

INSIGHTSIAS



INSIGHTSIAS

SIMPLIFYING IAS EXAM PREPARATION

[www.INSIGHTSONINDIA.com](http://www.INSIGHTSONINDIA.com)

**INSIGHTS into EDITORIAL**

**March 2021**

Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCpoccbCX9GEIwaile4HLjwA>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/insightsonindia/>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/vinaygb>

Email: [support@insightsias.com](mailto:support@insightsias.com)



**INSTACLASSES 2022**  
Full-fledged Classroom Program for Freshers  
OGP- Offline & Online Guidance Program


*We Don't Just Guide You*  
**We EQUIP You!**  
EQUIP Strategy for your SUCCESS!

**ADMISSIONS OPEN**  
BATCH Starts from 12<sup>th</sup> April 2021

**Early Bird Offer** **15%** disc

 **Bangalore Office : 7483163074 / 9380863034**  
**Delhi Office : 7303318519 / 011-49520205 | Hyderabad Office : 8688512637**

 **support@insightsias.com**



**Advanced Prelims Enrichment Course 2021**  
(APEC-2021)  
(Full Fledged Preparation for Prelims 2021)  
Online Mode & Offline Mode\*

**Orientation On 10 Feb 2021**  
**Starts from 11 Feb 2021**

**Fee: 16,000/- incl. Taxes**

**Early Bird Offer : 15 % Discount till 10<sup>th</sup> Feb 2021 | Old Subscriber Offer : 20 % Discount**

**Takeaways**

- ◆ Subscribers clearing Prelims will get 50% discount on I-WIL 2021
- ◆ Free Textbook Based Prelims Test Series will be available from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021
- ◆ Timetable is smoothly Integrated with Insto Prelims Revision Plan 2021
- ◆ Mentorship Provided till Prelims 2021

**Classes**



- ◆ **Subject wise Classes** completely oriented towards Prelims Exam
- ◆ **Current Affairs** covered in Every Class of respective topics
- ◆ **Extended CSAT Classes** with full syllabus completion to tackle any unconventional paper
- ◆ **Economic Survey & Budget** integrated with the Classes
- ◆ 3hrs of classes per day for each subject


**Tests**


- ◆ Daily Revision Class Tests for GS as well as CSAT
- ◆ Home Assignments to be followed for more Practice & to improve your skills
- ◆ Full Length Prelims Test after every Subject
- ◆ Full Length Prelims Test on Economic Survey & Budget
- ◆ Full Length Prelims Test on Agriculture theme


**Special Sessions**

- ◆ Motivational Sessions
- ◆ Strategy classes to improve your accuracy
- ◆ Previous year Questions' Discussion

 **SUBSCRIBE** **TIME TABLE** 

 **INSIGHTSIAS - BANGALORE**  
PH: 7483163074, 9380863034

 **INSIGHTSIAS - HYDERABAD**  
PH: 8688512637

 **INSIGHTSIAS - DELHI**  
PH: 7303318519, 011-49520205

\* (Offline mode in Bangalore only. Depending on ease of Govt. Restrictions in Delhi, Classes will be LIVE STREAMED in Delhi Centre  
(i.e., Students can watch Classes LIVE in Delhi Centre)

---

Table of Contents

**INSIGHTS into EDITORIAL**

**GENERAL STUDIES I 5**

1.Rape and marriage: On the Supreme Court's failure to protect the rights of women

5

2.Women's needs are key to Swachh Bharat success 8

3. Why India is no country for working women 12

**GENERAL STUDIES II 16**

1.The absurdity of the anti-defection law 16

3.Poll position: On SC order on local body elections 19

4.A case for a revamped, need-based PDS 24

5.A booster shot for India's vaccination plan 27

6.Aadhaar as a hurdle: On authentication failures and welfare delivery 31

7.'Lateral entry' into bureaucracy: reason, process, and controversy 35

8.Rajya Sabha Approves Bill Giving Primacy to Delhi LG 38

9.The case that time forgot 42

10.Junk inefficiency: On vehicle scrappage policy 46

11.IAEA | The 'imperfect' fight against proliferation 49

12.Quad leaders: Committed to free, open, secure and prosperous Indo-Pacific region 52

13.Remove the wedges in India-Bangladesh ties 56

14.Ending the war in Yemen 59

15.China gives green light for first downstream dams on Brahmaputra 62

**GENERAL STUDIES III 71**

1.Doubling down on a resilient India 71

2.Salutary reminder: On Consumer Price Index 74

3.Railways and a question of transparency 78

4.Responsible AI — the need for ethical guard rails 82

5.Ploughing a new furrow in the agri-regulatory system 86

6.Aligning a missile deal with destination Manila 91

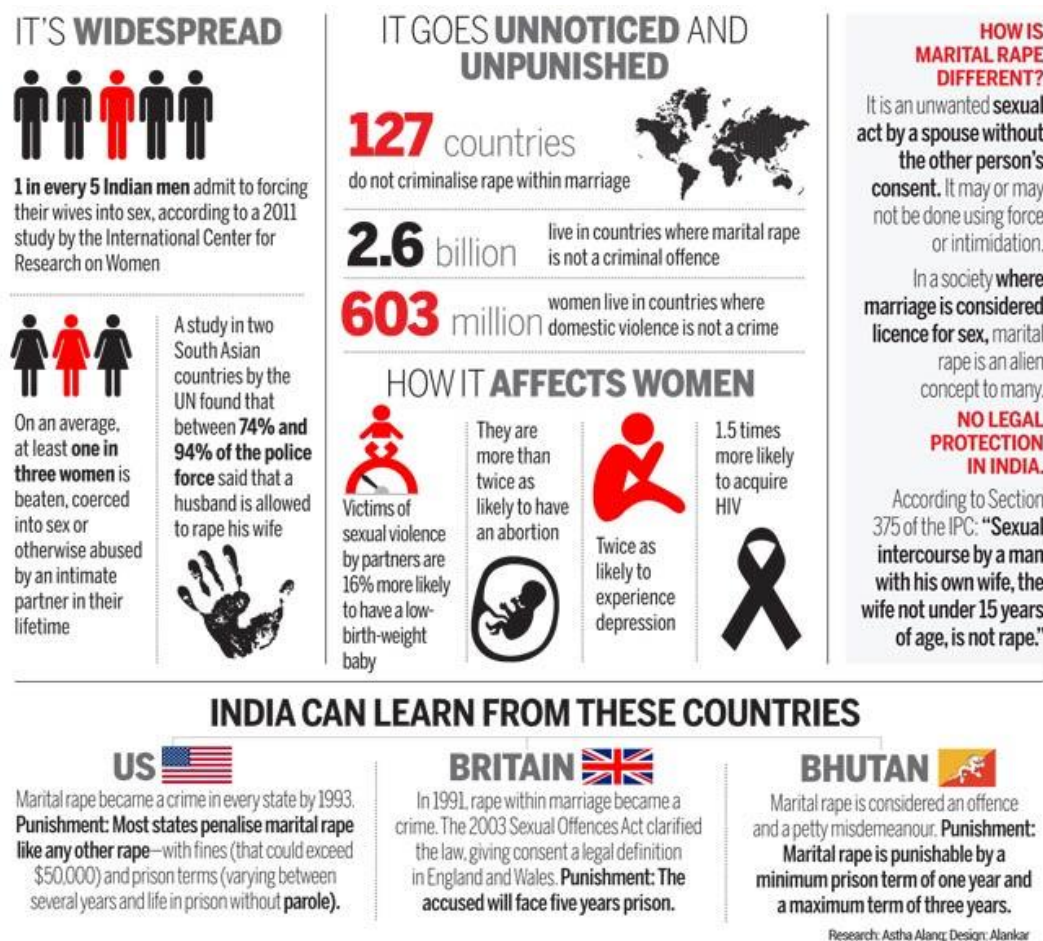
7.Working towards climate justice in a non-ideal world 94

8.ISRO places Brazil's Amazonia-1, 18 other satellites in orbit 98

9.Chinese malware may have targeted Indian power systems and seaports: U.S. firm 102

**ESSAYS 107**

INSIGHTS IAS

**INSIGHTS into EDITORIAL****GENERAL STUDIES I****1.Rape and marriage: On the Supreme Court's failure to protect the rights of women****Context:**

The Supreme Court's latest query to a Maharashtra government employee asking whether he would marry a girl he was accused of raping repeatedly while she was a minor is insensitive to the core.

By offering marriage as a solution to a rape victim, the judiciary failed to protect the rights of a girl.

In his petition, the accused recounted the allegations that he sexually abused the girl since she was in high school, and also that he had threatened the minor.

Instead of meting out harsh punishment, the Court asked the lawyer representing the accused to find out whether his client would be willing to marry the victim or risk going to jail.

### **Unequal Justice for Unequal people:**

In another case, the Bench stayed the arrest of a man accused of rape after falsely promising marriage.

The victim said she was promised marriage and was “brutally and sexually abused”.

The CJI asked the girl’s lawyer: “When two people are living as husband and wife, however brutal the husband is, can you call sexual intercourse between them ‘rape’?”

In both cases, these crimes attract severe penalties under the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013.

### **Previous judgement by Supreme court itself on against marrying rape victim:**

In Shimbu & Anr vs State of Haryana (2013), the Supreme Court said the offer of a rapist to marry the victim cannot be used to reduce the sentence prescribed by law.

When the scars of the Nirbhaya case are still raw, and a series of rape and murders are being reported against minors, especially Dalits, in Uttar Pradesh, the judiciary’s shocking remarks echo a deep-set prejudice against gender equality.

### **Violation to the Constitution of India Article 21:**

1. According to creative interpretation by the Supreme Court, rights enshrined in **Article 21** include the rights to health, privacy, dignity, safe living conditions, and safe environment, among others
2. In the State of Karnataka v. Krishnappa, the Supreme Court held that sexual violence apart from being a dehumanizing act is an unlawful intrusion of the right to privacy and sanctity of a female.
3. In the same judgment, it held that non-consensual sexual intercourse amounts to physical and sexual violence.
4. In the Suchita Srivastava v. Chandigarh Administration, the Supreme Court equated the right to make choices related to sexual activity with rights to personal liberty, privacy, dignity, and bodily integrity under Article 21 of the Constitution.

**Other areas to focus to avoid women Harassment:**

On marital rape, though the recommendation was not included in the Act, the **Justice J.S. Verma Committee** was clear the law ought to specify that a marital or another relationship between the perpetrator and victim cannot be a defence against sexual violation.

Citing the judgment of the European Commission of Human Rights in C.R. vs U.K., it endorsed the conclusion that “a rapist remains a rapist regardless of his relationship with the victim”.

**JS Verma Committee recommendations on Sexual Harassment at the Workplace Act:**

1. **Justice J.S. Verma Committee** had recommended setting up of an **employment tribunal** instead of an internal complaints committee (ICC) in the Sexual Harassment at the Workplace Act.
2. To **ensure speedy disposal of complaints**, the committee proposed that the tribunal should not function as a civil court but may choose its own procedure to deal with each complaint.
3. An **internal complaints committee** as laid down under the act could be counterproductive as dealing with such complaints in-house could discourage women from filing complaints.
4. Domestic workers should be included within the purview of the Act.
5. The Committee has termed the Sexual Harassment Act “unsatisfactory” and said it did not reflect the spirit of the **Vishakha guidelines** — framed by the Supreme Court in 1997 to curb sexual harassment at the workplace.
6. The Committee said any **“unwelcome behaviour”** should be seen from the subjective perception of the complainant, thus broadening the scope of the definition of sexual harassment.

On Domestic violence, In India, it is an entrenched problem, and it has only been exacerbated in recent years. According to the **National Crime Records Bureau’s (NCRB) ‘Crime in India’ 2019 report**, about 70% of women in India are victims of domestic violence.

One such manifestation of this domestic violence is Marital rape.

Marital rape, the act of forcing your spouse into having sex without proper consent, is an unjust yet not uncommon way to degrade and disempower women.

**Conclusion:**

**A relationship between two individuals, including marriage, is built around love, respect, trust and consent.**

Within that civilised framework, a violent and exploitative act like rape has no place.

This arduous battle for equality becomes even more difficult when people in high offices make offensive remarks.

Equal rights activists have always worked hard against misogyny, patriarchal mindsets and other failings such as blaming the victim for rape.

The law should deliver justice, not blatantly tilt the scales against women's rights.

## 2. Women's needs are key to Swachh Bharat success

### Cabinet approves "Phase 2" of Swachh Bharat Mission Grameen



POKET.NEWS

- Union Cabinet has approved the Phase- 2 of the this Mission till 2024-25.
- It will focus on Open Defecation Free Plus (ODF Plus).
- The program will work towards ensuring that no one is left behind and everyone uses a toilet.
- The phase-2 of the mission will be implemented in a mission mode with a total estimated budgeted financial implication of 52 thousand 497 crore rupees.

### Context: Recently, Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen) Phase-II Approved:

1. Swachh Bharat Mission 2.0 speaks of **sustained behavioural change** while embarking on the newer agendas of sustainable solid waste management and safe disposal of wastewater and reuse.
2. It will focus on **Open Defecation Free Plus (ODF Plus)**, which includes ODF sustainability and Solid and Liquid Waste Management (SLWM).
3. SBM (G) Phase-II will be implemented from 2020-21 to 2024-25 in a **mission mode** with a total outlay of Rs. 1,40,881 crores.
4. The Solid and Liquid Waste Management (SLWM) component of **ODF Plus** will be monitored on the basis of output-outcome indicators for **4 key areas**:
  - a. Plastic waste management,
  - b. Biodegradable solid waste management (including animal waste management),

- c. Greywater management
- d. Faecal sludge management.

### **About Swachh Bharat Grameen Phase I:**

As per the **census 2011**, **more than fifty percent** of India's population defecated in the open, and recent data showed that about 60% of rural households and 89% of urban households have access to toilets.

1. The Swachh Bharat Grameen Phase I guidelines (2017) state that **"requirements and sensitivities"** related to gender, including dignity and safety issues, are to be taken into account at all stages of sanitation programmes from planning to post-implementation."
2. The department of Drinking Water and Sanitation released the guidelines, recognising the **gender dimensions of sanitation in India**.
3. It emphasised not only the need for women's participation in planning and implementation of sanitation interventions but also **"their leadership in SBM-G committees and institutions"**.
4. **Planning, procurement, infrastructure creation, and monitoring** are the basic tenets of implementation in Swachh Bharat and the guidelines for the first phase of the mission called for strengthening the role of women.
5. The states were accordingly expected to ensure adequate representation of women in the village water and sanitation committees (VWSCs), leading to **optimal gender outcomes**.
6. The SBM-Grameen guidelines (Phase I) specifically recommended that 50 per cent of the members of VWSCs should be women.
7. In several states, the guidelines were strictly adhered to. There were inevitably cases where women were fronts for spouses.
8. During the early years of implementation, the messaging touched on the **"shame and dignity" of women**".
9. While these were useful entry-point messages, they carry the risk of lack of ownership by men and the reinforcing of gender stereotypes.

### **Case study to motivate people to become open-defecation free:**

There are no quick solutions other than **adopting concerted approaches** to ensure the survival and protection of the girl child through good health from sanitation and nutrition, and provision of water to liberate women from collecting water, and enabling their education.

Fortunately, there are spirited instances of women leaders in sanitation: Uttara Thakur, a differently-abled panchayat head from Chhattisgarh, was determined to improve sanitation services in her village.

Differently-abled panchayat head went door-to-door to motivate people to use toilets. Her contagious spirit **mobilised the whole village** to join hands and become **open-defecation free**.

Main Kuch Bhi Kar Sakti Hoon, a Doordarshan TV series promoted by PFI, used entertainment-education around safe and sustained sanitation practices to improve people's awareness and promote shifts in social and gender norms around the use and maintenance of toilets.

This reached 200 million viewers, nearly 45 per cent of whom reportedly took some action or promised to.

### **Positive promotional videos creates inspiring social ripples in society:**

1. In one of the promotional videos of SBM, featuring celebrity ambassador Vidya Balan, the protagonist asks a man on his wedding day whether he had a toilet at home, to which the answer was negative.
2. This prompts her to ask the bride to remove her veil, suggesting that a man who lets his wife defecate in the open has no right to ask her to follow the purdah.
3. This was later amended, highlighting the importance of viewing every communication through a gender lens lest there be unintended collateral damage.
4. It is heartening to notice changes in SBM messaging that reflect major transformations, attempting to popularise and portray stories of women groups and successful **women swachhta champions** to create the much-needed social ripple that would inspire women to take complete charge as they seek to achieve a healthy and dignified life for themselves and their families.
5. In Jharkhand, trained women masons built over 15 lakh toilets in one year, and helped the state achieve its open defecation free (rural) target.
6. The India Sanitation Coalition has helped link micro-finance with self-help groups run by women for sanitation needs.
7. Increasingly, interventions with these groups which drive livelihoods can be designed to produce income and well-being impact with water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) programmes.

### **Way Forward to make SBM 2.0 grand success:**

1. A **national monitoring and evaluation system** to track and measure gender outcomes in SBM is necessary.
2. Several researchers in this space have commented that gender analysis frameworks have a long history in development practice.
3. We can learn from these frameworks to support design, implementation, and measurement that can **bridge the gender equality gap** in sanitation.
4. SBM's current focus on the implementation of the **infrastructure of water and sanitation** could take attention away from the much-needed continuing **focus on behaviour change and gender**.
5. We will **need effective communications and training programmes** to build the capacity of stakeholders on gender targeting, both on the supply and demand sides of interventions.
6. **Information, education, and communication**, which aims at **behaviour change** of the masses, is key to the success of the swachhta mission 2.0.
7. In past SBM 1.0, the government has also very effectively **used over 8 lakh swachhagrahis**, mainly women, who for small honorariums work to push through behavioural change at the community level.

## Conclusion:

The **sustainable development goals (Target 6.2)** require India “by 2030, to achieve access to **adequate and equitable sanitation** and **hygiene for all** and **end open defecation**, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations.”

Besides the government, the **role of non-state actors**, including that of institutions like the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, UNICEF and several NGOs, must be lauded as we **pursue sustainable sanitation** using a **powerful gender lens**.

There is no doubt that women can help to drive change and bring about lasting change as the **jan andolan for swachhta, health and sanitation** gains momentum.

### 3. Why India is no country for working women

#### Female participation in the labour force (in %): India languishes at the bottom

This refers to the proportion of women, aged 15 and older, who are economically active

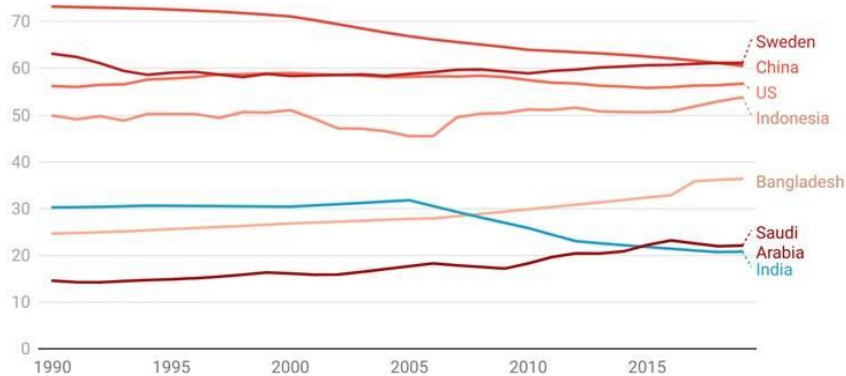


Chart: Udit Misra • Source: World Bank • Created with Datawrapper

#### Introduction:

**Economic empowerment is key to gender justice.** But India's workforce has been contending with a worrying retreat of women's participation.

**The female labour force participation rate (FLFPR) in the country has fallen from 30.27% in 1990 to 20.8% in 2019, as per data from the World Bank.**

What's worse, the decline was steepest in the years of high growth—2003-04 to 2010-11—indicating that the fruits of growth didn't flow equally to men and women in terms of empowerment.

The pandemic has likely aggravated this—the loss of jobs in the informal sector is likely to have pushed many women out of work.

The formal sector hasn't done well either, with women's share in new payroll additions, which had been trending downwards for a long time, falling to below 20% in August 2020.

#### **Female labour force participation rate (FLFPR):**

1. The FLFPR basically tells what percentage of the total women within the working-age are seeking work; it includes both those who are employed as well as those who are as yet unemployed but seeking work.

2. As the chart below shows, at 21% India has one of the lowest female participation rates in the world.
3. In other words, 79% of Indian women (aged 15 years and above) do not even seek work.
4. Countries with which Indian typically compares itself such as China, the US, Indonesia, and Bangladesh have two-to-three times higher participation rates for women.
5. Worse still, it is not the case that India is behind just a handful of countries.
6. **India's 21% female LFPR is not even half the global average (47%).** The bottom of this chart further underscores the poor company India keeps in terms of freedom for women.
7. However, the truth about women's participation in India's economy is more complicated.

### **Paid work, unpaid work and domestic chores:**

In a recent paper, titled "Paid work, unpaid work and domestic chores: Why are so many Indian women out of the labour force?", professor of economics, makes a couple of nuanced but significant points.

1. One, she argues that the LFPR does not accurately capture the participation of Indian women in the economy.
2. She says that the majority of women in South Asia are between the two extremes — namely, those women who work outside their homes for a salary and those who are exclusively involved within their own homes (caring for their family) of their own volition.
3. These are women whose involvement in economic work (activities that are within the standard boundaries of the System of National Accounts, that is counted as economic activities when national income or GDP is measured) lies in a grey zone.
4. The other point is that **"the whole focus on labour force participation reduces the issue of women's involvement to a labour supply issue".**
5. In other words, while there are factors such as social norms or violence against women that hold them back from joining the labour force, little is said about the demand for their work.
6. To better understand this, she points to the **urban and rural break-up of female LFPR.**
7. It is another matter that urban female LFPR was always pretty low but the dip has been caused by fewer women in rural India being counted as part of the labour force.

### **Benefits of Women's Economic Empowerment:**

1. Women's economic empowerment has been shown, many times, to be the best available weapon against poverty.
2. Economically autonomous women can walk away from abuse. Providing young women with the means to earn shields them from human trafficking. **Gender equality reduces violence of all kinds.**
3. The beneficial effects of full inclusion for women would be visible at the institutional and national levels.
4. Including women in the financial system contributes to institutional profit and also reduces risk, increases transparency and also adds stability for the entire economy.
5. Allowing women to participate in international trade increases a nation's resilience and innovation.

#### **Measures that increase Women in workforce:**

1. **Training and mentoring programmes** help female employees to develop their skills.
2. Sponsorship programmes, in particular, have been shown to be important in the promotion of women and the development of a strong pipeline of female talent.
3. To attract and retain female workers, companies can offer **family-friendly policies** including flexible work options, and paid maternity and paternity leave benefits.
4. Creating more flexible work choices **reduces gender inequality** in both paid and unpaid work.
5. The need or the preference for temporal flexibility in work shapes women's choices of occupations, jobs and places of work and is a significant cause of the gender pay gap.
6. Investing in women's economic empowerment sets a direct path towards gender equality, poverty eradication and inclusive economic growth.
7. Women make enormous contributions to economies, whether in businesses, on farms, as entrepreneurs or employees, or by doing unpaid care work at home.

#### **Conclusion:**

Economic results are best when men and women work in a **gender-balanced way**, whether at work or at home.

Studies show consistently that teams of males and females make better investments, produce better products, generate higher returns, and have fewer failures.

At home, couples who share housework and paid work have closer relationships with children, more egalitarian values, less interpersonal tension, and more productivity.



