

PRAYAS4IAS

AN INITIATIVE BY THE PRAYAS INDIA

NOVEMBER WEEK 1



November (Week 1)

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Prelims

NATIONAL

'Janasevaka' and 'Janaspandana' schemes in Karnataka

(Source: [Indian Express](#))

Context: To deliver government services to the doorsteps of citizens, the Karnataka government launched 'Janasevaka' (peoples' servant), an online portal, and 'Janaspandana', an Integrated Public Grievance Redressal System (IPGRS).

What is Janasevaka?

- Janasevaka is an initiative to help people avail government services easily.
- Using a mobile application or website, or by getting in touch via a call centre, people can get up to 56 government services delivered to their doorsteps, including home delivery of ration at subsidised rates, or an Aadhaar card, caste certificate, income certificate, senior citizen card, BBMP khatha transfer and health card.

How to use Janasevaka services

- A website (www.janasevaka.karnataka.gov.in) has been developed to enable citizens to request services. They could also be requisitioned with a phone number (08044554455), which will connect citizens to the Sakala call centre.

What is the Janaspandana initiative?

- Janaspandana is an Integrated Public Grievance Redressal System (IPGRS) through which the government promises a one-stop platform for citizens to raise complaints on any government scheme or service.
- Janaspandana is a call centre that helps address various grievances of the citizens. The citizens can call the helpline (1902) and raise complaints on any government scheme or service.

Fisher Friend Mobile Application

(Source: [The Hindu](#))

Context: With the mass nesting season of the endangered Olive Ridley sea turtles approaching, the Odisha Government, in collaboration with the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF), has come up with a customised mobile application to alert fishermen to no-fishing zones in the Bay of Bengal.

Details:

- Fishermen and boat crew members can download the offline Fisher Friend Mobile Application (FFMA) free to know the GPS locations and the boundaries of the zones.
- According to the Government, the app will not require cellular network coverage and will work in offline mode in the outer sea.
- The Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary, located off the Odisha coast, has been declared a no-fishing zone.

- Each year, the turtles congregate near the Dhamara, the Devi, and the Rushikulya river mouths and along the sanctuary for mass nesting.
- The app would benefit more than 22,000 fishing boats, including trawlers, motorised and non-motorised vessels.

Abortion rules to aid minors

(Source: [The Hindu](#))

Context: *The new abortion rules notified by the Union Government recently recognise minors as a vulnerable category and seek to make services more accessible to them. But social stigma and conflict with the POCSO Act, 2012, or the law against child sexual abuse, pose hurdles. The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Amendment Rules, 2021, define new categories of vulnerable women who are allowed termination up to 24 weeks upon meeting certain conditions and with the permission of two doctors.*

New categories

- These include minors, survivors of sexual assault and those with foetal malformation. Others may seek abortion up to 20 weeks with the permission of one doctor upon meeting certain criteria — earlier you needed the permission of one doctor for termination up to 12 weeks, and two doctors for 12 to 20 weeks.
- The amended law provides for setting up of State-level medical boards to decide if a pregnancy may be terminated after 24 weeks.
- Minors were included as a special category because it was found that a large number of them were approaching courts for permission to terminate pregnancies beyond 20 weeks.
- They were the third largest category after those with foetal abnormalities and rape survivors. Moreover, if you look at the social context, the detection of pregnancies in case of minors gets delayed, and then after that the need to negotiate and seeking relevant care becomes all the more difficult.
- There is a need to fight stigma around adolescent sex. Contraception services rarely reach adolescents. Medical practitioners also rue the obstacles posed by the POCSO Act, 2012, in providing services.
- Section 19 of the Act requires any person aware of a minor engaging in sex to report the matter to the local police even if it was a consensual act as the law pegs the age of consent at 18.
- While the Government has extended the upper limit to 24 weeks for minors, we don't know how much this move will help as adolescent girls find out about their pregnancy in the last minute, when they will be forced to go to medical boards.
- Acknowledging that POCSO introduces “a chill factor” for doctors the challenge lies in educating them that mandatory reporting should not result in denial of service.

Roadkill and extinction risk for leopards in North India

(Source: [Indian Express](#))

Context: *The leopard (*Panthera pardus*) faces an 83% increased risk of extinction in North India due to roadkill, according to a new international study that quantifies the threat posed by roads to the survival of animal populations around the world. The study has been published in the journal Global Ecology and Biogeography.*

Details:



- The leopard population of North India is at highest risk among four animal populations identified as being the most vulnerable to extinction in the next 50 years if observed roadkill levels persist.
- It is followed by the maned wolf and the little spotted cat, both of Brazil, and the brown hyena of southern Africa.
- At an 83% increased risk, the study estimates the time to the North Indian leopard population's extinction at 33 years (see table).