**INSTACLASSES 2022**  
Full-fledged Classroom Program for Freshers  
OGP- Offline & Online Guidance Program

*We Don't Just Guide You*  
**We EQUIP You!**  
EQUIP Strategy for your SUCCESS!

**ADMISSIONS OPEN**  
BATCH Starts from 12<sup>th</sup> April 2021

**Early Bird Offer** **15%** disc



Bangalore Office : 7483163074 / 9380863034

Delhi Office : 7303318519 / 011-49520205 | Hyderabad Office : 8688512637



[support@insightsias.com](mailto:support@insightsias.com)

### INSIGHTSIAS Toppers from Offline Classroom Program (OGP) and CORE BATCH



**Jeydev C S**  
Rank 5  
OGP 2019 + Core Batch



**Dheeraj Kumar Singh**  
Rank 64  
OGP 2019



**Yashaswini B**  
Rank 71  
Core Batch +  
Mains Test Series 2019



**Nidhin K Biju**  
Rank 89  
Core Batch +  
Mains Test Series



**M V Satya Sai Karthik**  
Rank 103  
OGP 2018



**Kumar Shivashish**  
Rank 108  
OGP 2019 + Core Batch



**Keerthana H S**  
Rank 167  
OGP 2018



**Abhishek Gowda MJ**  
Rank 278  
OGP 2018



**Vishnusankar**  
Rank 384  
OGP 2018



**Kumari Manisha**  
Rank 617  
OGP 2018



**INSIGHTSIAS**  
SIMPLIFYING IAS EXAM  
PREPARATION

**Hearty Congratulations to AIR 2 & 4 of our Online Test Series and all our proud 160+ Rank Holders in UPSC CSE 2019!**

## GENERAL STUDIES II

**1.The absurdity of the anti-defection law****'FINISH PROCEEDINGS IN 3 MTHS'**

➤ SC sets **three months as the outer limit** for Speakers to **conclude disqualification proceedings** against defectors

➤ Recommends that Parliament should amend Constitution to set up a permanent tribunal to decide cases. Tribunal can be **headed by retired SC judge or HC CJ**

➤ SC emphasises that **ensuring purity of anti-defection law** under

the 10th Schedule is vital to democracy's functioning

➤ SC decision came in a case related to **Manipur Congress MLA T Shyam Kumar**, who switched to BJP and became a minister after the party formed govt in 2017

➤ A dozen pleas seeking Shyam's disqualification were filed but Speaker sat over them. SC asks Speaker to **decide in four weeks**

**Context:**

The events in Puducherry highlight, yet again, the absurdity of the anti-defection law.

In what has now become the standard operating procedure, several MLAs from the treasury benches resigned, lowering the numbers required for a no-confidence motion to succeed.

This formula has been seen recently in other States such as Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka.

**Views of Constitutional Makers: Govt accountable, even at the cost of stability:**

The framers of our Constitution, while introducing the draft Constitution, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar outlined the differences between the presidential and parliamentary forms of government.

He said that the presidential form (such as in the United States) had higher stability but lower accountability as the President is elected for four years, and cannot be removed except for proven misdemeanour.

In the parliamentary form, the government is accountable on a daily basis through questions and motions, and can be removed any time it loses the support of the majority of members of the Lok Sabha.

The drafting committee believed that **India needed a government that was accountable, even at the cost of stability.**

The anti-defection bill weakens the accountability mechanism.

### **About Anti-defection law:**

The **Tenth Schedule** was inserted in the Constitution in 1985 by the **52nd Amendment Act**.

- The main purpose was **to preserve the stability of governments** and insulate them from **defections of legislators** from the treasury benches.
- The law stated that any Member of Parliament (MP) or that of a State legislature (MLA) would be disqualified from their office if they voted on any motion **contrary to the directions issued by their party**.
- It **lays down the process** by which legislators may be disqualified on grounds of defection by the Presiding Officer of a legislature based on a petition by any other member of the House.
- The decision on question as to disqualification on ground of defection is referred to the **Chairman or the Speaker of such House**, and **his decision is final**.

The law applies to both Parliament and state assemblies.

**The anti-defection law was included in the Constitution as the Tenth Schedule in 1985 to combat the “evil of political defections”.**

### **Range of the provision of the Anti-defection Law:**

The provision was not limited to confidence motions or money bills (which are quasi-confidence motions).

It applies to all votes in the House, on every Bill and every other issue.

It even applies to the Rajya Sabha and Legislative Councils, which have no say in the stability of the government.

Therefore, an MP (or MLA) has **absolutely no freedom to vote their judgement on any issue**.

They have to **blindly follow the direction of the party**. This provision goes **against the concept of representative democracy**.

### **How Anti-defection law turns MP/MLAs to a agent of another party?**

There are **two broadly accepted roles of a representative** such as an MP in a democracy.

1. One is that they are **agents of the voters** and are expected to vote according to the wishes and for the benefits of their constituents.

2. The other is that their duty to their constituents is **to exercise their judgement on various issues towards the broader public interest.**

In this, they deliberate with other MPs and find a reasonable way through complex issues.

The anti-defection law turns the concept of a representative on its head. It makes the MP neither a delegate of the constituency nor a national legislator but converts them to be just an agent of the party.

### **A broken chain in India:**

Look at the contrast with other democracies.

1. For example, in the recent vote on the impeachment of former U.S. President Donald Trump, seven members from his party in the U.S. Senate, the Republicans, voted to convict him. Such a decision does not have any legal repercussion.
2. Of course, the party may take action (it did not). Also, voters may decide to reject the legislator for re-election and that is the **core design element of representative democracy.**

### **The legislator is accountable to voters, and the government is accountable to legislators.**

In India, this **chain of accountability** has been **broken** by **making legislators accountable primarily to the party.**

This means that anyone from the party having a majority in the legislature which is, by definition, the party forming the government is unable to hold the government to account.

Further, all legislators have a ready explanation for their voting behaviour: they had to follow the party's direction.

**This negates the concept of them having to justify their positions on various issues to the people who elected them to the post.**

### **The Anti-defection law fails to provide stability:**

1. The political system has found ways to topple governments **by reducing the total membership through resignations.**
2. In other instances, the Speaker usually from the ruling party has **delayed taking a decision on the disqualification.**
3. The Supreme Court has **tried to plug this by ruling** that the Speaker has to take the decision in three months, but it is not clear what would happen if a Speaker does not do so.

4. The premise that the anti-defection law is needed to punish legislators who betray the mandate given by the voters also seems to be flawed.
5. We have seen many of the defectors in States such as Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh being re-elected in the by-polls, which were held due to their disqualification.

### Conclusion:

The problem arises from the attempt to find a legal solution to what is essentially a political problem.

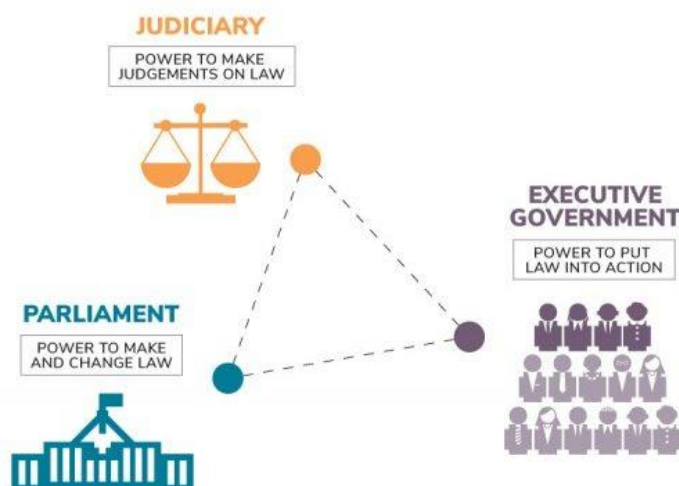
If stability of government is an issue due to people defecting from their parties, the answer is for parties to strengthen their internal systems.

To sum up, the **anti-defection law** has been detrimental to the functioning of our legislatures as deliberative bodies which hold the executive to account on behalf of citizens.

It has turned them into fora to endorse the decision of the government on Bills and budgets.

And it has not even done the job of preserving the stability of governments. The Tenth Schedule to the Constitution must be repealed.

### 2. Dormant Parliament, fading business



### Introduction:

The Budget session of Parliament ended, two weeks ahead of the original plan, as many political leaders are busy with campaigning for the forthcoming State Assembly elections.

This follows the trend of the last few sessions: The Budget session of 2020 was curtailed ahead of the lockdown imposed following the novel coronavirus pandemic, a short 18-day monsoon session ended after 10 days as several Members of Parliament and Parliament staff got affected by COVID-19, and the winter session was cancelled.

### **No Bill scrutiny in Parliamentary discussions:**

1. An important development this session has been the absence of careful scrutiny of Bills. During the session, 13 Bills were introduced, and not even one of them was referred to a parliamentary committee for examination.
2. Many high impact Bills were introduced and passed within a few days.
3. The Government of **National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Bill, 2021**, which is the Bill to change the governance mechanism of Delhi shifting governance from the legislature and the Chief Minister to the Lieutenant Governor was passed.
4. Another Bill, **the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2021**, amends the Mines and Minerals Act, 1957 to remove end-use restrictions on mines and ease conditions for captive mines; this Bill was introduced on March 15 and passed by both Houses within a week.
5. A Bill **The National Bank for Financing Infrastructure and Development (NaBFID) Bill, 2021** to create a new government infrastructure finance institution and permit private ones in this sector was passed within three days of introduction.
6. **The Insurance (Amendment) Bill, 2021**, the Bill to increase the limit of foreign direct investment in insurance companies from 49% to 74% also took just a week between introduction and passing by both Houses.
7. In all, 13 Bills were introduced in this session, and eight of them were passed within the session.
8. This quick work should be read as a sign of abdication by Parliament of its duty to scrutinise Bills, rather than as a sign of efficiency.

### **Decline in Parliament Efficacy:**

This development also highlights the decline in the efficacy of committees.

The percentage of Bills referred to committees declined from 60% and 71% in the 14th Lok Sabha (2004-09) and the 15th Lok Sabha, respectively, to 27% in the 16th Lok Sabha and just 11% in the current one.

While COVID-19 was undoubtedly a grave matter, there is no reason why Parliament could not adopt remote working and technological solutions, as several other countries did.

The Budget session of 2020 was curtailed ahead of the lockdown. A short 18-day monsoon session ended after 10 days as several Members of Parliament and Parliament staff got affected by COVID-19.

The fiscal year 2020-21 saw the Lok Sabha sitting for 34 days (and the Rajya Sabha for 33), the lowest ever.

The casualty was proper legislative scrutiny of proposed legislation as well as government functioning and finances.

### **Money Bill classification and by-passing Rajya Sabha:**

1. The last few years have seen the **dubious practice of marking Bills as 'Money Bills'** and getting them past the Rajya Sabha.
2. Some sections of the **Aadhaar Act** were read down by the Supreme Court of India due to this procedure (with a dissenting opinion that said that the entire Act should be invalidated).
3. **The Finance Bills**, over the last few years, have contained several unconnected items such as restructuring of tribunals, introduction of electoral bonds, and amendments to the foreign contribution act.
4. Similarly, this year too, the Finance Bill has made major amendments to the Life Insurance Corporation Act, 1956.
5. As this is a Money Bill, the Rajya Sabha cannot make any amendments, and has only recommendatory powers.
6. Some of the earlier Acts, including the Aadhaar Act and Finance Act, have been referred to a Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court.
7. It would be useful if the Court can give a **clear interpretation of the definition of Money Bills** and provide guide rails within which Bills have to stay to be termed as such. During this session, the Union Budget was presented, discussed and passed.
8. The Constitution requires the Lok Sabha to approve the expenditure Budget (in the form of demand for grants) of each department and Ministry.
9. The Lok Sabha had listed the budget of just five Ministries for detailed discussion and discussed only three of these; **76% of the total Budget was approved without any discussion.**

**The missing Deputy Speaker:**

1. A striking feature of the current Lok Sabha is the **absence of a Deputy Speaker**.
2. **Article 93** of the Constitution states that “The House of the People shall, as soon as may be, choose two members of the House to be respectively Speaker and Deputy Speaker”.
3. Usually, the Deputy Speaker is elected within a couple of months of the formation of a new Lok Sabha, with the exception in the 1998-99 period, when it took 269 days to do so.
4. By the time of the next session of Parliament, two years would have elapsed **without the election of a Deputy Speaker**.
5. The issue showed up starkly this session when **the Speaker was hospitalised**.

**Factors Responsible for Deterioration of the Parliament of India:**

1. The **growth of delegated legislation** is perhaps the most important factor for the decline of Parliament.
2. In the present day world, it is not possible for the Parliament to devote its entire time to the details of legislative measure.
3. Hence all the bills contain a clause empowering the government to frame necessary regulations and bye-laws.
4. Thus, **delegated legislation robs the Parliament to a great extent, the law-making power, resulting in the decline of the prestige of the Parliament**.
5. The primary duty of Members of Parliament is of course **to enact laws**. But in the Indian context these popularly elected representatives are expected to perform so many varied tasks that their role has **become highly complex and multifaceted**.
6. In Parliament, the issues coming up for discussion cover a wide range of national and international affairs.
7. The **ever changing political and moral conditions in India** are also responsible for the decline of prestige and position of Parliament.
8. **Dominance by the party, the lack of party organisation, the malaise of political defections, corruption and the decline of the morale of politician** have all contributed to the erosion of the prestige of Parliament.
9. The **gradual loss of confidence** in the impartiality of the presiding officers of the legislatures also is a point of importance.

10. They have shown an inclination to side with the government and the ruling party, almost functioning as their representatives, not as guardians of the public interest.
11. The following Lok Sabha (2009-14) saw a lot of disruptions to work, with about a third of its scheduled time lost.

### **Way Forward: Parliamentary scrutiny is key:**

Parliament has the central role in our democracy as the representative body that checks the work of the government.

It is also expected to examine all legislative proposals in detail, understand their nuances and implications of the provisions, and decide on the appropriate way forward.

In order to fulfil its constitutional mandate, **it is imperative that Parliament functions effectively.**

This will require making and following processes such as creating a system of research support to Members of Parliament, providing sufficient time for MPs to examine issues, and requiring that all Bills and budgets are examined by committees and public feedback is taken.

### **Conclusion:**

Finally, the **decline of Parliament** has been due to **the technicality and complexity of government business.**

Legislation on technical issues necessitates prior consultation with experts and individual institutions concerned. Much data has to be collected and studied before a Bill is drafted.

All this is beyond the easy reach of private members. As a result, Bills, when introduced, are pushed through rapidly, and the **members do not get enough time even to express their points of view.**

In sum, **Parliament needs to ensure sufficient scrutiny** over the proposals and actions of the government.

### **3. Poll position: On SC order on local body elections**

### Functions of Election Commission in India

1. EC takes decision on every aspect of conduct and control of election from the announcement of election to the declaration of results.
2. It implements the code of conduct and punishes any candidate or party that violates it.
3. It can also order the government to follow some guideline, to prevent use and misuse of governmental power to enhance its chance to win elections, or to transfer some governmental officials
4. When on the election duty, government officers work under the control of the EC and not the government.
5. To give an advice to the President on some certain issues.

#### Context:

The Supreme Court said **State Election Commissioners (SECs)** across the country should be **independent**, and not persons holding office with the central government or a state government.

The observation came in a case relating to the municipal elections in Goa;

1. The Supreme Court directed the Goa government to redo the exercise of delimitation and reservation of municipal wards for women and SC/ST candidates in five municipal councils.
2. **Appoint an independent SEC**, which the government is now in the process of doing.

#### **State Election Commission role in conducting elections for urban and rural local bodies:**

Even though more than a quarter century has elapsed since the Constitution was amended to make **urban and rural local bodies a self-contained third tier of governance**, it is often agreed by experts that there is **inadequate devolution of powers to them.**

This may somewhat explain their **relative lack of autonomy.**

However, an entirely different facet of the way these local bodies function is that the manner in which their representatives are elected is often beset by controversies.

**Local polls are often marred by violence, and charges of arbitrary delimitation and reservation of wards.**

#### **About State Election Commissioner:**

1. The State Election Commission has been entrusted with the function of **conducting free, fair and impartial elections** to the local bodies in the state.
2. Under **73rd and 74th constitutional amendment acts**, State Election Commissions were created for every state to conduct elections to panchayats and municipalities
3. He/She is **appointed by the Governor**. His conditions of service and tenure of office shall also be determined by the governor.
4. **SEC shall be removed from his office in the same manner & ground as a Judge of a High Court.**
  - a. A judge of a high court can be removed from his office by the President on the recommendation of the parliament.
5. **Article 243K(1)**: It states that the superintendence, direction and control of the preparation of electoral rolls for, and the conduct of, all elections to the Panchayats (Municipalities under Article 243ZA) shall be vested in a State Election Commission consisting of a State Election Commissioner to be appointed by the Governor.
6. **Article 243K(2)**: It states that the tenure and appointment will be directed as per the law made by the state legislature. However, State Election Commissioner shall not be removed from his/her office except in like manner and on the like grounds as a Judge of a High Court.

#### **Independence and autonomy of State Election Commissioner:**

1. A key factor in any local body polls being conducted in a **free and fair manner** is the extent to which the **State Election Commissioner**, the authority that supervises the elections, is independent and autonomous.
2. Unfortunately, most regimes in the States appoint senior bureaucrats from among their favourites to this office.
3. In practice, SECs frequently face charges of being partisan. Routine exercises such as delimiting wards, rotating the wards reserved for women and Scheduled Castes and fixing dates for the elections become **mired in controversy**.
4. As a result, as the Opposition tends to believe that the exercise is being done with the ruling party's interest in mind.
5. Even though this cannot be generalised in respect of all States and all those manning the position, it is undeniable that SECs do not seem to enjoy the confidence of political parties and the public to the same extent as the **Election Commission of India as far as their independence is concerned**.

### **What did the Supreme Court rule on the State Election Commissioner?**

1. It is in this backdrop that the Supreme Court's judgment declaring that a State Election Commissioner should be someone **completely independent of the State government acquires salience.**
2. It has described the Goa government's action in asking its Law Secretary to hold additional charge as SEC as a "**mockery of the Constitutional mandate**".
3. By invoking **its extraordinary power** under **Article 142 of the Constitution**, the Court has asked all SECs who are under the direct control of the respective State governments to step down from their posts.
4. In practice, most States appoint retired bureaucrats as SECs. Whether the apex court's decision would have a bearing on those who are no more serving State governments remains to be seen.
5. However, it is clear that these governments will now have to find a way to appoint to the office only those who are **truly independent and not beholden to it in any manner.**

### **Conclusion:**

The SEC has to be a person who is independent of the State Government as he is an **important constitutional functionary** who is to oversee the entire election process in the state qu panchayats and municipalities

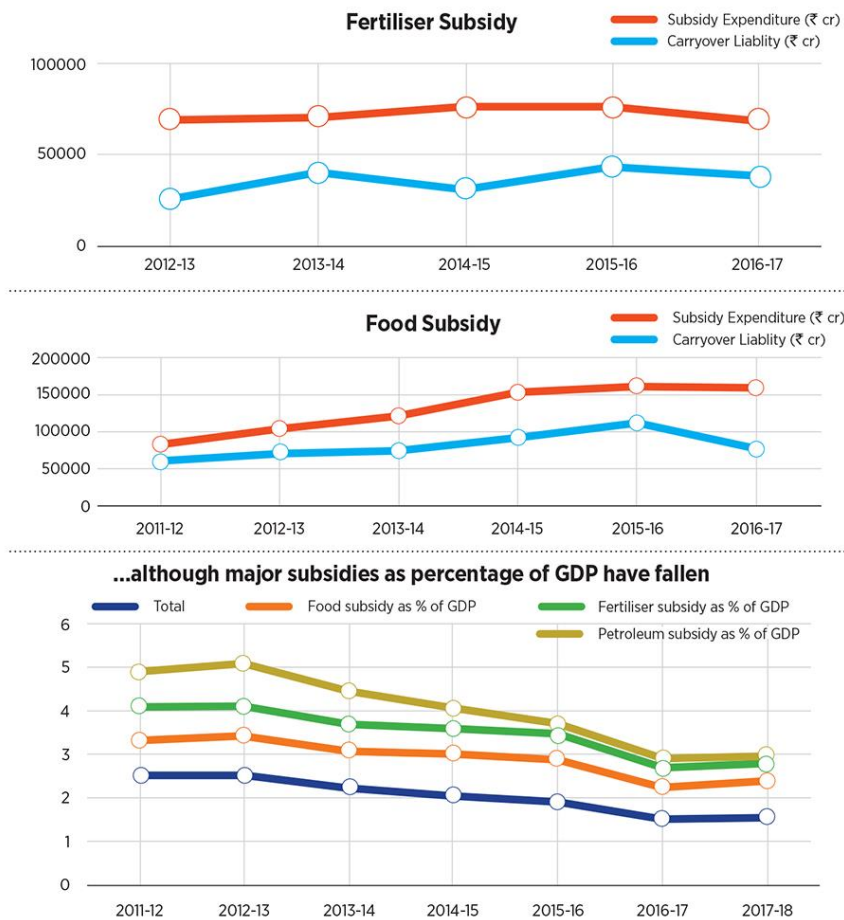
The present verdict of Supreme court will help **secure the independence of SECs in the future.**

More significantly, the Court has boosted the power of the election watchdog by holding that it is **open to the SECs** to countermand any infractions of the law made by the State government in the course of preparing for local body polls.

Regimes in the States would have to wake up to the reality that they cannot always control the local body polls as in the past.

### **4.A case for a revamped, need-based PDS**

## Rolled-Over Subsidies Have Been On The Rise...



Source: CAG report, India Budget and RBI

### Context: Food Subsidy system in India:

The **Economic Survey**, rightly flagged the issue of a growing food subsidy bill, which, in the words of the government, “is becoming unmanageably large”.

The reason is not far to seek. **Food subsidy**, coupled with the **drawl of food grains by States from the central pool** under various schemes, has been on a perpetual growth trajectory.

During 2016-17 to 2019-20, the subsidy amount, clubbed with loans taken by the Food Corporation of India (FCI) under the **National Small Savings Fund (NSSF)** towards food subsidy, was in the range of Rs.1.65-lakh crore to Rs.2.2-lakh crore.

In future, the annual subsidy bill of the Centre is expected to be about ₹2.5-lakh crore.

Even the **Economic Survey 2020-21** has made important recommendations to improve the Public Distribution System.

**Food Subsidy in India: Implementation:**

Food Security of beneficiaries is ensured by distributing food grains at subsidized prices through the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS). It protects them from price volatility due to inflation.

Over the years, while the spending on food subsidy has increased, the ratio of people below the poverty line has decreased.

The Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food, and Public Distribution is the nodal ministry for the implementation of food subsidy. This Ministry has 2 Departments which are given below

1. Department of Food and Public Distribution
2. Department of Consumer Affairs

98% of this Ministry's budget is allocated to the Department of Food and Public Distribution.

**Challenges to Food Security in India:**

1. Beneficiaries have complained of receiving poor quality food grains.
2. Farmers receive **Minimum Support Price (MSP)** from the Government for crops such as wheat, paddy, and sugarcane.
3. The MSP is higher than the market price. There is very minimum procurement of other crops by the Government at MSP.
4. Due to this factor farmers do not have the incentive to produce other crops such as pulses. This puts immense pressure on the water table as the above crops are highly water-intensive.
5. Due to the possibility of **increasing nutritional imbalance in food grains**, the Government must expand subsidies and include other protein-rich food items.
6. Under the **National Food Security Act**, the identification of beneficiaries is to be completed by State Governments.
7. As per the findings of **the Comptroller and Auditor General in 2016**, a massive 49 % of the beneficiaries were yet to be identified by the State Governments.
8. The **available storage capacity** in states was inadequate for the allocated quantity of food grains as per the report of the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG).

**Quantity of Food grains: High drawal rate by the states:**

1. During the three years, the quantity of food grains drawn by States (annually) hovered around 60 million tonnes to 66 million tonnes. Compared to the allocation, the rate of drawal was 91% to 95%.
2. As the National Food Security Act (NFSA), which came into force in July 2013, enhanced entitlements (**covering two-thirds** of the country's population), this naturally pushed up the States' drawal.
3. Based on an improved version of the targeted Public Distribution System (PDS), the law requires the authorities to provide to each beneficiary 5 kg of rice or wheat per month.
4. For this financial year (2020-21) which is an extraordinary year on account of the **COVID-19 pandemic**, the revised estimate of the subsidy has been put at about ₹4.23-lakh crore, excluding the extra budgetary resource allocation of ₹84,636 crore.
5. Till December 2020, the Centre set apart 94.35 million tonnes to the States under different schemes including the NFSA and additional allocation, meant for distribution among the poor free of cost.
6. Importantly, the government has decided to abandon the practice of extra budgetary resource allocation and include in the food subsidy amount itself, arrears in loans outstanding of the FCI drawn through the NSSF.

### **Problem of Allocating funds: Increase in the Food Subsidy Bill:**

The food subsidy bill has increased from 1.2 lakh crores in 2014-15 to 3.8 lakh crores in 2020-21.

In order to pay the food subsidy bill, the Government has been borrowing from National Small savings Fund (NSSF) through the issuance of special G-Secs.

However, this practice of borrowing from NSSF has been discontinued from this year as announced in the Union Budget 2021-22.

Food subsidy comprises of:

- (i) Subsidy provided to FCI for procurement and distribution of wheat and rice under NFSA and other welfare schemes and for maintaining the strategic reserve of food grains and
- (ii) Subsidy provided to States for undertaking decentralized procurement. The Food subsidy bill is calculated as the difference between Economic cost of Food grains and Central Issue price (CIP).

### **Way Forward: Recast the food subsidy system is the need of the hour:**

1. In this context, it is time the Centre had a relook at the overall food subsidy system including the pricing mechanism.
2. It should revisit NFSA norms and coverage. An official committee in January 2015 called for decreasing the quantum of coverage under the law, from the present 67% to around 40%.
3. For all ration cardholders drawing food grains, a “give-up” option, as done in the case of cooking gas cylinders, can be made available.
4. Even though States have been allowed to frame criteria for the identification of PHH cardholders, the Centre can nudge them into pruning the number of such beneficiaries.
5. As for the prices, the existing arrangement of flat rates should be replaced with a slab system.
6. Barring the needy, other beneficiaries can be made to pay a little more for a higher quantum of food grains.
7. The rates at which these beneficiaries have to be charged can be arrived at by the Centre and the States through consultations.
8. These measures, if properly implemented, can have a salutary effect on retail prices in the open market.

### Conclusion:

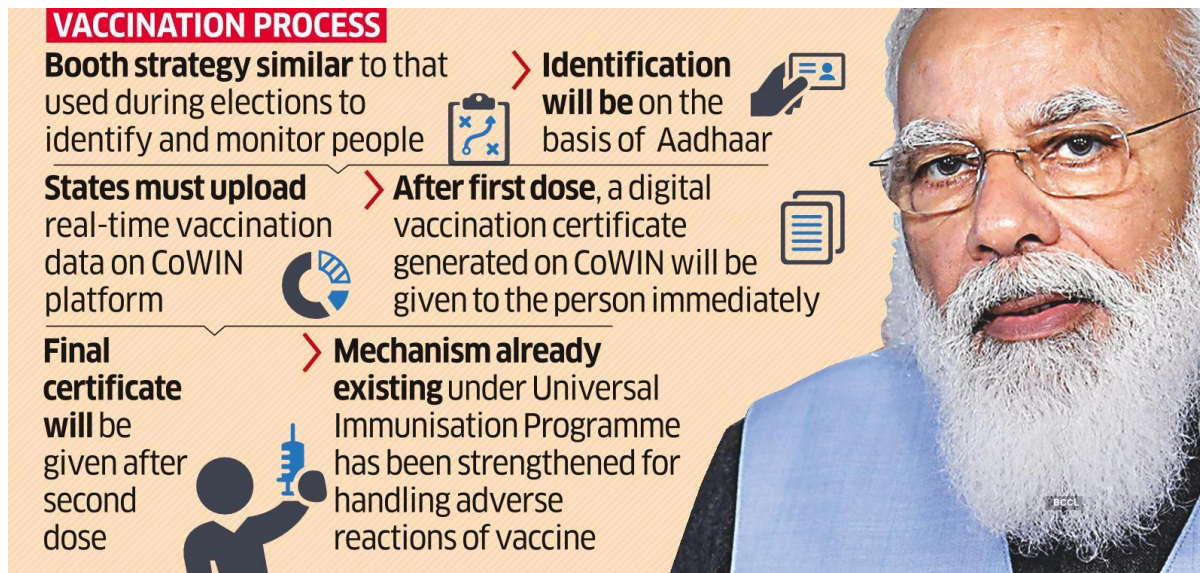
There are no two opinions about reforms implemented in the PDS through various steps, including end-to-end computerisation of operations, digitisation of data of ration cardholders, seeding of Aadhaar, and automation of fair price shops.

Yet, diversion of food grains and other chronic problems do exist. It is nobody's case that the PDS should be dismantled or in-kind provision of food subsidy be discontinued.

After all, the Centre itself did not see any great virtue in the Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) mode at the time of giving additional food grains free of cost to the States during April-November last year (as part of relief measures during the pandemic).

**A revamped, need-based PDS** is required not just for cutting down the subsidy bill but also for reducing the scope for leakages. **Political will** should not be found wanting.

### 5.A booster shot for India's vaccination plan



### Context:

#### More than a third of all vaccinations done in the world each day are in India.

With over 40,000 sites, it is heartening to see how India is shaping the COVID-19 vaccination programme. Yet, these are baby steps, and there is a long way ahead in covering the vulnerable.

So far, **India has vaccinated only 3.2% of the adult population**. Although the country covered 2.6 million doses per day on March 15, the seven-day rolling average hovers only around 0.11 per 100 people.

This slow pace, which is also cause for concern, does not constitute an appropriate response when compared to India's true potential in scaling up vaccination.

#### Steps to scale up: Need of Definitive time frame:

India has identified a **target of 300 million vulnerable population**, but there is neither a definitive time frame attached to it nor any specifics on the process.

With COVID-19 cases on the rise again in different parts of the country, time is running out.

**If India can vaccinate 10 million people per day, the vulnerable can be protected over the next two to three months.**

**However, vaccinate 10 million people per day requires speeding up the pace by five times.**

Public health programmes should be as simple as possible **to ensure scalability**.

Simple age-based criteria should be used to expand vaccination without restrictive criteria such as insisting on a medical certification of comorbidities.

Given that India has 300,000 trained vaccinators (217780 auxiliary nurse midwives and over one lakh nurses), nearly three million people can be covered each day by the public health workforce.

They are trained in vaccinating millions of children routinely through outreach sessions.

Thus, they can easily cover **two million doses per day routinely.** By expanding participation by private health facilities, it would be possible to cover more than seven to 10 million doses per day.

#### **India-Russia template: Local production of Sputnik:**

1. To have a sustained campaign of 10 million doses per day, India will need to have a **reasonable stockpile and production line of vaccines.**
2. Several other vaccines are available internationally with established efficacy and safety, and can be approved under **emergency use authorisation (EUA).**
3. The government may proactively seek supplies from other manufacturers while rapid studies can assess safety and immunogenicity in the Indian context.
4. The ongoing arrangement with Russia for the **local production of Sputnik** while the vaccine is already **undergoing clinical trials in India** is an excellent template of using Indian companies to roll out other vaccines.
5. India has to **balance compassion** to supply vaccines to other countries with the compulsion to save the lives of millions of Indians, who are at risk of death due to serial waves hitting different parts of the country.
6. **Regulated sales in the private market** should be used as a careful option to accelerate the vaccination campaign.
7. The government should act as the **assurer of quality and regulate the prices of all the vaccines in the country.**

#### **What are the concerns raised by the PM, and his suggestions to the states?**

Wastage occurs at **three levels**: during transportation; during cold chain point; and at a vaccination site both at service and delivery levels.

PM Modi specifically pointed out that **vaccine wastage** in Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh is to the **tune of 10%.**

The states have to examine why the vaccine is being wasted and there has to be a mechanism where every evening this is being monitored.

Because by wasting the doses of the vaccine, we are denying another beneficiary's right to get vaccinated.

The states have to immediately correct the drawbacks of planning and governance at the local level to reduce vaccine wastage. **The states have to target zero per cent wastage.**

### **A '3M' road map for Vaccination:**

#### **Microplanning:**

1. **Microplanning** is a process that is followed in **India's vaccination programmes**, that captures the population details by identifying and mapping them.
2. It has details for workforce and logistic arrangement, and tags for people to clearly identify vaccination sites.
3. The micro plans are the **blueprints of the vaccination programme**, which connect houses, migrant population and institutions such as old age homes and dementia care centres with vaccination teams.
4. This is not just the fixed sites; the micro plans also provide details of mobile teams and outreach sessions to cover a population.
5. The central government can work with the States in strengthening micro plans so that the vaccination pace picks up and is sustained.

#### **2. Mobilising identified persons:**

1. **Mobilising identified persons** can be done by the **accredited social health activists (ASHAs) in rural areas** and other volunteers in urban areas.
2. There is **one ASHA for 1,000 population in rural areas**. Based on the micro planning done, people should be **mobilised to designated vaccination sites** on a designated day.
3. The strategy for mobilisation in urban areas can include **innovative technological solutions**. Role models can influence many peers to get vaccinated as well.

#### **3. Monitoring and Mentoring:**

1. **Monitoring and mentoring of each step** of the process are essential.
2. The activities that **need structured support** include preparing micro plans, ensuring that all the necessary inter-sectoral coordination is done, and that the **necessary logistical and transport supplies** are provided.

3. Task forces can coordinate these at the district and sub-district levels.

### Conclusion:

**By coordinating with the World Health Organization**, India has an irrefutable track record of designing and updating micro plans, which have been used as templates in the global polio eradication programme.

India's reputation as a **world leader in vaccination programmes** needs to be strengthened further by addressing these issues swiftly.

We are making **good progress in COVID-19 vaccination efforts**, but it is not sufficient to achieve what is necessary.

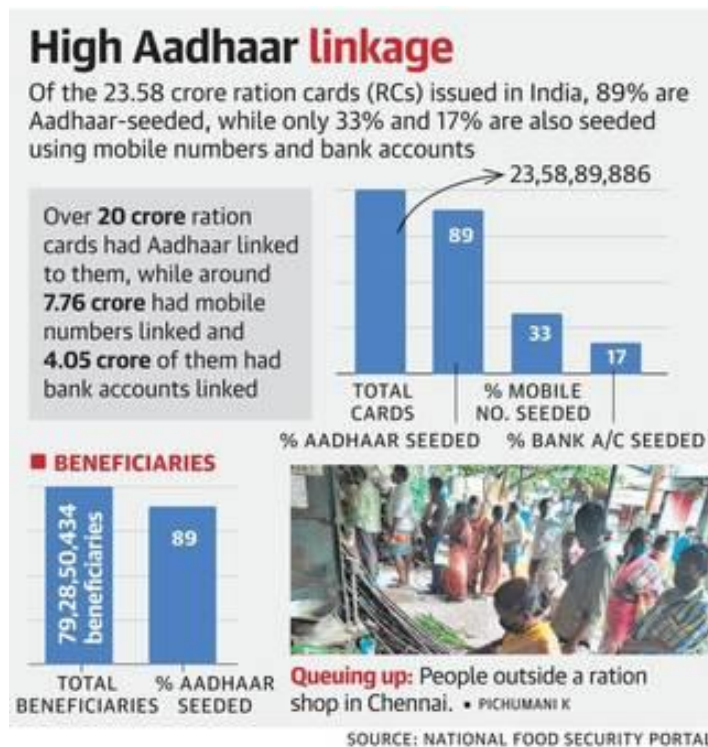
Any person who is 18 years should be permitted to get any vaccine approved by India, at any designated place, and at a fixed price regulated by the government. This will scale up vaccination in the workplace settings across the country and for all others who can afford them.

While this happens, the inequities in the health system, which systematically neglect the poor and the marginalised, should be looked into on priority.

This can be done with the government as the sole provider of free vaccines and care for all Indians below the poverty line or who cannot afford to buy vaccines.

**Vaccinating people in impoverished communities is a mandatory social responsibility.** Doing the best that we are capable of is the only option. And, we can do it.

### **6.Aadhaar as a hurdle: On authentication failures and welfare delivery**



#### Context:

Recently, the Supreme Court did the right thing by terming as serious the allegation by a petitioner that three crore ration cards were cancelled for not being linked with the Aadhaar database without prior notice to the beneficiaries, and that these were connected to reported starvation deaths in some States.

The unique identification scheme has been in existence for more than a decade and recent data has estimated that nearly 90% of India's projected population has been assigned the Aadhaar number.

These include inefficiencies in biometric authentication and updating, linking of Aadhaar with bank accounts, and the use of the Aadhaar payment bridge.

#### About Unique Identification Authority of India:

1. The Parliament has passed the Aadhaar and Other Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2019 which allows voluntary use of Aadhaar as proof of identity.
2. The existing Aadhaar act provides for the use of Aadhaar number as proof of identity of a person, subject to authentication.

3. The Bill replaces this provision to state that an individual may voluntarily use his Aadhaar number to establish his identity, by authentication or offline verification.
4. The Bill states that authentication of an individual's identity via Aadhaar, for the provision of any service, may be made mandatory only by a law of Parliament.
5. The **Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI)** is a **statutory authority** established by the Government of India under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, following the provisions of the Aadhaar Act 2016.
6. The UIDAI is mandated to assign a **12-digit unique identification (UID)** number (Aadhaar) to all the residents of India.
7. The UIDAI was initially set up by the Government of India in January 2009, as an attached office under the aegis of the Planning Commission.

#### **Case study: Jharkhand, where not having Aadhaar could starve you to death:**

1. Around half-a-dozen people have allegedly died of starvation in Jharkhand in the last six months.
2. Most of them were reportedly denied rations from the Public Distribution System shops for failing to have Aadhaar-based biometric authentication.
3. Two women in different districts in Jharkhand died of alleged starvation last week, prompting Chief Minister to order a probe.
4. The government reports said the women were sick; family members claimed they died of hunger.

#### **Cancellations had led to starvation deaths across the country:**

1. The **insistence on Aadhar and biometric authentication** had led to the cancellation of nearly four crore ration cards in the country according to the Union of India.
2. The Union of India casually gives an explanation that **these cancelled cards were bogus.**
3. The real reason is that the **technological system** based on iris identification, thumb prints, non-possession of Aadhaar, non-functioning of the internet in rural and remote areas, etc, led to largescale cancellation of ration cards without notice to the family concerned.
4. **Biometric authentication failures** are but expected of a large scale and technology-intensive project such as the UID.

5. Despite being designed to store finger and iris scans of most users, doubts about the success rates of authentication and the **generation of “false negatives”** have always persisted, more so for labourers and tribal people.
6. Those engaged in manual and hard labour, for example, are susceptible to fingerprint changes over time.
7. In practice, beneficiaries have tended to use Aadhaar cards as identity markers but there have been instances of people losing cards and being denied benefits.

### **Why the Aadhaar-PDS link?**

Though the Supreme Court has said Aadhaar linkage is voluntary, at the village and panchayat levels, little appears to have changed.

For a person who gets foodgrains through the PDS, it is mandatory for him or her to follow the **Aadhaar-Based Biometric Authentication (ABBA) system** that is the practice of using an **electric point of sale (PoS) machine** for each transaction.

For implementing the ABBA system, it is necessary to have Aadhaar seeding, which is to get one's Aadhaar number linked to the ration card.

### **What are the hurdles?**

1. To get benefits under the PDS, **biometric authorisation is required** and this calls for **technological necessities** which villages lack: uninterrupted power supply, a functioning PoS machine, adequate mobile and Internet connectivity and ensuring that data repository servers are running smoothly.
2. So, every time a person has to get **rations from a PDS shop**, he/she has to pray that all these variables work.
3. **With benefits under the PDS, the NREGA and LPG subsidy**, among other essentials, requiring individuals to have the Aadhaar number, inefficiencies and failures have led to inconvenience and suffering for the poor.
4. There are reports that show **failures in authentication** having led to delays in the disbursement of benefits and, in many cases, in their denial due to cancellation of legitimate beneficiary names.
5. The government had promised that exemption mechanisms that would allow for **overriding such failures** will help beneficiaries still avail subsidies and benefits despite system failures.

The **Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSPs)** of Indian Constitution mandates government to provide various kinds of welfare measures to the people.

These initiatives like old age pension, scholarships, food supply at cheap prices suffered from issues of leakages in absence of proper universal identification tool.

### Conclusion:

Given the scale of the problem, the central and State governments would do well to allow alternative identification so that genuine beneficiaries are not denied due subsidies.

**Right to food**, which the ration card symbolised, cannot be curbed or cancelled because of lack of Aadhaar.

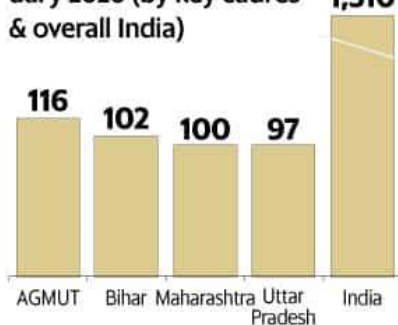
The question of fraud can still be addressed by the use of other verification cards and by decentralised disbursal of services at the panchayat level.

### 7. 'Lateral entry' into bureaucracy: reason, process, and controversy

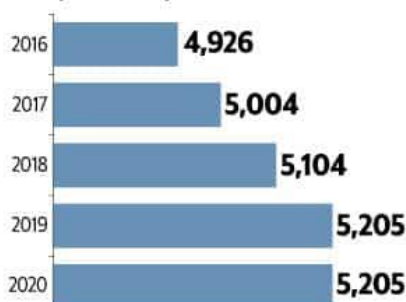
#### Bridge too short

Vacancies in the Indian Administrative Service have risen, as hiring of officers dipped post liberalization.

IAS posts vacant as of January 2020 (by key cadres & overall India)



IAS officers working in India in the past five years



Source: Department of Personnel and Training, Govt of India

### Context:

Recently, the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) issued an advertisement seeking applications “from **talented and motivated** Indian nationals willing to contribute towards **nation building**” for three posts of **Joint Secretary** and 27 of **Director** in central government Departments.

These individuals, who would make a “**lateral entry**” into the government secretariat, would be contracted for three to five years.

These posts were “unreserved”, meaning were no quotas for SCs, STs and OBCs.

### **What is ‘lateral entry’ into government?**

**NITI Aayog**, in its **three-year Action Agenda**, and the Sectoral Group of Secretaries (SGoS) on Governance in its report submitted in February 2017, recommended the induction of personnel at middle and senior management levels in the central government.

These ‘lateral entrants’ would be part of the central secretariat which in the normal course has only career bureaucrats from the All India Services/ Central Civil Services.

### **What is the government’s reasoning for lateral entry?**

Minister of State for DoPT told Rajya Sabha that “Government has, from time to time, appointed some prominent persons for **specific assignments** in government, keeping in view their **specialised knowledge and expertise** in the **domain area**”.

They mentioned that “Lateral recruitment is aimed at achieving the twin objectives of bringing in fresh talent as well as augment the availability of manpower.”

### **Living up to the demands of modern bureaucracy:**

1. A **high degree of professionalism** ought to be the dominant characteristic of a modern bureaucracy. The fatal failing of the Indian bureaucracy has been its low level of professional competence.
2. The IAS officer spends more than half of his tenure on policy desks where domain knowledge is a vital prerequisite.
3. However, in the present environment, there is **no incentive** for a young civil servant to acquire knowledge or to improve their skills.
4. According to some experts, As years pass by, there is thus an exponential growth in both his ignorance and arrogance.
5. The most important being cut-throat competition that exists in the IAS for important positions, both at the state and central levels.
6. Due to the control that the IAS lobby exerts on the system, a large number of redundant posts in the super-time and superior scales have been created to ensure them quick promotions.

7. Often a senior post has been split, thus **diluting and diminishing the scale of responsibilities** attached with the post.

### **Benefits related to lateral entry in civil services:**

1. There is huge shortfall of IAS cadre officers in state cadres. **The Baswan Committee (2016)** pointed out how large states such as Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan have a deficit of 75 to over 100 officers and their unwillingness to sponsor officers to go to the Centre on deputation is understandable.
2. Outside talent from the private sector is more likely to be **target-oriented**, which will improve the performance of the government.
3. More competition will encourage career civil servants to **develop expertise in areas of their choice.**
4. Lateral entry **infuse fresh energy and thinking** into an insular, complacent and often archaic bureaucracy.
5. It enables the **entry of right-minded professionals** and the adoption of best practices for **improving governance.**

### **Concerns: Why is lateral entry sometimes criticised?**

1. **Groups representing SCs, STs and OBCs have protested the fact that there is no reservation in these appointments.**
2. The present system of 'frequent and arbitrary transfers' hinder gaining of the relevant experience by incumbent officers. Thus, it is unfair to brand incumbents as '**generalists**'.
3. If given a fair chance, the incumbents too, can emulate private sector expertise.
4. **Private sector approach** is **profit oriented** on the other hand motive of Government is public service. This is also a fundamental transition that a private sector person has to make while working in government.
5. Lateral entry at **only at top level policy making positions** may have little impact on field level implementation, given the **multiple links** in the chain of command from the Union Government to a rural village.
6. Many activists believe that the lateral entry will **disband the reservation policy** since the government does not offer a quota in contractual appointments.
7. Lateral entrants with the **right 'connections'** may join just to enjoy the perks and privileges **by cherry-picking the post.**

8. The motive of lateral entrants might be to **just enhance their CV.**
9. The lateral entrants may **join permanently or temporarily** to simply **promote vested interests** of their organization/field.
10. **Civil service reforms** will **curtail the inordinate control** that the political masters have at present. To succeed, other reforms (besides lateral entry) are needed.

A **good managerial system** encourages and nurtures talent from within instead of seeking to induct leadership from outside.

A **credible statutory agency** like the Union Public Service Commission or an autonomous agency like the Bank Board Bureau, established to hire heads of public-sector banks, should be **entrusted with the responsibility of recruitment.**

### Conclusion:

An **intensive training program** for entrants from the private sector to civil services need to be formulated which help them understanding the **complex nature of work in Government.**

There should be **open competition for the Lateral entry** with due transparent process including **all necessary checks and balances** to ensure persons with **integrity and political neutrality** enters the government service.

After all, the structure that we have inherited is largely a colonial structure which regrettably, hasn't undergone many changes even after 70 years of Independence.