VULNERABLE TO EXTINCTION DUE TO ROADKILL

Species, location	Population road-killed	Probability of extinction	Time to extinction
Leopard, North India (<i>Panthera pardus</i>)	19.4%	83%	33 years
Maned wolf, Brazil	36.4%	34%	30 years
Little spotted cat, Brazil	20-37%	0-75%	0-36 years
Brown hyena, Southern Africa	6-43%	3-100%	0-21 years

OTHER SPECIES VULNERABLE TO ROADKILL

Lion-tailed macaque (South India), sloth bear (South India), Amur tiger, Goa antelope (Tibet), wild yak (Tibet), Iberian lynx, African lion

- Other populations found highly vulnerable include the lion-tailed macaque (*Macaca silenus*) and sloth bear (*Melursus ursinus*) in South India.
- Using existing roadkill data for 392 mammal species on six continents, the researchers made their calculations based on population density, roadkill rates, sexual maturity age, litter size etc.
- For the North Indian leopard population, the study site covered Uttarakhand's Rajaji National Park and Haridwar Conservation area.
- If at least 20% of the population has been killed by roadkill, the risk of local extinction can increase by 10%, the researchers said.
- The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) recognises roadkill as a threat to 10 mammalian species, but the study notes that these were not among those found most vulnerable by the researchers.

Indian farming practices: Learning from elsewhere in the world

(Source: [The Hindu](#))

Context: A paper has appeared recently in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences USA (PNAS)* titled: "Integrated farming with intercropping increases food production while reducing environmental footprint".

Details:

- This work found that



- (1) “relay planting” enhances yield,
- (2) within-field rotation or “strip rotation”, allowing strips for planting other plants (such as grass, fruits) besides the major crop was more fruitful,
- (3) “soil munching,” that is, available means such as crop straw, in addition to the major crop such as wheat or rice, and
- (4) “no-till” or a reduced tillage, which increases the annual crop yield up by 15.6% to 49.9%, and decreasing the environmental footprint by 17.3%, compared with traditional monoculture cropping.
- This led to the conclusion that small farm holders can grow more food and have reduced environmental footprint.
- How do these factors apply to the small farmers of India? Current statistics reveal that our country has a significant population of small farmers, many owning less than 2 hectares of land.
- About 70% of its rural households still depend primarily on agriculture for their livelihood, with 82% of farmers being small and marginal. The total production of food-grains in 2017-18 was estimated to be 275 million tons.
- Some others have pointed out that only 30% of all farmers borrow from formal sources.
- The farm loan waivers from the state governments have been helpful in this regard, but yet, over 50% struggle to borrow from Shylockian sources.

Relay planting

- The site “Relay Cropping- GK Today” explains this in some detail. Relay planting means the planting of different crops in the same plot, one right after another, in the same season.
- Examples of such relay cropping would be planting rice (or wheat), cauliflower, onion, and summer gourd (or potato onion, lady’s fingers and maize), in the same season. Why do this? Well, less risk since you do not have to depend on one crop alone.
- It also means better distribution of labour, insects spread less, and any legumes actually add nitrogen to the soil! We have read about how small farmers in Telangana, Karnataka and Maharashtra are actually doing this and earning money out of such relay farming.
- They plant onions, turmeric, chillies, ginger, garlic and even some native fruits, thus making profit, during these relay times. ‘GK Today’ does, however, point out the difficulties involved in such relay cropping, namely mechanisation here can be difficult, plus the management requirements are somewhat higher.
- It is here that women come in handy. Women plant materials for home food, such as greens, leafy vegetables and pulses such as green grams, Finger millet (ragi in Hindi, kezhwaragu in Tamil) horse gram (chane ki dal in Hindi, kudure gram in Kannada, and kollu in Tamil), cowpeas, and also grass (all of which add to the nitrogen to the soil and also to the world around us, fixing nitrogen not just under our feet but also in the air we breathe; the carbon dioxide, ozone, and the oxides of nitrogen and phosphorus that we inhale every day from the filthy atmosphere is at least nullified a little, thanks to relay cropping)!

Strip cropping

- Strip cropping has been used in the U.S. (where the fields are larger than those in India), where they grow wheat, along with corn and soyabean, in the same farm in an alternative manner.
- However, this needs large lands. In India, where there are large fields (such as the ones owned by cities and state governments), the land is divided into strips, and strips of grass are left to grow between the crops. Planting of trees to create shelters has helped in stabilising the desert in Western India.
- “Strip crop - a ray of hope” is the title given by the site ‘Vikaspedia’, which discusses Western Karnataka (and the nearby Telangana and Northern Tamil Nadu), dry belts with frequent droughts, where 80% of the farmers depend on groundnut as their option.
- The Karnataka Watershed Development (KAWAD), together with the AME Foundation, persuaded the farmers to stop using finger millets, fodder and groundnuts.

Soil mulching and no-till

- While these methods are not easy for small farmers in India, they could be practised at least in larger farms such as the ones owned by industry and governments.
- Soil mulching requires keeping all bare soil covered with straw, leaves, and the like, even when the land is in use.
- Erosion is curtailed, moisture retained, and beneficial organisms, such as earthworms, kept in place. The same set of benefits are also offered by not tilling the soil.
- These four methods suggested by the international group are worth following in India.

India-UK 'green grids' initiative

(Source: [Indian Express](#))

Context: Prime Minister Narendra Modi and UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson have launched a 'green grids' initiative—the One Sun One World One Grid (OSOWOG) project—on the sidelines of the COP26 summit. The project aims to connect energy grids across borders to facilitate a faster transition to the use of renewable energy.