Thus, this '**revolving-door**' which is there in some countries can be adopted by us as long as we keep an open mind, and see how it functions. But the key again to the success of this scheme would lie in **selecting the right people in a manner which is manifestly transparent.**

### **8.Rajya Sabha Approves Bill Giving Primacy to Delhi LG**

## Centre vs Delhi govt again

WHAT THE BILL PROPOSES	DELHI GOVT'S RESERVATIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The term "Government" in any law by the legislative assembly will mean "Lieutenant Governor"</li> <li>• The assembly shall not make rules or committees to consider day-to-day administration or conduct inquiries</li> <li>• Rule or committee made before the new amendment comes into force "shall be void"</li> <li>• Before taking any executive action, opinion of the L-G shall be obtained by a general or special order</li> <li>• L-G shall have power to reserve for consideration any bill, and any of the matters outside the purview of the powers conferred on the legislative assembly</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Article 239AA says legislature can make laws on any matters on state and concurrent list except for issues relating to public order, police and land.</li> <li>• SC's Constitution bench in 2018 recognised assembly's right, and said Union has exclusive powers only in the above 3 issues.</li> <li>• SC said L-G should work with aid and advice of council of ministers</li> <li>• SC order clarified that L-G has not been entrusted with any independent decision-making power</li> <li>• While any matter of dispute can be sent to President, the SC said it does not mean every matter should be</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Bill will define responsibilities in line with the constitutional scheme of governance of national Capital, as interpreted by SC</b> — AMIT SHAH, UNION HOME MINISTER</p>	 <p><b>After being rejected by people of Delhi, BJP seeks to drastically curtail powers of elected govt. Bill is dilution of SC judgment.</b> — ARVIND KEJRIWAL, CM</p>

### Context:

Parliament approved a Bill giving **primacy to Delhi's Lieutenant Governor (LG) over the elected government**, with the Rajya Sabha passing it amidst an uproar from some opposition parties and some others walking out of the house.

The bill gives **greater powers to the Lieutenant Governor (LG)** to a certain extent while ensuring more accountability of the Delhi Legislative Assembly, however, within the constitutional framework.

According to the central government, the bill **seeks to amend the law relating to the running of the National Capital Territory of Delhi** and give effect to the interpretation given by the Supreme Court judgments on **Delhi's governance structure**.

### **Concise of Parliamentary democracy:**

Parliamentary democracy, with a **cabinet form of government**, **is part of the basic structure of the Indian Constitution**. Its first article reads, "India that is Bharat shall be a Union of States."

When the Constitution came into force, there were **four kinds of States**, called **Parts A, B, C and D States**, with the last two being administered by centrally appointed Chief Commissioners and Lieutenant Governors, with no locally elected Assemblies to aid and advise them.

The Constitution has mandated a **federal balance** wherein independence of a certain required degree is assured to the State Governments.

As opposed to centralism, a **balanced federal structure** mandates that the Union does not usurp all powers and the States enjoy freedom without any unsolicited interference from the Central Government with respect to matters which exclusively fall within their domain.

### **Amendment to the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi Act, 1991:**

The Ministry of Home Affairs' statement on "**objects and reasons**" of the Bill stated that **Section 44 of the 1991 Act** deals with conduct of business and there is no structural mechanism for effective time-bound implementation of the said section.

Also, there is no clarity as to what proposal or matters are required to be submitted to Lieutenant Governor before issuing order thereon.

Section 44 of the 1991 Act says that all executive actions of the LG, whether taken on the advice of his Ministers or otherwise shall be expressed to be taken in the name of the LG.

### **Major Highlights of the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Bill, 2021, Soon to Be A Law:**

The passage of the Bill will mean that the Delhi government will now have to seek the **opinion of the LG before taking any executive action**.

The Centre has maintained that the Bill is in line with the Supreme Court's July 2018 ruling on the ambit of powers of the LG and the Delhi government after a series of run-ins between the two.

1. Firstly, the **bill redefines Government as the LG for Delhi** and it would apply to any law made by the Legislature in Delhi.
2. Two, through **Section 3 of the bill passed**, there will be an **extension to the powers of LG by adding a new clause to Section 24 of the 1991 act** which deals with the **assent to the bills**.
3. Within this section, the additional clause via the amendment will ensure that it now covers any matters that fall outside the purview of the powers conferred on the Legislative Assembly.
4. The new bill also makes an amendment to Section 33 of the 1991 act which **dealt with the rules of procedure**.
5. The act of 1991, in Section 33, says that the Legislative Assembly may make rules for regulating, subject to provisions of this act, its procedure, and its conduct of the business.
6. However, the amendment shall add 'which shall not be inconsistent with the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in House of People' at the end of conduct of the business.

7. **Against 'provided that' in the 1991 act**, the amendment will add a clause to Section 33 to extend the meaning.
8. Now, the legislative assembly will not make any rule to enable itself or its committee to consider matters of the day-to-day administration of Delhi or conduct inquiries in relation to the administration of Delhi. Also, most importantly, the provisions are sought to be made retrospective, thus voiding all such existing committees.
9. Through Section 5 of the amendment, an additional clause will be added to Section 44 of the 1991 act that deals with the **conduct of business**.
10. The additional clause makes it **compulsory for the government to obtain the opinion of the LG** on all matters before any executive action can be taken, ensuring accountability.
11. This also ends the ambiguity that persisted when it came **to time-bound implementation of the laws** and the confusion surrounding matters where LG consultation was necessary.

#### **Concerns related to the passed bill:**

1. Many constitutional experts are of the view that the proposed bill is the very antithesis of what the Court has said.
2. They held that the Bill, if it becomes law, will wholly undermine the Court's efforts to strengthen the elected government vis-à-vis the appointed Lieutenant Governor.
3. By conflating the government of Delhi with L-G, the **bill blurs the distinction between the elected government and L-G**.
4. Further, by **requiring L-G's opinion** before the elected government can take executive action, it **effectively renders the elected government powerless**.
5. Moreover, the clause that declares void any rule that empowers the Assembly or its Committees to discuss any matter of day-to-day administration or conduct enquiries amounts to a rollback of representative government.
6. The bill contradicts the 2018 judgment, which unambiguously clarifies that the council of ministers with the chief minister at its helm is the executive head of the government of Delhi.

#### **Points raised by other members of Parliament:**

1. The Bill effectively reduces the elected government to a mere vestigial organ and elevates the centrally appointed LG, to the **position of a Viceroy with plenipotentiary powers**.
2. Simply put, the elected government in Delhi can do nothing, if the LG does not permit them **to so do**.

3. It further provides that before taking any executive action in pursuance of the decision of the Council of Ministers or a Minister, to exercise powers of Government, under any law in force in the Capital, the opinion of Lieutenant Governor shall be obtained on all such matters as may be specified, by a general or special order, by Lieutenant Governor.
4. The population of Delhi which counts among the **highest in the world**, will have an **unrepresentative administration**.
5. It will be **ruled by an appointed LG**, who can only be changed if the rest of the country, decides to change the Central government.
6. There can be no recourse to the ballot box to hold to account an unelected, centrally appointed government functionary.
7. It is quite likely that the amendment act will end up being challenged in the constitutional courts.
8. Opposition parties also termed the **Bill as “unconstitutional”** and claimed that it will fail judicial scrutiny. They demanded that it be **examined by a Select Committee**.

### Conclusion:

Parliament envisaged a **representative form of Government for the NCT of Delhi**.

The said provision intends to provide for the Capital a **directly elected Legislative Assembly** which shall have legislative powers over matters falling within the State List and the Concurrent List, barring those excepted, and a mandate upon the Lieutenant Governor to act on the **aid and advice of the Council of Ministers** except when he decides to refer the matter to the President for final decision.

The Supreme Court has already cautioned **Interpretation cannot ignore the conscience of the Constitution**.

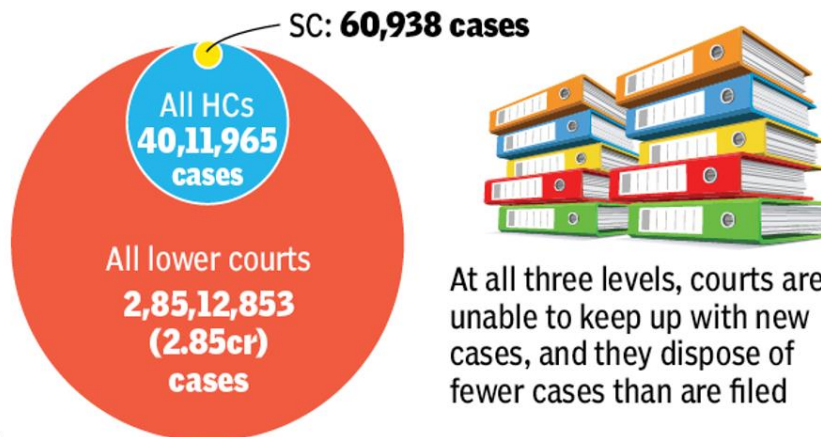
That apart, when we take a broader view, we are also alive to the consequence of such an interpretation.

If the expressions in case of difference and on any matter are construed to mean that the Lieutenant Governor can differ on any proposal, the expectation of the people which has its **legitimacy in a democratic set-up**, although different from States as understood under the Constitution, will lose its purpose in simple semantics.

### **9.The case that time forgot**

# THE STATE OF PENDING CASES

## PENDENCY IN INDIA



### Context:

Vishnu Tiwari, 43, was recently acquitted by the Allahabad High Court in a rape case after spending 20 years in prison. His story is illustrative of the tragic consequences that can follow from cases falling through the cracks of a bloated legal system.

Mr. Tiwari's appeal before the Allahabad High Court was pending for 16 years as a defective matter.

These defects are usually in the nature of missing documents or documents in the wrong format and are remedied by the lawyer, and the case gets listed.

### Present criminal justice system: A poorly designed system:

1. An effective justice system should not depend on a few individuals' goodness and should be robust enough to ensure justice for everyone, irrespective of the individual in charge.
2. Many of the hiccups in Mr. Tiwari's case do not reflect deliberate malice but result from poor design and the absence of an integrated digital platform for the criminal justice system. This poor design can have enervating effects on individual freedom.
3. While digitisation has transformed the delivery of certain public services like passports, the criminal justice system is still beset with archaic procedures and paper-based processes.
4. Although the **e-Courts project** has made significant progress in digitising the works of courts, there remain substantial lacunae. These are especially glaring in the criminal justice system.

### Sharing information seamlessly:

1. Criminal cases involve **various institutions** such as the police, prosecutors, legal services authorities and forensic labs.
2. **Coordination and communication** between these institutions are far from seamless.
3. A criminal case's smooth movement involves **several 'rubbing points'** where progress depends on one institution securing information from another.
4. For example,
  - a. the prosecutor needs to get the FIR from the police;
  - b. The police have to submit the FIR and charge sheet to the court;
  - c. The forensic labs need to submit reports to the prosecutors and the courts; etc.
5. Allowing these **various elements of the system to 'talk' to each other** through a **digital platform** that standardises the format and content of data across all the systems will allow for **seamless communication** and will help avoid duplication of data entry and analyses.
6. Such a system would have alerted the registry that defects in a particular appeal had been left unrectified for an extended period and would have alerted the accused person in prison that his lawyer was not pursuing his case diligently.
7. Simultaneously, **the legal services authority** would have been informed of the case so that the lawyer could have been replaced.
8. The digital platform would have been able to monitor the quality of representation of the lawyer provided by the legal services authority.
9. The documents from the lower court would have been **transmitted electronically** to the accused person's lawyer and the High Court eliminating the endless wait for the 'paperbook'.

#### **Pendency of cases across all types of courts in India:**

1. There's **no singular state of pendency across India**. When we talk of the state of pending court cases in India, different states have vastly different realities.
2. The performance of courts across the country vary hugely, both in terms of geography as well as the level of the judiciary.
3. **Nearly 87.5% of all pending cases in India come from our lower courts which are the district and subordinate courts.**
4. These courts dispose of more than half the new cases filed (56%) within a year, which looks good on paper.

5. However, such a result is mostly achieved by either dismissing cases without trial (21%), transferring them to another court (10%) or simply settling the case outside of the court (19%).

#### **Delay in Judgments: Poor judge-population ratio:**

1. The judge-population ratio provides one of the **most important yardsticks to measure the health of the legal system.**
2. The U.S. has about 100 judges per million population. Canada has about 75 and the U.K. has about 50.
3. India, on the other hand, has only 19 judges per million population. Of these, at any given point, at least one-fourth is always vacant.
4. Lower courts where the common man first comes into contact (or at least should) with the justice delivery system is also unnoticed and hardly any attention is focused on their gaping inadequacy.
5. These **inadequacies** are far more important to the common man than the issues relating to the apex court that are frequently highlighted in the public space.
6. In **All India Judges Association v. Union of India (2001)**, the Supreme Court had directed the Government of India to increase the judge-population ratio to at least 50 per million population within five years from the date of the judgment. This has not been implemented.

#### **Way Forward:**

**Provision of law and order and justice** is the ultimate public good which a state is expected to provide for.

If there's one aspect of state capacity which impacts the delivery of almost every other public good, it is law and order and justice.

It has profound repercussions for practically everything that's done in society by its people and it forms a fundamental part of the social contract between the citizen and a state as well.

#### **Conclusion:**

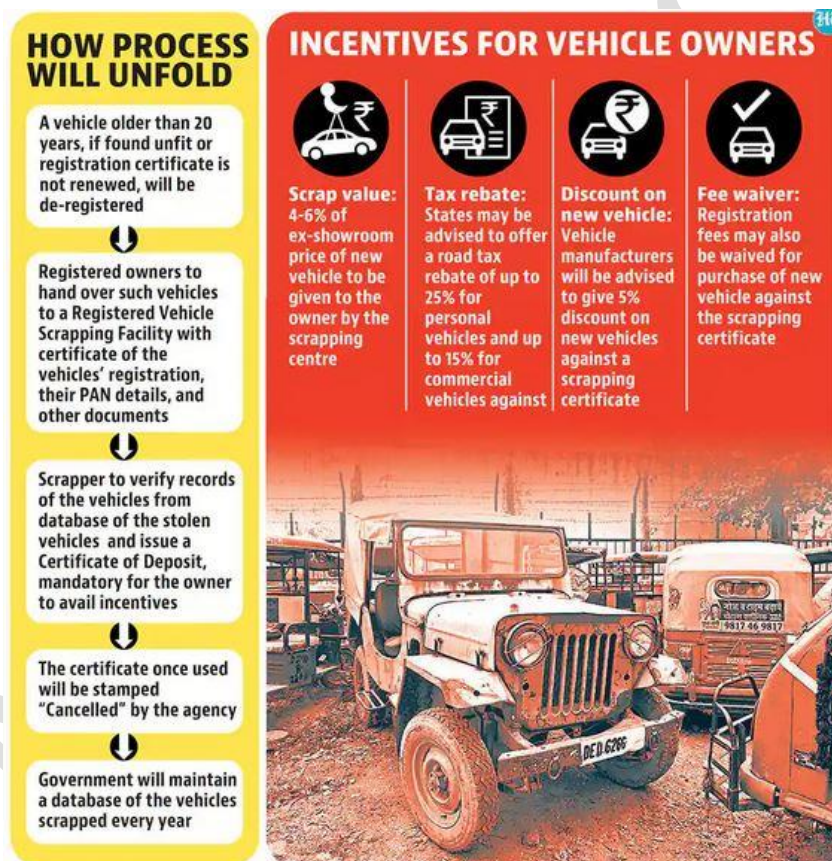
Although the **Interoperable Criminal Justice System** is on the anvil to integrate the information systems of the various institutions in the criminal justice system, it is far from being fully implemented.

A critical factor holding back implementation is that these institutions have already created their own information systems that work in silos and are not interoperable.

Priority must be given to speeding up the implementation of such a system that provides **transparent, real-time access to criminal justice information to all stakeholders, including accused persons.**

From the functioning of businesses and enterprises to the protection of fundamental rights, most of them boil down to the state having the capacity to **enforce the law and provide for timely access to justice for its citizens via a judicial mechanism of recourse.** India can and must do better on this front.

### **10.Junk inefficiency: On vehicle scrappage policy**



#### **Context:**

1. India finally got its **formal vehicle scrappage policy** well, somewhat. The point is that now that it is here, lots of people from different sections of the industry have opinions and takes on India's vehicle scrappage policy.

2. The much-awaited **vehicle scrappage policy** announced by the Transport Ministry, coming after the move for a **green tax on ageing and polluting automobiles**, promises economic benefits, a cleaner environment and thousands of jobs.
3. Although it will take until April 1, 2022 for vehicles belonging to the government and the public sector to be scrapped, another year thereafter to identify junk heavy commercial vehicles through mandatory fitness checks, and **finally other vehicles by 2024**, it is a **constructive road map**.
4. It will be no easy task, however, to put in place a **credible system of automated fitness checking centres** with help from States to assess whether commercial and private vehicles are roadworthy after 15 and 20 years, respectively, as the policy envisages.
5. So far, it seemed pretty much everyone was largely satisfied with how the policy was shaping out to be, but it turns out there's at least one section that isn't entirely keen on it.

#### **Need for introduction of vehicle scrappage policy:**

1. Enforcement will be key to get them scrapped once they are found unfit for use and to stop them from moving to smaller towns.
2. States must also come on board **to provide road tax and registration concessions**, while the automobile industry is expected to sweeten the deal with genuine discounts on new vehicles.
3. Transport Minister, who has had **limited success** with enforcement of the **amended Motor Vehicles Act of 2019** because States are not entirely on board, has the difficult task of **ensuring that the scrappage plan gets their support, and the backing of manufacturers who stand to benefit from a spurt in demand**.
4. **Heavy commercial vehicles**, which contribute **disproportionately to pollution 1.7 million lack fitness certificates pose the biggest challenge**.
5. Many of these cannot be replaced quickly in the absence of financial arrangements for small operators, who have opposed the new measures.

#### **Need for boosting automobile production in the country:**

1. The industry's share pre-COVID-19 was about 7.5% of GDP with significant downstream employment, but it also **imposes a fuel import burden**.
2. The Centre has to arrive at a balance and have incentives that reward manufacturers of vehicles that are the most fuel-efficient.

3. **Failure to prioritise fuel efficiency** and mandate even higher standards and enhance taxes on fuel guzzlers will only repeat the mistakes of vehicle exchange programmes abroad, where full environmental benefits could not be realised, and taxpayers ended up subsidising inefficiency.
4. According to **CARE Ratings**, the policy expected to be a '**win-win**' for all as it helps **reduce India's oil import bill** by improving fuel efficiency, reduce environmental pollution and improve road and vehicular safety by getting rid of old and defective vehicles, boost the availability of low-cost raw materials like plastic, steel, aluminium, steel, rubber, electronics, etc.

#### **Concerns so far analysed from vehicle scrappage policy:**

1. The **country's trucking industry** is, in fact, opposed to the policy, saying it will exert exceptional strain on the trucking industry. An IANS report notes industry experts believe the new policy will cause a lot of truck driver-owners to go out of business.
2. The scrappage industry may **provide incentives for scrapping older vehicle** (like recovery of scrap, steel etc.). The government is not a direct beneficiary except the environmental cost. **Thus, providing incentives from public money might not be feasible.**
3. In rural areas, old vehicles are being used as the owners have **very limited financial resources** to purchase new vehicles.
4. Scrapping capacity of India is in doubt. India so far has only one government-authorized scrappage workshop in Greater Noida.
5. Also, the government do **not have any standard operating procedures (SOP)** for setting up of vehicle scrapping centres.
6. Formulating a policy without having the capacity will lead to accumulation of old vehicles like solid wastes.
7. **Regulation of pollutants** released during scrapping. The scrapping of Vehicle will release toxic metals like mercury, lead, cadmium or hexavalent chromium.
8. If not properly regulated, it will pollute the environment and have long-lasting consequences.

#### **Way Forward:**

The Scrappage policy has the potential to meet the government-**set target of 30-40 percent electrification of the vehicle fleet by 2030.**

But it can be sustainable only when the government provide adequate support to Electric Vehicles such as by creating the necessary infrastructure for charging, manufacturing battery packs etc.

The scrappage scheme should **incentivise replacement of old vehicles with EVs**. On the other hand, the government should also frame a policy to reduce the purchasing of traditional petroleum-powered vehicles.

In the Electric Vehicle Policy of the Delhi government, they **linked scrappage incentives with buying of electric vehicles**. Such a special linkage of policy is necessary at the national level to promote the electric vehicle.

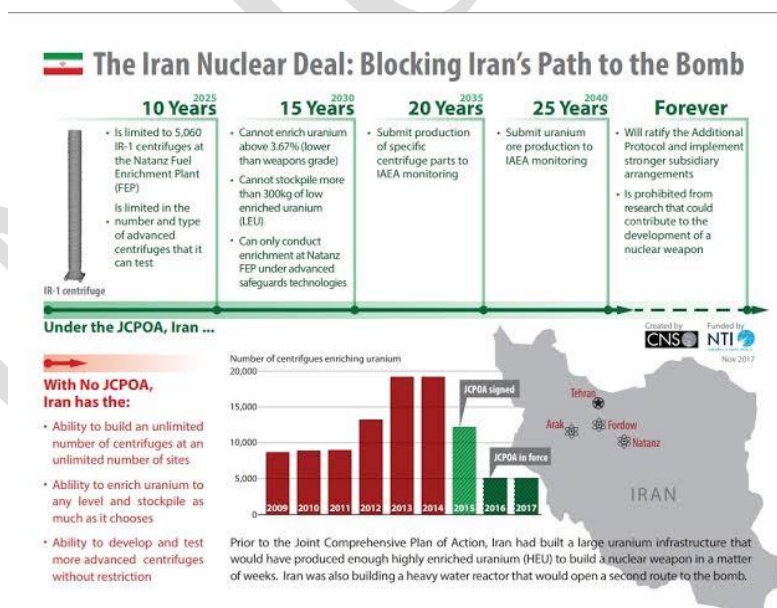
### Conclusion:

**Ecological scrapping**, as a concept, must lead to high rates of materials recovery, reduce air pollution, mining and pressure on the environment.

**Vehicle scrappage and replacement** is seen internationally as a route to rejuvenate COVID-19-affected economies by privileging green technologies, notably electric vehicles (EVs).

It is also can be seen as an initiative **to achieve net zero emissions** by mid-century under **Paris Agreement commitments**. India's automobile ecosystem is complex, with dominant, legacy motors spanning fossil-fuel driven vehicles and a nascent EV segment.

## 11. IAEA | The 'imperfect' fight against proliferation



**Context: Revive the Iran nuclear deal:**

The move by the Joe Biden administration of the U.S. **to revive the Iran nuclear deal** has once again turned the spotlight on **the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)**, which played a key role in enforcing the original nuclear deal from which Donald Trump withdrew the U.S. in 2018.

Recently, the IAEA and Iranian diplomats **struck a “temporary” deal** to continue inspection of **Iran’s nuclear plants** for three more months, which keeps at least the diplomatic path to revive the deal open.

**IAEA role in Iran Nuclear Deal:**

The **2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)**, or the Iran nuclear deal, proved that the IAEA can emerge beyond its mandate of being a **monitoring and inspection agency** and, in fact, play a **key role in finding solutions** to tense international crises.

As the preeminent **nuclear watchdog** under the UN, the IAEA is entrusted with the task of **upholding the principles of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty of 1970.**

Established as an **autonomous organisation** on July 29, 1957, at the height of the Cold War between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, the IAEA claims that it “works with its member states and multiple partners worldwide **to promote the safe, secure and peaceful use of nuclear technologies**”.

Though established independently of the UN through its own international treaty, the **agency reports to both the UN General Assembly and the Security Council.**

**Civil nuclear solutions in other field areas:**

Apart from dealing with the sovereign states and their **pursuit of civil and military nuclear programmes**, the IAEA is also active in **championing civil nuclear solution** to a **number of areas** like **health**, which is one of the main areas of peaceful application of nuclear know how.

That apart, in recent years, the IAEA is also active in **dealing with climate change, pandemic containment and in prevention of Zoonotic diseases.**

**Iran Nuclear Deal:**

1. In 2015, **Iran with the P5+1 group** of world powers - the USA, UK, France, China, Russia, and Germany agreed on a long-term deal on its nuclear programme.
2. The deal was named as **Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)** and in common parlance as Iran Nuclear Deal.

3. Under the deal, Iran agreed to **curb its nuclear activity** in return for the lifting of sanctions and access to global trade.
4. The agreement allowed Iran to accumulate small amounts of uranium for research but it banned the enrichment of uranium, which is used to make reactor fuel and nuclear weapons.
5. Iran was also required to redesign a heavy-water reactor being built, whose spent fuel could contain plutonium suitable for a bomb and to allow international inspections.

#### **About International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA):**

1. IAEA's origins can be traced back to an address of the former US President **Dwight Eisenhower** to the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1953.
2. The address was **known as 'Atoms for Peace'** and this was the organisation's first name when it was formally established in 1957. Headquartered in Vienna, Austria, the IAEA is a UN agency.
3. The primary mandate of the organisation was and continues to be promoting **safe, secure and peaceful nuclear technologies**. India became a member in 1957 itself.
4. By **ensuring the peaceful usage** of nuclear technologies, the IAEA contributes to peace and security in the world and also towards achieving **the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**.
5. The **IAEA**, along with its former Director-General **Mohamed ElBaradei**, was awarded the **Nobel Peace Prize in 2005**.
6. Currently, it has 171 members. The latest member is **Saint Lucia** which joined the IAEA in 2019.

#### **Criticism related to the working of IAEA:**

1. There have always been questions about the Agency's ability to work independently, without being drawn into big power rivalries.
2. What the IAEA missed **in terms of real authority** over sovereign states, it compensated for that by cultivating some tall leadership whose actions kept the issue of non-proliferation on the multilateral table.
3. Both Mohamed El Baradei (1997-2009) and Yukiya Amano (2009-19) were vocal at difficult moments.
4. Under pressure from the George W. Bush administration to back the American claim that the Saddam Hussein regime of Iraq was pursuing nuclear weapons.

5. Former Director General Mr. El Baradei maintained that he would not rush into a judgment on this matter **without incontrovertible evidence** that could prove that Hussein had committed a gross violation of non-proliferation.
6. History proved that his cautious approach was right as the **invasion of Iraq failed to yield the necessary proof** of Hussein's pursuit of nuclear weapons.
7. While the agency **played a key role** in providing the platform for **holding frank discussion** about civil nuclear requirement for several countries, it proved to be ineffective to prevent power politics from influencing nuclear negotiations.
8. This was particularly visible when Pakistan pursued a nuclear weapons programme in the 1980s and despite **overwhelming evidence** in possession of the American authorities, they did **not pursue the case effectively** through the IAEA because of the cooperation between the U.S. and Pakistan on the Afghan front.
9. Defenders of the Agency would say the lack of executive authority has not been a real issue as the IAEA was originally set up as a monitoring organ.
10. Richard Barlow, who was in charge of the CIA's non-proliferation programme that tracked Pakistan's nuclear programme, says that having the IAEA is an "imperfect system but it's better than nothing".
11. The IAEA was the first to announce that the North Korean nuclear programme was not peaceful.
12. North Korea finally expelled IAEA observers and as a result, there are no on-the-ground international inspectors in North Korea.
13. The world is reliant on ground sensors and satellite imageries to observe North Korea's nuclear actions.

#### **Iran became a challenge for IAEA:**

The coming weeks will, however, test the 63-year old organisation as Iran remains suspicious of the exact intentions of the U.S. under the Biden administration.

The current episode, which **involves regional political concerns** like Saudi-Iran and Iran-Israel rivalries as well as the American interests in the region, will certainly test the leadership of Rafael Mariano Grossi, the current Director General of the IAEA.

It will also test the **ability of the IAEA to deal with powerful states from its position of "uneven authority"**.

**Conclusion:**

There were controversies in the **case of inspection of Iranian nuclear installations** when Iran's then Intelligence Minister had accused the IAEA of sending intelligence operatives who engaged in espionage against the interest of the Islamic Republic.

The 2010 allegation also hinted that IAEA inspectors and observers had shared information with the U.S. government.

The issues involved between Iran and the U.S. indicate that they are not part of the mandate of the IAEA.

Iran also **requires assurance** that once activated, the deal will not be abandoned in future by an American President in the way that President Trump had done in 2018. Tying all the loose ends of this difficult negotiation will be the biggest challenge for all parties.

**12. Quad leaders: Committed to free, open, secure and prosperous Indo-Pacific region****Context:**

Leaders of the four-nation QUAD have reaffirmed that they are striving to ensure that the Indo-Pacific is **accessible, dynamic and governed by international law** and bedrock principles such as **freedom of navigation and peaceful resolution of disputes, and free from coercion**, sending a clear message to China which is flexing its muscles in the region and beyond.

Quad leaders asserted that all countries should be able to make their own political choices, free from coercion.

They said the governments of **India, Japan, US and Australia** have worked closely for years, for the first time in “Quad” history, they convened as leaders to advance meaningful cooperation at the highest level.

#### **About QUAD grouping:**

1. It is a four-nation alliance of India, Australia, USA and Japan which was established in 2007. It is often dubbed as an **"Asian" or "mini" NATO**, and is viewed as a counterbalance to China's military and economic clout in the Indo-Pacific region.
2. The QUAD, which used to be known as the quadrilateral security dialogue, is now known as the quadrilateral framework to indicate it has gone beyond a narrow security dialogue.
3. Quad is an opportunity for like-minded countries to share notes and collaborate on projects of mutual interest.
4. Members share a vision of an **open and free Indo-Pacific**. Each is involved in development and economic projects as well as in promoting maritime domain awareness and maritime security
5. In 2020, all four QUAD Countries - Japan, India, Australia and the USA took part in the Malabar exercise.
6. **Malabar exercise** is an annual trilateral naval exercise between the navies of India, Japan, and the USA which is held alternately in the Indian and Pacific Oceans.

#### **Aim of QUAD: To ensure that the Indo-Pacific is peace, accessible and dynamic:**

1. The virtual Quad summit took place as China and India are involved in a military standoff along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh since May last year.
2. China is also engaged in hotly contested **territorial disputes** in both the South China Sea and the East China Sea. In the East China Sea, Japan has maritime disputes with China.
3. Australia, India, Japan and the US “a group of democratic nations dedicated to delivering results through practical cooperation” coordinated rapid humanitarian assistance and disaster relief to people in need, they wrote.
4. Now, in this new age of **interconnection and opportunity** throughout the Indo-Pacific, we are again summoned to act together in support of a region in need.

5. Since the tsunami, climate change has grown more perilous, new technologies have revolutionised our daily lives, geopolitics have become ever more complex, and a pandemic has devastated the world.
6. “Against this backdrop, we are recommitting to a shared vision for an Indo-Pacific region that is free, open, resilient and inclusive.
7. We are striving to ensure that the Indo-Pacific is accessible and dynamic, governed by international law and bedrock principles such as freedom of navigation and peaceful resolution of disputes, and that all countries are able to make their own political choices, free from coercion,” they wrote.
8. The four leaders asserted that in recent years, that vision has increasingly been tested and those trials have only strengthened their resolve to reckon with the most urgent of global challenges together.
9. It is clear that **climate change** is both a **strategic priority** and an **urgent global challenge**, including for the Indo-Pacific region.
10. That’s why we will work together and with others **to strengthen the Paris agreement**, and enhance the climate actions of all nations.

#### **Billion coronavirus vaccine doses exports by India by 2022:**

1. On their commitment to fight against the coronavirus pandemic, they said, it is among the **greatest risks to health and economic stability** in recent history, and the QUAD nations must work in partnership to stop it in its tracks.
2. With an **unwavering commitment** to the **health and safety** of our people, we are determined to end the COVID-19 pandemic because no country will be safe so long as the pandemic continues.
3. QUAD countries launched an ambitious effort to help end COVID-19. Together, we pledge to expand and accelerate production in India of **safe, accessible and effective vaccines**.
4. They will partner at each stage to ensure that vaccines are administered throughout the Indo-Pacific region into 2022.
5. The Quad finalised a landmark initiative under which **huge investments** will be made in India to **create additional production capacities** to roll out a **billion coronavirus vaccine doses by 2022** for **exports to the Indo-Pacific region**, seen as a significant step to counter China’s expanding vaccine diplomacy.

6. We will combine our scientific ingenuity, financing, formidable productive capacity and long history of global-health partnership to surge the supply of life-saving vaccines, in close collaboration with multilateral organizations including the WHO and COVAX Facility.

### Conclusion:



The Quad leaders in the summit vowed to strive for a “free, open and inclusive” region unconstrained by “coercion”.

Emphasising that the Quad nations foundations of democracy and a commitment to engagement unite them, the four leaders concluded saying, “We know we can provide for the **safety and prosperity** of our people at home by confronting global crises together, with purpose and resolve.

To strengthen their quest for a region that is open and free, QUAD leaders have agreed to partner to address the challenges presented by new technologies and collaborate to set the norms and standards that govern the innovations of the future.

We summon from tragedy the strength and resilience to unify and overcome. And we recommit ourselves, once again, to an Indo-Pacific region that is free, open, secure and prosperous.”

### 13.Remove the wedges in India-Bangladesh ties



## MoUs between India-Bangladesh

- MoU in the Field of Disaster Management, Resilience and Mitigation
  - MoU between Bangladesh National Cadet Corps, People's Republic of Bangladesh and National Cadet Corps, Republic of India
- MoU for the Supply of ICT Equipment, Courseware & Reference Books and Training for Bangladesh-Bharat Digital Service and Employment Training Centre.
  - MoU for Establishment of Sports Facilities at Rajshahi College Field and Surrounding Areas
- MoU on the establishment of a framework cooperation in the area of trade remedial measures

### Context:

The friendship between India and Bangladesh is **historic**, evolving over the last 50 years.

**India's political, diplomatic, military and humanitarian support** during Bangladesh's Liberation War played an important role towards Bangladesh's independence.

Nearly 3,900 Indian soldiers gave up their lives and an estimated 10 million Bangladeshi refugees took shelter in India.

### **25-year treaty of friendship and cooperation between India and Bangladesh:**

Fifty years ago, PM Indira Gandhi and PM Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, through signing a **25-year treaty of friendship and cooperation** between their two countries, solidified the links that India and Bangladesh had forged in the course of the **Bangladesh War of Liberation in 1971**.

Half a century on, as PM Narendra Modi **arrives in Dhaka** to be **part of the golden jubilee celebrations of Bangladesh's independence**, it is the enduring nature of the ties between the two nations that takes centre stage.

Added to that are **two complementary realities**, namely, **the 50th year of close ties between the two neighbours and the centenary of the birth of Bangladesh's founding father Sheikh Mujibur Rahman**.

### **India-Bangladesh ties: A warm friendship despite turbulence:**

India and its neighbouring country Bangladesh have a history forged in the battlefield.

The two countries **share a border, dozens of rivers and most importantly, a common culture**. The two countries share a **4096-kilometre border and 54 rivers**.

The key role played by India in the birth of Bangladesh cannot be overlooked and since then, despite roadblocks, the two countries have maintained close relations.

### **Here's a round-up of the bilateral ties between the two countries:**

1. Long before colonial cartographers chalked up South Asia, **India and Bangladesh shared a common land**.
2. In 1947, the country currently known as Bangladesh was called East Pakistan. After 20 years of hardship, there were rumours of dissent that East Pakistan wanted independence.
3. The Indian army was welcomed as liberators in Dhaka. They had turned the tide against West Pakistani forces. They fought shoulder-to-shoulder with Bangladeshi freedom fighters. This joint campaign remains the cornerstone of bilateral ties after 50 years.

4. The Indo-Bangladesh treaty of friendship, cooperation and peace was signed. Although the two sides looked set for bigger things, Mujibur Rahman's assassination in 1975 acted as a turning point.
5. In 2015, India and Bangladesh signed the **land border agreement**. Both sides promised to exchange border enclaves. Thus, settling a decades-long border confusion.
6. They set up a **joint rivers commission in 1972**. Both sides seldom agree on water-sharing. But the conflict remains inside the commission. In 1996, they signed a 30-year treaty on sharing water from the Ganga.
7. **Both countries are members of SAARC, BIMSTEC, the Indian Ocean Rim Association and the Commonwealth.**
8. Recently, Bangladesh backed India's election to the UN Security Council. The armed forces from both sides regularly conduct joint drills like exercise Sampriti and Milan.
9. India has extended its hand of friendship whenever Bangladesh faced crises.
10. During the coronavirus crisis, India provided medical training to Bangladeshi professionals, test kits and medicines, besides the dispatch of vaccine consignments. New Delhi gifted 2 million doses of the COVID vaccines to Bangladesh.

#### **Concerns that need to be address:**

**The Teesta River** is a **point of contention** for the two countries. While India claims 55 per cent of the river's waters, Bangladesh is unhappy with its share.

The **Teesta river originates in Sikkim**, flows through the **northern parts of West Bengal, before entering Bangladesh and joining the Brahmaputra river.**

The flow of the river is crucial for Bangladesh from December to March during which the country requires 50 per cent of the river's water supply.

**Hundreds of illegal migrants** cross the porous border putting economic pressure on India. New Delhi's plan to document illegal migrants and deport them is viewed with concern in Dhaka.

Bangladesh's participation in the **China-led belt and road initiative** is a cause of concern for India due to the growing closeness between a key ally and a strategic rival.

#### **However be the concerns, key is maintaining stable and friendly relations:**

1. **Maintaining stable and friendly relations** with India has been to Bangladesh's advantage in terms of both countries **sharing a common position on regional security**.
2. Bangladesh's strong stand against religious militancy and terrorism has resonated with policy makers in Delhi and vice versa.
3. In the field of trade, there is **certainly a gap in terms of exports and imports**, but again, it is geography which has often determined conditions.
4. **Bangladesh is currently India's biggest trade partner in the South Asian region.**
5. To strengthen and encourage Bangladesh's trade and commerce, India has given several concessions to Dhaka, **including duty-free access** to Bangladeshi products into the Indian markets.
6. While India has **given duty-free access** to a number of Bangladeshi goods, its physical enormity precludes circumstances that could have Bangladesh enhance the quantum of exports.
7. While the gap between the countries' exports to each other seems worrying, for Dhaka the **redeeming factor is its economy**, which is currently one of the fastest-growing in the world.
8. Meanwhile, the inauguration of the **Chilahati-Haldibari railway link** has been a significant move in **enhancing connectivity** between the countries.
9. Bangladesh has received **9 million doses of Covishield vaccines from India**, a gesture that has enormously boosted morale in Dhaka as it battles the pandemic.

### Conclusion:

The Modi-Hasina talks could well be a **fresh opportunity for Bangladesh to emphasise to India the need for meaningful pressure to be applied to Myanmar over the Rohingya issue.**

As the two prime ministers join in the celebrations in Dhaka, Bangladesh's leader may well find the moment opportune to buttonhole the visiting Indian head of government on the Rohingya issue.

PM Modi's visit to Dhaka will be an opportunity for the two countries to enhance cooperation through some new MoUs.

### **14.Ending the war in Yemen**



### Context:

Yemen's Houthi rebels said they struck a **Saudi oil facility** in the port city of Jiddah, the latest in a series of cross-border attacks the group has claimed against the kingdom amid the grinding war in Yemen.

Saudi Arabia's state-owned media did not immediately acknowledge any incident in Jiddah.

Houthi rebels military tweeted that they fired a new Quds-2 cruise missile at the facility.

He posted a satellite image online that matched Aramco's North Jiddah Bulk Plant, where oil products are stored in tanks. The rebels claimed they hit the same facility last November, an attack the Saudi-led coalition later admitted had sparked a fire at the plant.

### The war in Yemen: Background:

1. The conflict has its roots in **the Arab Spring of 2011**, when an uprising forced the country's **long-time authoritarian president**, Ali Abdullah Saleh, to hand over power to his deputy, Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi.
2. The **political transition** was supposed to bring stability to Yemen, one of the Middle East's poorest nations, but President Hadi struggled to deal with various problems including **militant attacks, corruption, food insecurity, and continuing loyalty of many military officers to Saleh.**

3. Since 2014, Yemen is facing a **multi-sided conflict** involving local, regional, and international actors.
4. The **Houthis**, a group of **Zaidi Shia Muslims** who ruled a kingdom there for nearly 1,000 years.
5. They used widespread anger against President Hadi's decision to postpone long-awaited elections and his stalled negotiations over a new constitution to protest against the government.
6. They marched from their stronghold of Saada province to the capital Sanaa and surrounded the presidential palace, placing Hadi under house arrest.

#### **New USA administration looks to solve Yemen multi-polar Civil war:**

One of the first key foreign policy decisions that USA President Joe Biden took after assuming office was to end the U.S.'s support for Saudi Arabia's six-year-long war on Yemen.

He halted weapons sales to Saudi Arabia, appointed a Special Envoy for Yemen, and removed the Shia Houthi rebels, who control the north western parts of the Arab country, from the list of foreign terrorist organisations.

Both former Presidents Barack Obama and Donald Trump looked away from Yemen even as the country, amidst a multipolar civil war and Saudi bombing, descended into chaos and witnessed a humanitarian catastrophe.

#### **Houthi Rebels supported by Shia majority country Iran:**

1. The Saudi-led coalition feared that continued success of the Houthis would give their **rival regional power** and **Shia-majority state, Iran**, a foothold in Yemen, Saudi Arabia's southern neighbour.
2. Saudi Arabia says Iran is backing the Houthis with weapons and logistical support – a charge Iran denies.
3. Both sides have since been beset by infighting. The Houthis broke with Saleh and he was killed by Houthi fighters in December 2017.
4. On the anti-Houthi side, militias include separatists seeking independence for south Yemen and factions who oppose the idea.

#### **Many more dimensions in Yemen Civil War:**

A military coalition led by Saudi Arabia intervened in Yemen on March 26, 2015, at Hadi's request, after the Houthis continued to sweep the south and threatened to conquer the last government stronghold of Aden. **Prompting one of the world's worst humanitarian crises ever.**

The crisis in Yemen is not only about the **Saudi-Houthi conflict**. It has many more dimensions: **humanitarian, civil, geopolitical and sectarian.**

When Saudi Arabia, the UAE and their allies went to Yemen in March 2015, they had a clearly defined objective: drive the Houthis, who are backed by Iran, out of the capital Sana'a and stabilise the country under the government of Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi that they support.

### **Humanitarian situation in Yemen is worsening:**

1. The Saudi-led coalition imposed a blockade on Yemen, which they hoped would eventually weaken the Houthis, and started a bombing campaign aimed at wrecking the rebels militarily.
2. This campaign was a failure as the Houthis entrenched themselves in the north-west despite the military and economic challenges.
3. The only success the Saudis can claim from a tactical point of view is that the Houthis were limited to the north-west.
4. But the Saudi-backed government failed to consolidate its position even in the south.
5. A separatist group, the **Southern Transitional Council (STC)**, has established its rule in southern Yemen. The UAE, which backs the STC, has pulled out of the Saudi-led coalition.
6. All this is happening while the humanitarian situation in Yemen is worsening by the day. The war has killed over 10,000 people and pushed the country to the brink of a famine.
7. **According to the UN, 50,000 Yemenis are starving to death and 16 million will go hungry this year.**
8. They are depending on **food assistance to survive**, but the war is making it difficult for aid groups to operate in the country.
9. According to WHO, since the Saudi intervention in 2015, at least 10,000 people have been killed in Yemen.
10. The widespread damage caused to infrastructure by the coalition airstrikes and lack of supplies of food and medicines due to the blockade has pushed Yemen into a humanitarian catastrophe.

11. About 12 million people are at the **risk of starvation in Yemen**. The country is also facing a massive cholera outbreak. According to UNICEF, a child dies every 10 minutes in Yemen from preventable causes.
12. Many more are dying due to preventable diseases as Yemen lacks proper health infrastructure and essential medicines.

### **Blockade and bombing didn't solve the Civil war crisis:**

1. The last six years of war prove that the Saudi strategy of blockade and bombing was a failure.
2. The Houthis continued to **amass weapons**, even technologically advanced drones which they use to **attack Saudi targets** across the border, despite the blockade, while the **Yemeni people continue to suffer**.
3. The Saudis should ask themselves whether they should continue with a failed strategy while the situation in Yemen keeps worsening.
4. Also, the continued **Houthi rocket and drone attacks** have left a hole in Saudi Arabia's national security umbrella.
5. The Houthis are also under pressure. If they want **international legitimacy**, they should stop fighting and start talking with other stakeholders.

### **Conclusion:**

A ceasefire is in everybody's interest but the question is who will blink first.

A solution to the conflict can be found only if the rebels and the government make some political concessions.

The new USA administration should use its leverage to pressure Riyadh to lift the blockade, a key Houthi demand, as a **confidence-building measure** and push for talks for a lasting ceasefire.

Once a ceasefire between the two main rival blocs is achieved, the U.S. and its regional allies could call for a **multilateral conference** involving all stakeholders to discuss Yemen's future.

Yemen can find a way out of the current crisis provided the war is brought to an immediate end and the country is given diplomatic assistance.

### **15.China gives green light for first downstream dams on Brahmaputra**



### Context:

**A draft of China's new Five-Year Plan (2021-2025)**, which is set to be formally approved, has given the green light for the first dams to be built on the lower reaches of Yarlung Zangbo river, as the **Brahmaputra** is known in Tibet, before it flows into India.

The draft outline of the new Five-Year Plan (FYP) for 2025 and “long range objectives through the year 2035”, submitted before the National People's Congress (NPC), China's ceremonial legislature, specifically mentions **the building of hydropower bases** on the lower reaches of the river as among the priority energy projects to be undertaken in the next five years.

### **Impact of construction of dams on downstream states:**

1. Dams will eventually lead to **degradation of the entire basin**. Silt carried by the river would get blocked by dams leading to a fall in the quality of soil and eventual reduction in agricultural productivity.
2. The construction of several dams along the **Yarlung Zangbo river (Brahmaputra) river** on the Chinese side has been a repeated **cause for concern** for Indian officials and the local people.
3. China has an ambitious plan to **link its south and north through canals, aqueducts and linking of major rivers to ensure water security**.
4. In pursuit of these goals, China, being an **upper riparian state in Asia**, has been **blocking rivers** like the Mekong and its tributaries, affecting Southeast Asian countries like Thailand, Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.

**Construction of these Dams will damage the world's most ecologically sensitive zones:**

1. It has **caused immense damage to the environment** and altered river flows in the region.
2. The location of the dams in the Himalayas pose a risk. Seismologists consider the Himalayas as **most vulnerable to earthquakes and seismic activity**.
3. The sheer size of the **infrastructure projects** undertaken by China, and increasingly by India, poses a significant threat to the populations living downstream.
4. Close to a million people live in the Brahmaputra basin in India and tens of millions further downstream in Bangladesh.
5. The Brahmaputra basin is one of the **world's most ecologically sensitive zones**. It is identified as one of the **world's 34 biological hotspots**.
6. This region sees several species of flora and fauna that are endemic to only this part of the world.
7. The river itself is **home to the Gangetic river dolphin**, which is listed as critically endangered.
8. China sees these projects as a continuation of their historic tributary system as the smaller states have no means of effectively resisting or even significant leverage in negotiations.

**India expressed concern regarding upper stream dams construction:**

India has expressed concerns to China over the four planned dams on the upper and middle reaches, though Indian officials have said the dams are not likely to greatly impact the quantity of the Brahmaputra's flows in India because they are only storing water for power generation.

As a lower riparian State with considerable established user rights to the waters of the trans-border rivers, the government has consistently conveyed its views and concerns to the Chinese authorities.

India also urged them to ensure that the interests of downstream States are not harmed by any activities in upstream areas

However, the location of the dams also poses a **risk as the Himalayas** are one of the **most vulnerable to earthquakes and seismic activity**.

**Landslides** resulting from earthquakes pose a significant threat. For example, the 2015 Nepal earthquake and the resultant landslides wiped out several dams and other facilities.

**The Brahmaputra is not entirely dependent on upstream flows with an estimated 35% of its basin in India.**

Dams on the lower reaches and at the Great Bend would, however, raise fresh concerns because of the location across the border from Arunachal Pradesh and the potential impact downstream.

**In future, it may lead to water scarcity to India:**

1. India's concerns are that these dams are large enough to be **converted and used as storage dams**, especially if the purpose is flood control and irrigation (as is the case with Zangmu Dam).
2. In the absence of a water treaty, China **depriving India of water during lean seasons becomes a possibility**.
3. According to Chandan Mahanta, who heads the Centre for Environment at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Guwahati, the Chinese hydropower projects could convert Brahmaputra into a seasonal river implying water scarcity in India.
4. Another risk is the release of flood waters during the monsoon season, which could inundate the **already flooded Brahmaputra river basin in Assam**.
5. There is much apprehension that the Brahmaputra may lose the silt, which makes the plains in its basin fertile, because of sediment trapping in the dams.

In building its dams, China has also **polluted its rivers**. The quality of water that flows downstream into India needs to be taken into account.

The **disruption of natural flood cycles of the river** could also adversely affect the rich geo-environmental and bio-physical settings in India's Northeast.

These multifarious factors could also severely impinge on the economy of the region.

**Conclusion:**

Responsible countries were expected to **heed the international water policy** and that the Ministry of External Affairs would deal with the issue of dam construction in Tibet.

There are **alternate solutions** to solving the water crisis. Building a **decentralised network of check dams, rain-capturing lakes and using traditional means of water capture** have shown effective results in restoring the ecological balance while supporting the populations of the regions in a sustainable manner.

Instead of construction of dams without each other concern, since India and China do not have a water-sharing agreement and they should work upon it.

Both nations **share hydrological data** so it becomes important to share genuine data and have a **continuous dialogue** on issues like a warning of droughts, floods and high-water discharges.

**INSIGHTSIAS**  
SIMPLIFYING IAS EXAM PREPARATION

## Advanced Prelims Enrichment Course 2021 (APEC-2021)

(Full Fledged Preparation for Prelims 2021)  
Online Mode & Offline Mode\*

**Orientation On 10 Feb 2021**  
**Starts from 11 Feb 2021**

**Fee: 16,000/- incl. Taxes**

Early Bird Offer : 15 % Discount till 10<sup>th</sup> Feb 2021 | Old Subscriber Offer : 20 % Discount

**Takeaways**

- ◆ Subscribers clearing Prelims will get 50% discount on I-WIL 2021
- ◆ Free Textbook Based Prelims Test Series will be available from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021
- ◆ Timetable is smoothly Integrated with Insta Prelims Revision Plan 2021
- ◆ Mentorship Provided till Prelims 2021

- ◆ **Subject wise Classes** completely oriented towards Prelims Exam
- ◆ **Current Affairs** covered in Every Class of respective topics
- ◆ Extended **CSAT Classes** with full syllabus completion to tackle any unconventional paper
- ◆ **Economic Survey & Budget** integrated with the Classes
- ◆ 3hrs of classes per day for each subject

**Classes**


**Tests**

- ◆ Daily Revision Class Tests for GS as well as CSAT
- ◆ Home Assignments to be followed for more Practice & to Improve your skills
- ◆ Full Length Prelims Test after every Subject
- ◆ Full Length Prelims Test on Economic Survey & Budget
- ◆ Full Length Prelims Test on Agriculture theme

- ◆ Motivational Sessions
- ◆ Strategy classes to improve your accuracy
- ◆ Previous year Questions' Discussion

**Special Sessions**

**SUBSCRIBE**

**TIME TABLE**

**INSIGHTSIAS - BENGALURU**  
Ph: 7483163074, 9380863034

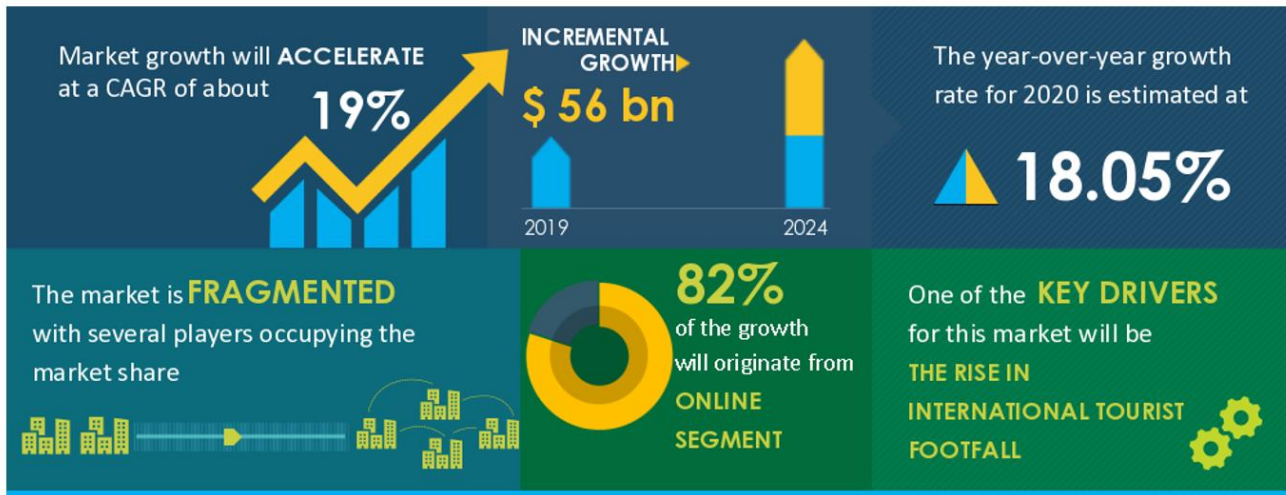
**INSIGHTSIAS - HYDERABAD**  
Ph: 8688512637

**INSIGHTSIAS - DELHI**  
Ph: 01145637946, 73003318519

\* (Offline mode in Bangalore only. Depending on ease of Govt. Restrictions in Delhi, Classes will be LIVE STREAMED in Delhi Centre i.e., Students can watch Classes LIVE in Delhi Centre)

## GENERAL STUDIES III

### 1. Doubling down on a resilient India



#### Context: India bags highest ever FDI at \$67.5 billion in first 9 months of FY21:

India has attracted highest ever foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows at \$67.54 billion during the first nine months of financial year 2020-21.

With this, total FDI flows were 22 per cent higher during April-December 2020 compared to \$55.14 billion in the corresponding period last year.

Total inflows registered a year-on-year growth of 24 per cent in December compared to \$7.46 billion in December 2019.

FDI inflows have constantly grown since August 2020 on a yearly basis; it recorded a substantial growth of 81 per cent in the month of November.

#### FDI inflows into India:

Google, Facebook, Walmart, Samsung, Foxconn, and Silver Lake have been just a handful of the firms that made big ticket bets on India in 2020.

As a result, even as India experienced one of the world's sharpest economic contractions, it also saw the fastest growth in Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) inflows among all the major economies in 2020.

India's \$60 billion-plus tally for new annual FDI equity inflows was its largest-ever haul and a milestone in the agenda of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government in its second term.

That India should emerge as a leading destination for FDI might strike some observers as an unexpected outcome. It is certainly one that deserves parsing.

Indeed, a significant share of India's FDI inflows arose from foreign investments directed solely at Reliance Jio.

Meanwhile, India's latest FDI totals still lags behind the highest tallies in other markets such as China and Brazil.

### **Adapting to the Indian market**

1. Three decades after its economy was liberalised, India remains a **complex and challenging place** to do business.
2. Frequent shifts in the **policy landscape** and **persistent market access barriers** are standard complaints levied against India by the business community.
3. Meanwhile, the Modi government's push **to build a "self-reliant" India** has also rattled skittish investors and smaller companies that lack the resources to navigate on-the-ground hurdles.
4. Still, leading corporate investors see the Indian market differently. They recognise that doing business in India or any emerging market for that matter comes with **inherent risks** but that **adaptation in approach is critical to success**.
5. Most importantly, they have the vision to understand that **these are risks worth taking given the scale of the India Opportunity**.

### **Driving points for India's Economic Growth rates:**

Four core dynamics drive this calculus and explain why multinational companies are making India an essential part of their growth story.

#### **First, sheer demographics:**

1. What India offers through its **nearly 1.4 billion people** and **their growing purchasing power** is uniquely valuable for multinationals with global ambitions.
2. No other country outside of China has a market that houses nearly one in six people on the planet and a rising middle class of 600 million.
3. Failure to compete for a share of Indians' wallets is not just a missed strategic opportunity; it's borderline malpractice at the boardroom level.

#### **Second, shifting geopolitics:**

1. **Rising U.S.-China competition** is redefining the global landscape for investment and manufacturing, forcing multinationals to rethink their footprints and production hubs.
2. Savvy countries such as Vietnam have capitalised on this opportunity to great effect, but India is finally getting serious about **attracting large-scale production and exports.**
3. Major multinational companies such as Samsung have invested billions in the Indian market, and manufacturers such as Cisco, Nokia, Ericsson, and Flex are reportedly weighing new investments that take advantage of fresh incentive programs.

### **Third, rising digital connectivity:**

1. Cheap mobile data have powered a revolution across India's digital economy and connected an **estimated 700 million Indians to the Internet.**
2. As PM Mr. Modi has said, more than 500 million Indians still remain offline, and the rise of these 'next gen netizens' is a key reason why leading global tech companies are **investing in India and weathering acute policy pressure.**
3. Domestic Indian companies have also demonstrated their ability **to innovate and deliver high quality services at scale.**
4. The partnerships and FDI flows linking multinationals and Indian tech firms will continue to unlock shared market opportunities for years to come.

### **Fourth, national resilience:**

1. Despite facing the scourge of the novel coronavirus head on, India has managed the **pandemic better** than many of its western peers and restored economic activity even before implementing a mass vaccination programme.
2. These are **remarkable developments**, and yet they speak to India's underlying resilience even in the face of historic challenges.
3. This ethos will serve India well as it navigates the complex challenges of the 21st century, and global investors are clearly taking note.

### **Value creation and Value Addition will unlock opportunities:**

1. **Unlocking opportunities in the Indian market** cannot take the form of a one-way wealth transfer, and companies should not expect a warm welcome without continuously demonstrating their commitment to India.
2. Successful companies do this by placing **shared value creation** at the heart of their business strategy.

3. They tie corporate success to India's growth and development. They forge enduring partnerships and lasting relationships, elevate and invest in Indian talent, align products with Indian tastes, and ultimately tackle the hardest problems facing India today.

However, the country still has several restrictive laws on foreign investment, excessive bureaucracy, and high levels of corruption.

Still, given India's growing demographics, and huge e-commerce and technological markets, activity in both areas are expected to grow in the following years.

### Conclusion:

India ranked **63rd out of 190 countries** in the **2020 Doing Business report published by the World Bank**, a significant improvement from the previous year's spot, when it ranked 77th.

Global investors typically focus on India mainly because of **its demographics**, but also for its stable barometers, whether it be inflation, fiscal deficit or growth.

Charting a path forward in this dynamic growing market will require corporate executives to make new commitments and navigate choppy waters.

But for leading companies with global ambitions and a willingness to make big bets, the rewards of investing in the Indian market are substantial and well worth pursuing.

### 2.Salutary reminder: On Consumer Price Index



### Context: Retail inflation rises to 5.03% in February:

1. The **country's retail inflation**, measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI), rose to 5.03 per cent in the month of February mainly on account of **higher food prices**.
2. Separately, India's factory output, measured in terms of the Index of Industrial Production (IIP), witnessed a contraction of (-)1.6 per cent in January, two separate data released by the Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation (MoSPI).
3. The rate of price rise in the food basket accelerated to 3.87% in February, as against 1.89% in the preceding month, as per data released by the National Statistical Office (NSO).
4. Inflation in 'fuel and light' category remained elevated at 3.53% during the month vis-a-vis 3.87% in January.
5. The Reserve Bank, which mainly **factors in the retail inflation** while arriving at its **monetary policy**, has been asked to keep CPI inflation at 4 per cent with a margin of 2% on either side.

#### About Wholesale Price Index WPI and Consumer Price Index CPI:

##### Wholesale Price Index WPI

1. It is the most widely used inflation indicator in India. Published by the Office of Economic Adviser, Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
2. All transactions at the first point of bulk sale in the domestic market are included.
3. Major criticism for this index is that the general public does not buy products at wholesale price.
4. The base year of All-India WPI has been revised from 2004-05 to 2011-12 in 2017.

##### Consumer Price Index CPI

1. It measures price changes from the perspective of a retail buyer. Base Year for CPI is 2012.
2. It measures changes over time in the level of retail prices of selected goods and services on which consumers of a defined group spend their incomes.
3. Four types of CPI are as follows:
  - a. CPI for Industrial Workers (IW).
  - b. CPI for Agricultural Labourer (AL).
  - c. CPI for Rural Labourer (RL).
  - d. CPI (Rural/Urban/Combined).

- e. Of these, the first three are compiled by the Labour Bureau in the Ministry of Labour and Employment. Fourth is compiled by the Central Statistical Organisation (CSO) in the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.

#### **About Index of Industrial Production:**

1. The Index of Industrial Production (IIP) is an index that shows the growth rates in different industry groups of the economy in a fixed period of time. **Base Year for IIP is 2011-2012.**
2. It is compiled and published monthly by **the Central Statistical Organization (CSO)**, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.
3. IIP is a composite indicator that measures the growth rate of industry groups classified under: Broad sectors, namely, Mining, Manufacturing, and Electricity. Use-based sectors, namely Basic Goods, Capital Goods, and Intermediate Goods.
4. The eight core industries of India represent about **40% of the weight of items that are included in the IIP.**

#### **Price volatility of fuel and fuel costs needs to be replaced by price stability:**

1. The quinquennial review of the current inflation target under the **monetary policy framework**, the latest Consumer Price Index (CPI) reading provides a salutary reminder for policymakers to maintain a ceaseless vigil over price stability.
2. Retail inflation, measured by the CPI, accelerated to a three-month high of 5.03% in February, data released by the National Statistical Office.
3. The jump of almost 100 basis points from January's 4.06%, while partly attributable to a base effect given that price gains had relatively eased in February 2020, is a clear signal that **food and fuel costs continue to pose a threat to broader price stability in the economy.**
4. Specifically, the RBI's early February prognostication of continuing pressures in the **prices of pulses and edible oils** has been borne out by the last two months' CPI data.
5. **Inflation** of both **essential food products** has persisted in the double digits during the period, and in the case of the latter, accelerated disconcertingly to 20.8% last month.
6. Price gains with respect to two other key sources of protein, meat and fish and eggs, also remain stuck above 11%.
7. And the **deflation in vegetable costs**, which had helped offset the generalised pressure in food inflation, also waned considerably in February to minus 6.7% from minus 15.8% in January.

8. The upshot was that **food and beverages** as a combined category, with a weight of **54.2% in the CPI**, witnessed an almost 160 basis points quickening in inflation to 4.25% last month, from January's 2.67%.

**Prices of petroleum products indirectly rises the prices of food and beverages:**

1. Another equally worrisome source of inflationary pressure is the continuing upward trajectory in the prices of petroleum products.
2. **Transport and communication**, which directly reflect these prices, saw inflation rocket by more than 200 basis points to 11.4% in February, from 9.3% the preceding month.
3. Diesel, the main fuel for freight carriage, is now hovering around Rs.85 per litre in many parts and will most certainly feed into the costs of everything requiring to be transported.
4. **Brent crude oil futures** have surged by close to 40% in the three-month period through March 11 in the wake of output cuts by major oil producing nations, another worrying portent for inflation.

The **doubling in WPI inflation** to a 27-month high was fairly broad-based, reflecting the rise in commodity prices brought on by the global risk-on sentiment, a **hardening of crude oil and fuel prices**, as well as the fading of the favourable base effect for food items.

Economists expects a huge uptick in WPI inflation over the next three months with core and headline WPI rising to around 6 per cent in March.

We maintain our view that inflation dynamics will rule out any further rate cuts, with a status quo expected through 2021.

**Conclusion:**

Any effort to dilute the focus in a purported bid to prioritise growth, risks putting the economy on a perilous path that may secure neither objective.

With the RBI's own researchers having so cogently laid out the case for persisting with the **current flexible inflation targeting regime** of ensuring that price gains stay **within the 2% to 6% band** in the central bank's first Report on Currency and Finance in eight years.

Policymakers must stay laser focused on **keeping price stability front and centre of their fresh framework for the next quinquennium.**

**3.Railways and a question of transparency**



## RAIL REFORMS

- Eight Group A services of the Railways will be merged into one, the Indian Railway Management Service (IRMS)
- The Railway Board will have a leaner structure. There will be four board members (infrastructure, operations and business development, rolling stock and finance) instead of eight
- An unspecified number of independent members will be inducted. They will have 30 years of experience in industry, finance, economics and management
- The chairman will be now be called the chief executive officer

© BCCL 2021. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

### Context:

A surprising feature of the post-Budget discourse in Parliament and in the media these past few weeks has been the total absence of one topic: Railways.

Apparently, the understated objective of doing away with a separate Budget for the Railways, namely, shifting the spotlight away from it, has been handsomely achieved.

However, sweeping under the carpet the serious problems of viability facing the country's largest and most crucial transport organisation, by taking cover behind the diversions provided by other, more topical issues thrown up by the Union Budget, will not make them disappear.

### Importance of Indian Railways:

Indian Railways (IR) has the **4<sup>th</sup> longest rail network** in the world. It is a network of 70,000 km and runs about 21,000 trains, carrying 23 million passengers and 3 million tonnes of freight per day.

Government has set a vision of making railways a 100% safe, fast and reliable mode of transport for passengers and freight.

The plan is to modernise the entire network. The recent step of creating an Indian Railway Management Service will help in this objective.

### However, now in Indian Railways: Finances are out of whack:

1. Recent public statements about the performance of the Railways on the freight front seem to suggest that all is well with the Railways.

2. Meanwhile, an **important financial performance index** has been airbrushed to project a picture totally removed from reality.
3. The **Operating Ratio (OR)**, which is broadly the ratio of working expenses to revenues, has been artificially kept below 100% by making less-than-required provision for pension payments during 2019-20 and 2020-21.
4. While the official figures of OR are 98.36% for 2019-20 and 96.96% for 2020-21, the actual OR works out to 114.19% and 131.49%, respectively, if the required provision is made for pension payments.
5. The purpose of indulging in this self- delusional exercise is not clear. Technically, the Indian Railways are well and truly in the red. Tinkering with statistics cannot alter that reality.
6. Perhaps for the first time ever, the Indian Railways were unable to adequately provide for the Pension Fund, both for 2019-20 and 2020-21, totalling ₹78,119 crore.
7. The Railway Ministry has reportedly sought a loan from the Central Exchequer to meet this shortfall.
8. Railway finances are out of whack. And COVID-19, although it has its effects, but has nothing to do with it since the problems have been existing earlier.

#### **Key provision in the Budget for railways:**

1. First, there is a **National Rail Plan (NRP) for 2030.**
2. Second, the Western dedicated freight corridor (DFC) and the Eastern DFC will be commissioned by June 2022.
3. Parts of DFC will be in public-private partnership (PPP) mode.
4. Third, there will be an East Coast corridor (Kharagpur to Vijaywada), an East-West corridor (Bhusaval to Kharagpur/Dankuni) and a North-South corridor (Itarsi to Vijayawada).
5. Fourth, all broad-gauge routes will be electrified by December 2023.
6. Fifth, there will be safety and passenger amenity measures.

#### **Immediate challenges that need to be addressed:**

1. The fact is, over the years, **traffic revenues** have been unable to keep pace with the **increase in staff costs and pension payments.**

2. While the **passenger and freight revenues** increased by 84.8 % from 2010-11 to 2019-20, the **staff and pension costs** raced ahead at almost **double that rate**, by 157%, in the same period.
3. This, despite the fact that there has been a reduction of about one lakh staff on roll during this period.
4. The spike in the staff and pension costs is largely attributable to the implementation of the Central Pay Commission recommendations, a 10-yearly feature.
5. Being a Ministry of the Government of India, the Indian Railway's finances are bound to be subjected to another fatal body blow by the next (Eighth) Pay Commission around 2025-26.
6. Therefore, the immediate challenges are achieving a quantum jump in the revenues, particularly on the freight front, and a drastic reduction in the number of employees, there being no way to reduce the number of pensioners in the short run.

#### **Way Ahead: Need for public scrutiny in Indian Railways:**

**A separate Railway Budget** has passed irrevocably into history. However,

1. The **need for a detailed public scrutiny** of the affairs of one of the largest undertakings in the country, public or private, at least once a year has not gone away.
2. As suggested earlier by many experts:
  - a. an **annual report called 'Indian Railways Report'** on the lines of the annual Economic Survey should be placed in Parliament every year detailing the **physical and financial performance** of the Railways,
  - b. identifying the challenges and
  - c. plans for the future to meet the country's rail transport needs.
3. The Railways are in the midst of an **unprecedented financial distress** and are faced with fundamental organisational issues.
4. This is no time for evasiveness and obfuscation but for clarity and transparency. It is also time to confront reality.
5. The **full commissioning** of the **two Dedicated Freight Corridors (DFCs)**, slated to be **operational by 2022**, assumes great urgency and importance.
6. A related aspect is the product mix of freight that will be carried in the near future. A disturbing feature of freight traffic is the overwhelming dependence on one commodity: coal.

Global experience in **privatising railways services** has been mixed. So it is essential to tread with caution.

**Bibek Debroy committee** has suggested privatisation of some operations in Indian railways.

In order to keep Indian Railways **affordable** for the **lower strata** of the society (post privatisation), the government must offer subsidies and tax incentives to companies that would provide low cost services, similar to low cost airlines, to these very pockets of population.

This in the long run would make the railway network more efficient and affordable.

### **Conclusion:**

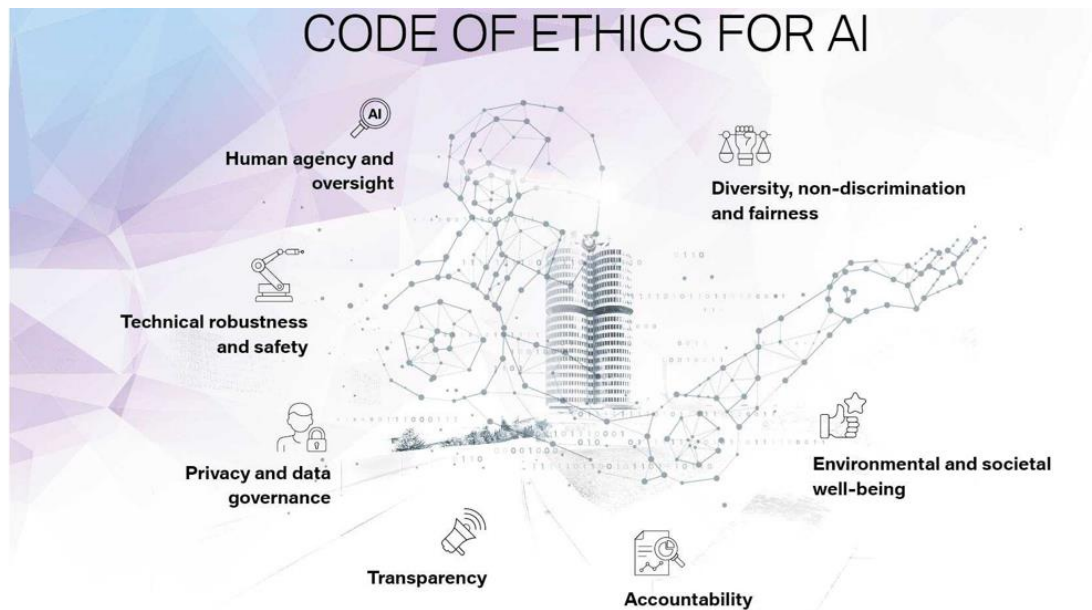
Also, India is a signatory to the 2015 Paris Agreement, committed to achieving targeted reductions in carbon emissions in a time-bound manner. The Railways have to therefore think seriously of a life after coal.

More than a year ago, a grand proposal to merge all cadres and have a single Indian Railways management cadre was announced to eliminate “departmentalism”.

There have been suggestions to **corporatise the Railways’s Production Units** and outsource the medical services. The government needs to firm up its policies on these crucial issues after discussions with all stakeholders.

An option that merits consideration is the adoption of the roll-on roll-off model of transporting loaded trucks on rail on the DFCs, which apart from boosting revenues has the added advantage of reducing the overall carbon footprint.

### **4.Responsible AI — the need for ethical guard rails**



### **Introduction: About Artificial Intelligence:**

Artificial intelligence is the branch of computer science concerned with making computers behave like humans.

AI refers to the ability of machines to perform cognitive tasks like thinking, perceiving, learning, problem solving and decision making.

Artificial intelligence (AI) refers to the ability of machines to perform cognitive tasks like thinking, perceiving, learning, problem solving and decision making. Initially conceived as a technology that could mimic human intelligence.

AI has evolved in ways that far exceed its original conception. With incredible advances made in **data collection, processing and computation power**, intelligent systems can now be deployed to take over a variety of tasks, enable connectivity and enhance productivity.

As AI's capabilities have dramatically expanded, so have its utility in a growing number of fields.

### **Artificial Intelligence's exponential growth in recent decade:**

1. It is embedded in the recommendations we get on our favourite streaming or shopping site; in GPS mapping technology; in the predictive text that completes our sentences when we try to send an email or complete a web search.
2. It promises to be even **more transformative** than the harnessing of electricity. And the more we use AI, the more data we generate, the **smarter it gets**.

3. In just the last decade, AI has evolved with unprecedented velocity from beating human champions at Jeopardy.
4. **Automation, big data and algorithms** will continue to sweep into new corners of our lives until we no longer remember how things were “before”.
5. Just as electricity allowed us to tame time, enabling us to radically alter virtually every aspect of existence, AI can leapfrog us toward **eradicating hunger, poverty and disease** opening up new and hitherto **unimaginable pathways** for climate change mitigation, education and scientific discovery.

#### **Artificial Intelligence usage can be for better or for worse:**

Already, AI has helped increase crop yields, raised business productivity, improved access to credit and made cancer detection faster and more precise.

It could contribute **more than \$15 trillion to the world economy by 2030, adding 14% to global GDP**. Google has identified over 2,600 use cases of “AI for good” worldwide.

A study published in Nature reviewing the **impact of AI on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** finds that AI may act as an enabler on 134 or 79% of all SDG targets.

We are on the cusp of **unprecedented technological breakthroughs** that promise to **positively transform** our world in ways deeper and more profound than anything that has come before.

#### **Challenges of Artificial Intelligence (AI):**

1. Artificial intelligence is poised to be one of the biggest things to hit the technology industry (and many other industries) in the coming years.
2. But just because it holds enormous potential does not mean it does not also have its challenges.
3. And artificial intelligence challenges and possibilities are not small, which is why recognizing and working towards resolutions to problems can help further propel artificial intelligence’s rapid growth.
4. According to studies, around **40 % of the total energy** that data centres consume goes to **cooling IT equipment**. Now, to reduce energy consumption, companies are moving their data centres into cooler climates such as Siberia.
5. The **environmental impact** caused by data centres doesn’t stop at electrical consumption.

6. Coolants are often made of hazardous chemicals, and battery backups at data centres - needed for when there are power shortages - cause an environmental impact both due to mining for battery components and the disposal of the toxic batteries afterward.
7. Countries are passing **stricter legislations on data security** that require citizen data to be stored on servers located domestically, picking colder climates beyond their borders is becoming a difficult option.
8. Robotics and AI companies are **building intelligent machines** that perform tasks typically carried out by low-income workers: self-service kiosks to replace cashiers, fruit-picking robots to replace field workers, etc.
9. Algorithms based on our **past digital searches** creates and provides us **probable solutions or alternatives** which we are looking for.

Hence, based on our digital footprints, AI is trying to mimic our preferences and even thought perceptions.

#### **Privacy issues worries:**

1. AI also presents **serious data privacy concerns**. The algorithm's never-ending quest for data has led to our digital footprints being harvested and sold without our knowledge or informed consent.
2. We are constantly being profiled in service of customisation, putting us into echo chambers of like-mindedness, diminishing exposure to varied viewpoints and eroding common ground.
3. Today, it is no exaggeration to say that with all the discrete bytes of information floating about us online, the algorithms know us better than we know ourselves. They can nudge our behaviour without our noticing.
4. **Our level of addiction** to our devices, the inability to resist looking at our phones, and the chilling case of Cambridge Analytica in which such algorithms and big data were used to **alter voting decisions** should serve as a **potent warning** of the individual and societal concerns resulting from current AI business models.
5. In a world where the **algorithm is king**, it behoves us to remember that it is still humans with **all our biases and prejudices, conscious and unconscious** who are responsible for it. We shape the algorithms and it is our data they operate on.

#### **Artificial Intelligence usage can be double edged sword:**

1. The **study in Nature** also finds that AI can actively hinder 59 — or 35% — of SDG targets.

2. For starters, AI requires **massive computational capacity**, which means more power-hungry data centres and a big carbon footprint.
3. Then, AI could **compound digital exclusion**. Robotics and AI companies are building intelligent machines that perform tasks typically carried out by low-income workers: self-service kiosks to replace cashiers, fruit-picking robots to replace field workers, etc.
4. Without clear policies on reskilling workers, the promise of new opportunities will in fact create serious new inequalities.
5. Investment is likely to shift to countries where AI-related work is already established, widening gaps among and within countries.
6. Together, Big Tech's big four Alphabet/Google, Amazon, Apple and Facebook are worth a **staggering \$5 trillion**, more than the GDPs of just about every nation on earth.
7. In 2020, when the world was reeling from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, they added more than \$2 trillion to their value.
8. The fact is, just as AI has the potential to improve billions of lives, it can also replicate and exacerbate existing problems, and create new ones.

#### **Measures to avoid misusing of Artificial Intelligence:**

1. Without ethical guard rails, AI will **widen social and economic schisms**, amplifying any **innate biases** at an **irreversible scale and rate** and lead to discriminatory outcomes.
2. It is neither enough nor is it fair to expect AI tech companies to solve all these challenges through self-regulation.
  - a. First, they are not alone in developing and deploying AI; governments also do so.
  - b. Second, only a "whole of society" approach to AI governance will enable us to develop **broad-based ethical principles, cultures and codes of conduct**, to ensure the needed harm-mitigating measures, reviews and audits during design, development and deployment phases.
3. To inculcate the transparency, accountability, inclusion and societal trust for AI to flourish and bring about the extraordinary breakthroughs it promises.
4. Given the global reach of AI, such a **"whole of society" approach** must rest on a **"whole of world" approach**.
5. Many countries, including India, are cognisant of the opportunities and the risks, and are striving to **strike the right balance between AI promotion and AI governance** both for the greater public good.

6. NITI Aayog's Responsible AI for All strategy, the culmination of a year-long consultative process, is a case in point.
7. It recognises that our digital future cannot be optimised for good without **multi-stakeholder governance structures** that ensure the dividends are **fair, inclusive, and just.**

### Conclusion:

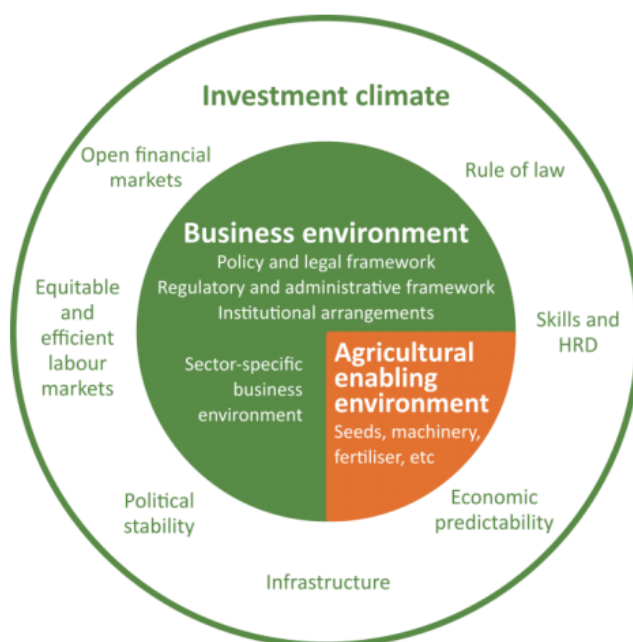
The UN Secretary-General's Roadmap on Digital Cooperation is a good starting point: it lays out the **need for multi-stakeholder efforts** on global cooperation so AI is used in a manner that is **"trustworthy, human rights-based, safe and sustainable, and promotes peace"**.

And UNESCO has developed a global, comprehensive standard-setting **draft Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence** to Member States for deliberation and adoption.

Agreeing on **common guiding principles** is an important first step, but it is not the most challenging part.

It is in the **application of the principles** that the rubber hits the road. It is where principles meet reality that the **ethical issues and conundrums** arise in practice, and for which we must be prepared for **deep, difficult, multi-stakeholder ethical reflection, analyses and resolve.** Only then will AI provide humanity its full promise.

### **5.Ploughing a new furrow in the agri-regulatory system**



**Context:**

The intense debates around the recently enacted **farm laws** have brought to light the issue of **developing a sound regulatory framework** to promote India's **agricultural growth** and in keeping pace with the changing times.

While the country is divided on the need for the three new farm laws, the fact remains that farmers, mainly smallholders, across India continue to face various constraints in carrying out farming activities.

**Constraints in Indian Agriculture:**

The farmers in the country face various constraints such as accessing agricultural inputs, markets, finance, human resources, and information. All these factors are critical for increasing farmers' competitiveness.

The existing institutional structure controlling farm production fails to handle these issues.

A way out of this problem is to develop a **suitable regulatory system** that would enable farmers to overcome their constraints.

**Where does India stand on this front in comparison to other countries?**

A recent publication by the **World Bank titled Enabling the Business of Agriculture (EBA) 2019** provides some interesting insights on this question.

Based on **eight indicators**, the EBA measures the extent to which government regulatory systems in 101 countries worldwide make it easier for their farmers to operate agricultural activities.

The indicators are supplying seed, registering fertilizer, securing water, registering machinery, sustaining livestock, protecting plant health, trading food, and accessing finance.

These indicators measure the strength of a country's agricultural regulatory environment pertaining to market integration and entrepreneurship in agriculture.

The EBA is akin to the Doing Business project of the World Bank, which ranks the ease of doing business in countries.

**India's poor standing in (EBA) 2019:**

Among 101 countries covered, India ranked 49 on the EBA aggregate score. France, Croatia, and the Czech Republic are the three top-ranking countries.

Among emerging groups of 20 (EG 20) countries, India has the second least favourable regulatory environment for farming activities after South Africa.

Turkey is the top-performing country among EG 20 countries, followed by Argentina, Brazil, the Russian Federation, Mexico and China.

Notably, India lags behind its close competitors in world agriculture, namely China, Brazil, and the Russian Federation.

### **8 parameters of World Bank titled Enabling the Business of Agriculture (EBA) 2019:**

Compared to other top performing countries, India has the weakest performance on five out of eight indicators.

1. They are registering fertilizer and machinery, securing water, sustaining livestock, and protecting plant health indicators.
2. **Registering fertilizer and machinery indicators** measure domestic laws and regulations that provide farmers access to fertilizer and agricultural machinery.
3. The regulatory processes that help farmers make appropriate decisions regarding the level of investment in irrigation are measured by securing water indicator.
4. **Sustaining livestock indicator** captures the quality of regulations affecting farmers' access to livestock farming inputs.
5. The quality of legislation on **phytosanitary standards (SPS)** is captured through the **protecting plant health indicator.**
6. Inadequate access to quality agricultural inputs such as fertilizers, water, and mechanical power can cause productivity loss, higher cost of food production and uncertainty, and lower capacity of farmers to produce surpluses, adopt new plant varieties and accept new opportunities to improve their income.
7. The **regulatory system** that governs **irrigation management** is essential for reducing the variability of farm output, prices, and incomes, minimising vulnerability to natural shocks, and incentivising the production of riskier and high returns crops.
8. Gaining access to the **global agricultural value chain** requires a **sound regulatory framework on SPS.**
9. For instance, thanks to active involvement by the SPS authority, namely National Agrarian Health Service (SENASA-Peru), Peru had become one of the **world's leading exporters of asparagus.**

**India's Performance on Seed supply and use of warehouse receipts:**

1. The comparative score of India on supplying seed, trading food, and accessing finance indicators is high.
2. **Supplying seed indicator** evaluates laws and regulations that ensure timely release of seed to farmers.
3. **A robust seed supply system** is required for **improving yield** and **adopting new crop varieties**.
4. The **trading food indicator** assesses **laws and regulations** that facilitate exporting of farm products by farmers.
5. The **regulatory framework** on the **use of warehouse receipts** is assessed using accessing finance indicator.
6. A **robust warehouse receipts system** enables the farmers to obtain the credit needed to invest in agriculture.
7. Warehouse receipt operators accept deposits of crops and provide warehouse receipts to farmers as evidence of deposited crops. By using warehouse receipts as collateral, farmers can receive credit.
8. The EBA project results reveal that, compared to its close competitors, the strength of India's agricultural regulatory environment is weak on the whole and with respect to key performance indicators.

**Role for the government:**

Governments can **play a critical role** in this regard by enacting laws and regulations that influence farmers' access to agricultural inputs, cost of production, farmers' participation in agricultural markets and value chains, the competitiveness of farmers, and private investment in the farming sector.

**Some Way Forward measures:**

1. The consolidation of land holdings becomes important to raise farmer incomes. In this Cooperative Farming and Contract Farming plays a major role in executing reforms.
2. Farmers can voluntarily come together and pool land to gain the benefits of size. Through consolidation, farmers can reap the economies of scale both in input procurement and output marketing.

3. There is a need to make a shift from rice and wheat-centric policies to **millet, pulses, fruits, vegetables, livestock and fish.**
4. The creation of a **competitive, stable and unified national market** is needed for farmers to get better prices.
5. Farmers' income can improve substantially if they are able to capture a greater **share in the supply chain** from farm gate to consumer.
6. For this to happen, farmers must have the freedom to sell what they want, where they want, and when they want without any restrictions on sale, stocking, movement, and export of farm produce.
7. These will require **legal and institutional changes**, major investments in **market infrastructure and storage** (including cold-chain storage), and incentives for the creation and operation of infrastructure by FPOs.

#### **Conclusion:**

The future of **world agriculture and food production** is expected to increasingly **depend on middle-income countries** such as China, India, Brazil, and Indonesia, just like the high-income countries dictating the fortunes of global agriculture in the past five decades.

To make the best use of this great opportunity, India needs to put in place an **agricultural regulatory system** that would make it easier for its farmers to conduct agricultural activities, thereby **improving their productivity, competitiveness, and income.**

#### **6.Aligning a missile deal with destination Manila**

Technical Specifications	
Maximum range	400+ km
Velocity	Mach 2.8
Weight	2.5 tonnes
Warhead mass	200-300 kg
Altitude	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cruise: 15 km</li> <li>Terminal: 10-15 metre</li> </ul>

Special Features
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Universal for multiple platforms</li> <li>■ "Fire and Forget" principle of operation</li> <li>■ High supersonic speed all through the flight</li> <li>■ Long flight range with varieties of flight trajectories</li> <li>■ Low radar signature</li> <li>■ Shorter flight times leading to lower target dispersion and quicker engagement</li> <li>■ Pin point accuracy with high lethal power aided by large kinetic energy on impact</li> </ul>

**Compared to existing state-of-the-art subsonic cruise missiles, BrahMos has**

- 3 times more velocity
- 2.5 to 3 times more flight range
- 3 to 4 times more seeker range
- 9 times more kinetic energy



### Context:

India and the Philippines signed the “**Implementing Arrangement**” for “**procurement of defense material and equipment procurement**”.

This agreement lays the groundwork for sales of defence systems such as the highly anticipated export of the **BrahMos cruise missile**, through the government-to-government route.

Philippine Department of National Defense publicly acknowledges, the archipelagic country’s intention of purchasing the missile, and a potential export deal for India, moves one step closer to reality.

This deal will be of great significance for multiple reasons, and even though the procurement process is progressing steadfastly, there are many challenges that lie ahead.

### **About the BrahMos Missile:**

1. A combination of the names of **Brahmaputra and Moskva rivers**, BrahMos missiles are designed, developed and produced by BrahMos Aerospace, a joint venture company set up by DRDO and Mashinostroyeniya of Russia.

2. It is a **two-stage missile** with a solid propellant booster as the first stage and liquid ramjet as the second stage.
3. The cruise missiles like BrahMos are a type of systems known as the **'standoff range weapons'** which are fired from a range sufficient to allow the attacker to evade defensive fire from the adversary.
4. Brahmos is a **multiplatform** i.e it can be launched from **land, air, and sea** and multi capability missile with pinpoint accuracy that works in both day and night irrespective of the weather conditions.
5. It operates on the **"Fire and Forgets" principle** i.e it does not require further guidance after launch.
6. Brahmos is one of the **fastest cruise missile** currently operationally deployed with **speed of Mach 2.8**, which is 3 times more than the speed of sound.
7. These weapons are in the arsenal of most major militaries in the world.
8. The versions of the BrahMos that are being tested have an extended range of around 400 km, as compared to its **initial range of 290 km**, with more versions of higher ranges currently under development.

#### **Export as a goal: Target of \$5 billion in defence exports by 2025:**

These advanced and powerful capabilities of the BrahMos not only augment the **strength of the Indian military** but make it a highly desirable product for other countries to procure as well.

Exporting the system, hence, has been on the agenda for more than a decade. Doing so would **boost the credibility of India** as a defence exporter, help it meet the **target of \$5 billion in defence exports by 2025**, and elevate its stature as a regional superpower.

Countries such as Vietnam, the Philippines, Indonesia, the United Arab Emirates, Argentina, Brazil, and South Africa have so far shown an interest in acquiring the systems.

#### **To promote Exports: Draft Defence Production and Export Promotion Policy (2020):**

the Ministry of Defence has formulated a draft Defence Production and Export Promotion Policy 2020 (DPEPP 2020).

The DPEPP 2020 is envisaged as an **overarching guiding document** to provide a **focused, structured and significant thrust** to defence production capabilities of the country for self-reliance and exports.

**Geo-political impact on these implications:**

The implications of the Philippines becoming the **first country to import the BrahMos** would be wide-ranging and consequential in the Indo-Pacific.

To begin with, it would caution China, with whom the Philippines has been engaged in a territorial conflict in the South China Sea, and act as a deterrent to Beijing's aggressive posturing.

Indeed, this is why China has been wary of the **Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries** acquiring defence systems such as the BrahMos.

Further, taking lessons, other nations threatened by Chinese belligerence may come forward to induct the BrahMos into their arsenal, thereby **boosting India's economic, soft, and hard power profile** in the region and providing the **Indo-Pacific** with a strong and dependable anchor with which they can **protect their sovereignty and territory**.

**Possible hurdles: May attract Sanctions because of this deal:**

1. The Government of India has prioritised making the country '**Atmanirbhar**' in the **defence manufacturing sector** and establishing itself as a **major defence exporter**.
2. The Philippines, on the other hand, has decided to buy the BrahMos out of geopolitical and strategic necessities. Nonetheless, two major roadblocks still remain in the Manila deal.
3. The first is the **Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA)**, which aims to sanction individuals and entities who engage in a "significant transaction" with a listed entity.
4. So far, Turkey and China have been penalised under CAATSA for purchasing the S-400 Triumph air defense systems from Russia. NPO Mashinostroyeniya is one of the listed Russian entities.
5. And since 65% of the components, including the ramjet engine and radar seeker **used in the BrahMos**, are reportedly provided by NPO Mashinostroyeniya, the export of the missile systems **may attract sanctions**.
6. Remarkably, the **United States**, of which **India is a major defence partner**, has **maintained ambiguity** over whether it will introduce sanctions over India's acquisition of the S-400, licensed production of the AK-203 assault rifle, and export of the BrahMos.
7. Hesitant of being sanctioned themselves, countries may shy away from purchasing the BrahMos.
8. However, there is an excellent case for India to receive a **waiver from CAATSA**, especially vis-à-vis the BrahMos that can help contain a confrontational China.

9. The second issue **pertains to financing**. A regiment of the BrahMos, including a mobile command post, four missile-launcher vehicles, several missile carriers, and 90 missiles, reportedly costs around \$275.77 million (Rs.2,000 crore).
10. Ravaged by the COVID-19 pandemic, many countries which are interested in the BrahMos would find it difficult to purchase it.
11. The cost of the systems has been a **major hurdle** in moving forward to reach a deal with the Philippines.
12. To remedy this, India has offered a **\$100 million line of credit**, and the Philippines is thinking of purchasing just one battery of the BrahMos, consisting of three missile launchers with two to three missile tubes each.

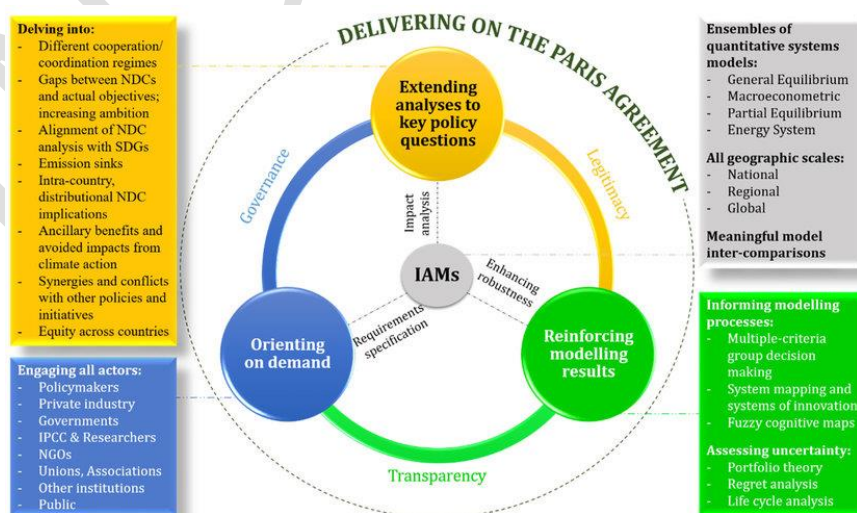
## Conclusion:

**Self-reliance in defence manufacturing** is a crucial component of effective defence capability and to maintain national sovereignty and achieve military superiority.

The attainment of this will **ensure strategic independence, cost-effective defence equipment** and may lead to saving on defence import bill, which can subsequently finance the physical and social infrastructure.

With India determined to develop itself as a **hub of defence manufacturing**, how it handles the sale of the BrahMos would be an important factor in its potential emergence as a **net provider of regional security in the Indo-Pacific**.

## 7. Working towards climate justice in a non-ideal world



**Context:**

Climate change is a pressing international political issue, for which a practical but principled solution is urgently required.

The election of Joe Biden as U.S. President has **catapulted climate change** to the top of the global agenda, allowing him to keep his promise to “lead a major diplomatic push” to **increase global climate ambition**.

This also works well for him in rebuilding the trans-Atlantic alliance apart from keeping at bay the domestic fissures from a tenuous hold of the Democrats in the U.S. Congress while being resolute on climate change.

Climate Justice in a Non-Ideal World aims to make normative theorising on climate justice more relevant and applicable to political realities and public policy.

**The U.S.A’s moves on climate change:**

1. Interestingly, the U.S. is not just returning back to the Paris Accord with its voluntary commitments but is taking an extra step forward through its call to **reconvene the Major Economies Forum (MEF)** starting with a Leaders’ Climate Summit in the coming months.
2. This amounts to a strong step forward to get the major emitters to agree to stronger climate commitments.
3. The MEF was first convened in March 2009 to rope in major emitters. The serious unwillingness of emerging economies to be labelled “major emitters” saw the meeting retitled “Major Economies Meeting” given the link between GDP and GHG.
4. It was also to push a way forward on climate change **without heed to the principle of differentiated responsibilities** and recognition of **historical responsibilities**, which are rightly hallowed principles of the climate discourse given the decades of staying power of greenhouse gases (GHGs) in the atmosphere.
5. The serious **unwillingness** of emerging economies to be labelled “major emitters” saw the meeting retitled “Major Economies Meeting” given the **clear link between GDP and GHG**.

**Commitment to net-zero Emissions (GHG emissions):**

1. All countries have been asked to commit to net-zero (GHG emissions) by 2050 with credible plans to ensure meeting this domestic target.

2. The Chinese, who posited themselves as reaching there by 2060, have been sternly told to be there a decade earlier.
3. The UN Secretary-General has called on countries to declare national climate emergencies apart from building a coalition for a carbon-neutral world by 2050.
4. As of today, countries representing **around 65% of global CO2 emissions** have already agreed to this.
5. The UN Secretary-General would like this figure to reach **90% within 2021**.
6. These plans and their implementation will, undoubtedly, be subject to international reviews and verification.

### **India's contribution:**

India, with its **huge population** and now one of the world's largest economies, but India has an extraordinarily **small carbon footprint in per-capita terms**. India's per capita CO2 emission stands at around 2 tons.

India has been a **global record-setter** in pushing renewables and has been an active participant in climate negotiations representing the interests of the developing nations.

It has been a strong orator of the **principle of differentiated responsibilities and recognition of historical responsibilities**.

### **India's Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC) targets:**

The INDCs will largely determine whether the world achieves an ambitious 2015 agreement and is put on a path toward a low-carbon, climate-resilient future.

India has submitted its Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

### **India's INDCs are:**

1. To reduce the emissions intensity of its GDP by 33 to 35 per cent by 2030 from 2005 level.
2. To achieve about 40 per cent cumulative electric power installed capacity from non-fossil fuel-based energy resources by 2030, with the help of the transfer of technology and low-cost international finance, including from Green Climate Fund.
3. To create an additional carbon sink of 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of CO2 equivalent through additional forest and tree cover by 2030.

### **A fund pay-in: Idea by Raghuram Rajan will possible to implement?**

1. The issue of money, especially the lack of it, is a perennial one in the climate discourse.
2. In this context, Raghuram Rajan has recently put forward a proposal for India to consider it calls on countries to pay into a **global fund amounts based on their carbon emissions over and above the global per-capita average of five tons.**
3. This obviously **disincentivises coal** in a big way while **incentivising renewables**. Those above the global average would pay, while those below would receive the monies.
4. While this would suggest a **certain equity**, it may be unacceptable to the developed countries even though Mr. Rajan has gone along with the drumbeat to forget historical responsibility.
5. As far as India is concerned, for starters such a proposal may appear attractive as India today has per capita CO2 emission of only 2 tons and is a global record setter in pushing renewables.
6. But will real politics allow a major economy to benefit from such fund flows or indeed even be the recipient of any form of concessional climate finance? Unlikely.
7. Moreover, the **long-term implications** of such a proposal in a setting of a sharply growing economy and reliance on coal-produced electricity for several decades require examination in detail, quite apart from factoring in the twists and turns that negotiations could give to such an idea.
8. And then, of course, there are alternatives such as emission trading.
9. The new proposals seem to **focus on current and future emissions**, and in keeping with the contract and converge approach, allows practical considerations to trump fairness by not only giving **a short shrift to historical responsibility** but also **denying priority access** to the remaining carbon space for developing countries.
10. In that sense, it double penalises them while giving developed countries a certain free pass.
11. Here it bears noting that more than 75% of the carbon space available to humankind to keep global temperature rises to 1.5° C has already been taken up by the developed world and China.

### **Conclusion:**

Climate negotiations are not just about the environment and human well being or even energy, but are also about **global governance**, and will henceforth be pursued with a vigour which requires India to carefully calibrate its approach including on the economic and political fronts.

Climate justice is an **imperative for India**, which needs to leverage **its green and pro-nature commitment** to ensure **carbon and policy space** for its developmental and global aspirations.

India's diplomatic and negotiating efforts must be quickly geared to that end.

## **8.ISRO places Brazil's Amazonia-1, 18 other satellites in orbit**



### **Context:**

ISRO successfully launched **Brazil's optical earth observation satellite, Amazonia-1**, and 18 co-passenger satellites from India [5] and the U.S.A. [13] from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SHAR) at Sriharikota.

The satellites were carried on board the **PSLV-C51**, the 53rd flight **of India's workhorse launch vehicle** and the **first dedicated mission for New Space India Ltd (NSIL), the commercial arm of ISRO.**

The mission was undertaken under a commercial arrangement with Spaceflight Inc., USA.

**The PSLV-C51**, equipped with two solid strap-on boosters, the third such launch of the PSLV-DL variant, lifted off from the first launch pad at Sriharikota.

### **PSLV-C51, the first dedicated launch by NSIL:**

1. PSLV-C51/Amazonia-1 is the **first dedicated commercial mission** of **New Space India Limited (NSIL)**, a Government of India company under Department of Space.
2. New Space India Limited (**NSIL**), the newly created **second commercial arm** of the Indian Space Research Organisation, has bagged its first contract.
3. The establishment of NSIL was announced in Budget 2019. One of the mandates of NSIL is to **mass-produce and manufacture the SSLV** and the **more powerful PSLV** in partnership with the private sector in India through technology transfers.
4. Its aim is to **use research and development** carried out by ISRO over the years for commercial purposes through Indian industry partners.
5. It differs from ISRO's existing commercial arm Antrix Corporation. Antrix will handle ISRO's commercial deals for satellites and launch vehicles with foreign customers.
6. NSIL will deal with **capacity building of local industry for space manufacturing**.

#### **About PSLV:**

Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle is an **indigenously-developed** expendable launch system of the ISRO.

It comes in the category of medium-lift launchers with a reach up to various orbits, including the **Geo Synchronous Transfer Orbit, Lower Earth Orbit, and Polar Sun Synchronous Orbit**.

**All the operations of PSLV are controlled from the Satish Dhawan Space Center, Sriharikota.**

#### **Differences between PSLV and GSLV:**

1. India has two operational launchers- Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) and Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV).
2. **PSLV is the third generation launch vehicle** of India and the **first Indian launch vehicle** which is equipped with liquid stages.
3. GSLV, on the other hand, is the fourth generation launch vehicle and is a three-stage vehicle with four liquid strap-ons.
4. PSLV was developed to launch **low-Earth Orbit satellites** into **polar and sun synchronous orbits**. It has since proved its versatility by launching geosynchronous, lunar and interplanetary spacecraft successfully.
5. On the other hand, GSLV was developed to launch the **heavier INSAT class of geosynchronous satellites** into orbit. In its third and final stage, GSLV uses the **indigenously developed cryogenic upper stage**.

6. PSLV is designed mainly to deliver the earth observation or remote sensing satellites, whereas, GSLV has been designed for launching communication satellites.
7. GSLV delivers satellites into a higher elliptical orbit, Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit (GTO) and Geosynchronous Earth Orbit (GEO).
8. PSLV can carry satellites up to a total weight of 2000 kgs into space and reach up to an altitude of 600-900 km. GSLV can carry weight up to 5000 kgs and reach up to 36,000 km.

#### **DRDO pay-load also included:**

Of the 13 satellites from the U.S., one was a technology demonstration satellite and the remaining for 2-way communications and data relay. Among the five Indian satellites, one belongs to DRDO.

Five satellites belong to India including the Satish Dhawan SAT (SDSAT) built by Space Kidz India, a nano-satellite intended to study the radiation levels, space weather and demonstrate long range communication technologies, and the UNITYsat, a combination of three satellites intended for providing radio relay services. The other satellite belongs to DRDO.

The SDSAT developed by SpaceKids India has an engraving of Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the top panel of the satellite to show solidarity and gratitude for the atmanirbhar initiative and space privatisation.

The Bhagavad Gita was also sent on-board an SD card to give the scripture, which teaches oneness as the highest form of humanity, the highest honour.

#### **Watching the Amazon rain forests:**

1. **The Amazonia-1**, weighing 637 kg, belonging to the Brazilian National Institute for Space Research (INPE), was separated.
2. The satellite will further strengthen the existing structure by providing **remote sensing data** to users for monitoring deforestation in the Amazon region and for analysis of diversified agriculture across the Brazilian territory, according to ISRO.
3. The Amazonia-1 was injected into its precise orbit of 758 km in a sun-synchronous polar orbit.
4. This moment represents the top of all this effort made by so many people in our National Institute for Space Research and our Space agency.
5. This is a very important mission for Brazil and it represents a new era for Brazilian industry for satellites. This is one positive step of our partnership that is going to grow. We are going to work together and this is the beginning of our partnership.

6. Following that, the **other 18 customer satellites** were placed into their intended orbits.

#### **Information about Amazon Rainforests:**

1. These are **large tropical rainforest** occupying the drainage basin of the Amazon River and its tributaries in northern South America and covering an area of 6,000,000 square km.
2. **Tropical forests are closed-canopy forests** growing within 28 degrees north or south of the equator.
3. They are **very wet places**, receiving more than 200 cm rainfall per year, either seasonally or throughout the year.
4. Temperatures are uniformly high - **between 20°C and 35°C**. Such forests are found in Asia, Australia, Africa, South America, Central America, Mexico and on many of the Pacific Islands.
5. Comprising about **40% of Brazil's total area**, it is bounded by the Guiana Highlands to the north, the Andes Mountains to the west, the Brazilian central plateau to the south, and the Atlantic Ocean to the east.

#### **Conclusion:**

This particular mission is special because these **five Indian satellites** are coming under the **new space reform** announced by the Government of India.

These institutes have done an excellent job. ISRO has promoted, handheld and all along helped them to build these satellites technically correctly to launch them.

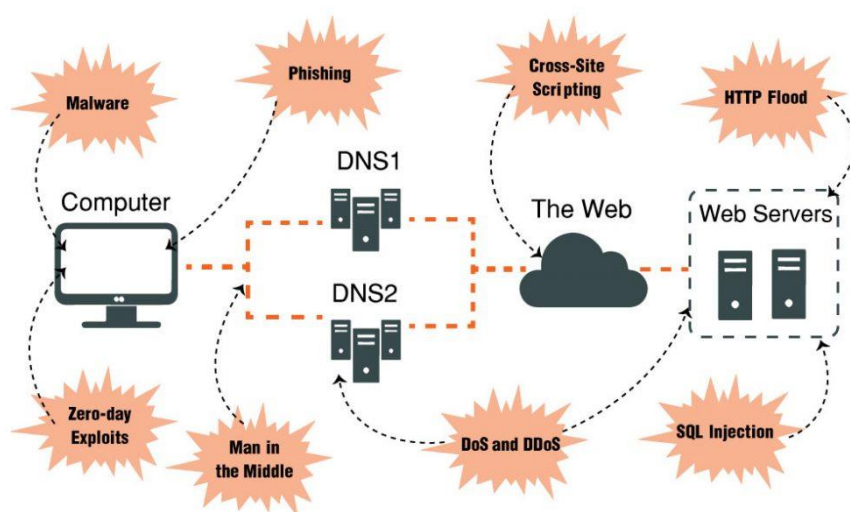
ISRO, like NASA, is essentially a scientific organisation whose main objective is the exploration of space and carrying out scientific missions.

There are a number of **ambitious space missions** lined up in the coming years, including a mission to observe the Sun, a mission to the Moon, a human spaceflight, and then, possibly, a human landing on the Moon.

ISRO has **14 missions** planned this year, including the **first unmanned mission** around the end of the year.

#### **9.Chinese malware may have targeted Indian power systems and seaports: U.S. firm**

### Common Types of Cyber-attacks



#### Context:

Chinese state-sponsored actors may have **deployed malware** into Indian power grids and seaports as border tensions between India-China began escalating in May last, culminating in a deadly clash along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in mid-June.

The alleged cyber intrusion was discovered and revealed by U.S. cyber security and intelligence firm, **Recorded Future**, according to the New York Times, which broke the story.

An recent **grid failure in Mumbai** may have been caused by the Chinese malware, as per the report.

China refuted reports that it had initiated cyber attacks against India's power grid resulting in massive power outages and also claimed that it is 'firmly opposed' to such irresponsible and ill-intentioned practices.

Recorded Future, a Massachusetts-based company that studies the use of the Internet by state actors, in its recent report details the campaign conducted by a China-linked threat activity group RedEcho targeting the Indian power sector.

#### About Cyber attacks:

1. Cyber-attacks are defined as “deliberate actions to alter, disrupt, deceive, degrade, or destroy computer systems or networks or the information and/or programs resident in or transiting these systems or networks.”
2. **Cyber exploitation or cyber espionage**, on the other hand, refers to the penetration of adversary computers and networks to obtain information for intelligence purposes; this is **espionage**, not a destructive activity.

3. Cyber-attack weapons are easy to use and they can **generate outcomes** that range from the simple defacing of a web site to the stealing of data and intellectual property, espionage on target systems and even disruption of critical services.
4. Likewise, cyber-attack as a **mode of conflict** raises many operational issues.
  - a. For example, how will a country know whether it is the subject of a deliberate cyber attack launched by an enemy government?
  - b. How will it prove this?
5. Proving attribution in cyberspace is a **great challenge**. It is extremely difficult to attribute cyber-attacks to a **nation-state**, since collecting irrefutable evidence has proved elusive in almost all cases of this nature in recent years.
6. The **very nature of botnets and zombies** makes it difficult to do so. This has led many analysts to conclude that the Internet is the perfect platform for plausible deniability.
7. Cyber attackers can support military operations. They can disrupt the target's command, control, and communications.
8. They can support covert actions to influence governments, events, organizations, or persons, often disguising whoever is launching those actions.
9. Valuable information and state secrets can be obtained through cyber espionage.

### **Mechanism for Cyber Attacks:**

Cyber-attacks can be carried out in a number of ways. Among them:

1. Computer-network attacks
2. Supply-chain attacks
3. Social-networking-led attacks
4. Attacks on radio networks for GPS and wireless networks
5. Radio frequencies with sufficiently high power to disrupt all unprotected electronics in a given geographical area

### **Types of cyber threats against nations:**

1. Cyberattacks can be launched **against the critical infrastructure of nations** that includes telecommunications, energy, financial networks, transportation systems, and water distribution, among others.

2. In many countries, such infrastructure is owned and operated by the private sector. Much of it depends on SCADA systems, which are **computer-controlled in a networked environment**.
3. Taking advantage of vulnerabilities in these systems, **attackers can disable them and disrupt essential services**.
4. An attack on the air traffic control system could not just wreak havoc with flight schedules but also, in the worst case, **cause crashes**.
5. The effects are the same as if the infrastructure were bombed or attacked by some other physical measure, without the enemy coming in by air, sea, or land. Likewise, **financial networks** can be targeted to **disrupt a nation's economy**.
6. Banks, stock exchanges, trading, online payment systems, and other transactions of all kinds can be brought to a grinding halt as if these were physically bombed. **This is cyber war or information warfare**.
7. The effects are similar to what would be achieved by **Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD)**.

#### **Therefore, Necessity of Cyber-Security:**

1. Photos, videos and other personal information shared by an individual on social networking sites can be inappropriately used by others, leading to **serious and even life-threatening incidents**.
2. Companies have a **lot of data and information** on their systems. A cyber attack may lead to loss of competitive information (such as patents or original work), loss of employees/customers private data resulting into complete loss of public trust on the integrity of the organization.
3. A local, state or central government maintains **huge amount of confidential data** related to country (geographical, military strategic assets etc.) and citizens.
4. **Unauthorized access to the data** can lead to serious threats on a country.

As we choose to stay connected, we are moving towards proliferation and assimilation of larger data sets, interacting with one another (big data, machine learning, Artificial Intelligence, Internet of Things); this **opens the entire ecosystem to larger threats from social deviants**.

It is on the individuals as well as the body corporates to preserve the confidentiality, integrity of data, while **ensuring that accessibility** to the very data is not compromised on any front.

#### **Conclusion:**

Cyber space infringement is a battle that we fight on everyday basis. **India needs stringent laws and policy in place to combat these issues.**

The **extant legal framework** does not sufficiently address the concerns of the sector, and there is an imminent requirement to have a comprehensive legislation in place to address the concerns.

The **proactive vigilance** observed by the body corporates and private individuals, is also being supported by the insurance industry, where cyber-security insurances have garnered immense popularity, and are augmenting the lack of an effective legal regime.

As we welcome the impending legislation, companies in the healthcare and the banking & financial services sector are ensuring that they rely on their own technical and organizational security measures to ensure that the data available with them is not corrupted or is subject to any unwarranted and unauthorized access.

It is oft said that the future is a click away, it is important that the click does not lead to any pernicious portal.



INSIGHTS IAS  
SIMPLIFYING IAS EXAM PREPARATION

**INSTACLASSES 2022**  
Full-fledged Classroom Program for Freshers  
OGP- Offline & Online Guidance Program

We Don't Just Guide You  
**We EQUIP You!**  
EQUIP Strategy for your SUCCESS!

ADMISSIONS OPEN  
BATCH Starts from 12<sup>th</sup> April 2021

Early Bird Offer **15%** disc



Bangalore Office : 7483163074 / 9380863034

Delhi Office : 7303318519 / 011-49520205 | Hyderabad Office : 8688512637





[support@insightsias.com](mailto:support@insightsias.com)

Classes Starting from (Monday)  
12th Oct 2020

# ETHICS CLASSES 2021

Faculty: Prof. K M Pathi Sir

Mode: Online & Offline\*  
Time: 9:30 am to 12:30 pm  
Contact: 7483163074, 9380863034

www.insightsindia.com



**INSIGHTSIAS**  
SIMPLIFYING IAS EXAM PREPARATION

## Advanced Prelims Enrichment Course 2021 (APEC-2021)

(Full Fledged Preparation for Prelims 2021)  
Online Mode & Offline Mode\*

**Orientation On 10 Feb 2021**  
**Starts from 11 Feb 2021**

**Fee: 16,000/- incl. Taxes**

Early Bird Offer : 15 % Discount till 10<sup>th</sup> Feb 2021 | Old Subscriber Offer : 20 % Discount

**Takeaways**

- ◆ Subscribers clearing Prelims will get 50% discount on I-WIL 2021
- ◆ Free Textbook Based Prelims Test Series will be available from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021
- ◆ Timetable is smoothly Integrated with Insta Prelims Revision Plan 2021
- ◆ Mentorship Provided till Prelims 2021

**Classes**


- ◆ **Subject wise Classes** completely oriented towards Prelims Exam
- ◆ **Current Affairs** covered in Every Class of respective topics
- ◆ Extended **CSAT Classes** with full syllabus completion to tackle any unconventional paper
- ◆ **Economic Survey & Budget** integrated with the Classes
- ◆ 3hrs of classes per day for each subject

**Tests**

- ◆ Daily Revision Class Tests for GS as well as CSAT
- ◆ Home Assignments to be followed for more Practice & to Improve your skills
- ◆ Full Length Prelims Test after every Subject
- ◆ Full Length Prelims Test on Economic Survey & Budget
- ◆ Full Length Prelims Test on Agriculture theme


**Special Sessions**


- ◆ Motivational Sessions
- ◆ Strategy classes to improve your accuracy
- ◆ Previous year Questions' Discussion




**SUBSCRIBE**

**TIME TABLE**






**INSIGHTSIAS - BANGALORE**  
Ph: 7483163074, 9380863034



**INSIGHTSIAS - HYDERABAD**  
Ph: 8688512637



**INSIGHTSIAS - DELHI**  
Ph: 01145637946, 73003318519

\* (Offline mode in Bangalore only. Depending on ease of Govt. Restrictions in Delhi, Classes will be LIVE STREAMED in Delhi Centre i.e., Students can watch Classes LIVE in Delhi Centre)

## ESSAYS

Write an essay on the following topic in not more than 1000-1200 words:

- March 07, 2021 : Subtlety may deceive you; Integrity never will
- March 14, 2021 : The Future of Multilateralism : Towards a responsible Globalization
- March 28, 2021 : Prejudice is a burden that confuses the past, threatens the future and renders the present inaccessible
- March 21, 2021 : Our major social problems are not the cause of our decadence but are a reflection of it

\*\*\*



INSIGHTSIAS  
SIMPLIFYING IAS EXAM PREPARATION

**INSTACLASSES 2022**  
Full-fledged Classroom Program for Freshers  
OGP- Offline & Online Guidance Program

*We Don't Just Guide You*  
**We EQUIP You!**  
EQUIP Strategy for your SUCCESS!

ADMISSIONS OPEN  
BATCH Starts from 12<sup>th</sup> April 2021

Early Bird Offer **15%** off

Bangalore Office : 7483163074 / 9380863034  
Delhi Office : 7303318519 / 011-49520205 | Hyderabad Office : 8688512637

✉ [support@insightsias.com](mailto:support@insightsias.com)

### INSIGHTSIAS Toppers from Offline Classroom Program (OGP) and CORE BATCH

									
<b>Jeydev C S</b> Rank 5 OGP 2019 + Core Batch	<b>Dheeraj Kumar Singh</b> Rank 64 OGP 2019	<b>Yashaswini B</b> Rank 71 Core Batch + Mains Test Series 2019	<b>Nidhin K Biju</b> Rank 89 Core Batch + Mains Test Series	<b>M V Satya Sai Karthik</b> Rank 103 OGP 2018	<b>Kumar Shivashish</b> Rank 108 OGP 2019 + Core Batch	<b>Keerthana H S</b> Rank 167 OGP 2018	<b>Abhishek Gowda MJ</b> Rank 278 OGP 2018	<b>Vishnusankar</b> Rank 384 OGP 2018	<b>Kumari Manisha</b> Rank 617 OGP 2018



Hearty Congratulations to AIR 2 & 4 of our Online Test Series and all our proud 160+ Rank Holders in UPSC CSE 2019!

INSIGHTS IAS

INSIGHTS IAS