What is the One Sun One World One Grid project?

- India had first proposed connecting solar energy supply across borders at the International Solar Alliance in 2018 to allow parts of the world with excess renewable power to send power to other countries.
- The proposal is aimed at addressing the issue of reliability of supply from solar power plants, which do not generate electricity after the sun has set.
- A transnational grid would allow countries to source solar power from regions where it is daytime to meet their green energy needs even when their own installed solar capacity is not generating energy.
- OSOWOG is also aimed at addressing the issue of high cost of energy storage.
- Power and renewable energy minister RK Singh has underscored the point that the high cost of energy storage is a key challenge to boosting the use of renewable energy and that the OSOWOG initiative is a possible solution for driving down the need for storage, which in effect will reduce the costs of the energy transition.

What are the challenges to the OSOWOG project?

- The transmission of power across vast distances would require large capital investment to set up long transmission lines.
- Experts have pointed out that transmission across great distances can potentially be very expensive.
- They have, however, noted that the first step of OSOWOG would be solar power transfer between neighbouring countries.
- India, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Myanmar and Nepal already share transmission capacity for energy transfer across borders which can be expanded further and utilised for the transfer of solar power between these countries.
- The International Solar Alliance has commissioned a study the feasibility of the OSOWOG project.
- The study will make an assessment on a country-by-country basis, examining projected power demand and supply as well as the renewable energy resource potential.

National Sports Awards 2021

(Source: [PIB](#))

Context: *National Sports Awards 2021 announced.*

Details:

- The National Sports Awards are given every year to recognize and reward excellence in sports.
- ‘Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna Award’ is given for the spectacular and most outstanding performance in the field of sports by a sportsperson over a period of the previous four years.
 - 12 people have been declared winners of this award including Tokyo Olympics Gold medallist Neeraj Chopra.
- ‘Arjuna Award for outstanding performance in Sports and Games’ is given for good performance over a period of previous four years and showing qualities of leadership, sportsmanship and a sense of discipline.
 - 35 people have been selected for the award.
- ‘Dronacharya Award for outstanding coaches in Sports and Games’ is given to coaches for doing outstanding and meritorious work on a consistent basis and enabling sportspersons to excel in international events.
- ‘Dhyan Chand Award for Lifetime achievement in Sports and Games’ is given to honour sportspersons who have contributed to sports by their performance and continue to contribute to promotion of sports event after their retirement.
- ‘Rashtriya Khel Protsahan Puraskar’ is given to corporate entities (both in private and public sector), sports control boards, NGOs including sports bodies at the State and National levels who have played a visible role in the area of sports promotion and development.
- Overall top performing university in inter-university tournaments is given the Maulana Abul Kalam Azad (MAKA) Trophy.

The Vanniyars

(Source: [Indian Express](#))

Context: *The Madras High Court quashed the 10.5 per cent special internal reservation provided by the Tamil Nadu government to Vanniyars, a most backward caste (MBC). The court said the quota was ultra vires to the Constitution and noted how the state government – both the previous AIADMK that made the first move and DMK that implemented it – went ahead without any “quantifiable data” to support the decision.*

How powerful are Vanniyars?

- Even as backward communities such as Thevars and Gounders are largely seen as Tamil Nadu’s socially and politically powerful communities, Vanniyars were one of the largest and most consolidated backward communities that had a consistency in retaining political representation from 1940s and 1950s.
- In the political act of bargaining for community representation too, Vanniyars had been far ahead of other backward and Most Backward Communities (MBC) for decades, which includes their organised state-wide agitations in the mid-1980s demanding an exclusive 20 per cent reservation in the state and 20 per cent in central services.
- Even before these agitations, Vanniyars weren’t at the receiving end but a numerically strong party, enjoying political powers for several years, thanks to Vanniyar leaders such as S S Ramaswami



Padayachiyar and M A Manickavelu Naicker, whose outfits had 10 MLAs each in the state assembly, in 1950s.

- Even as Kallars and Nadars are seen as communities that deserve much more attention than Vanniyars when it comes to their socio-economic conditions in rural Tamil Nadu, those organised agitations in the 1980s and the demands raised often in the later years have benefited Vanniyars, may be much more than other communities.

Why the special quota decision was detrimental to state's social justice values

- If the political decision favouring special quota by DMK and AIADMK were eyeing at mere electoral gains, they were actually derailing the state's enviable track record in ensuring reservation for the underprivileged.
- When Tamil Nadu had 25 per cent reservation for OBCs and 16 per cent for SCs and STs in 1951, it was the first M Karunanidhi government that increased OBC reservation to 30 per cent and SC, ST reservation to 18 per cent in 1971.
- Later, an exclusive 20 per cent reservation was carved out for MBCs in 1989.
- The current reservation breakup of the state comprises 69 per cent – which includes 30 per cent for BCs (including Christians and Muslims), 20 per cent for MBCs, 18 per cent for SCs and 1 per cent for the ST community.
- When the state's two powerful political parties decided to go against this unique social justice system by favouring one community alone with 10.5 percent reservation within the MBC quota of 20%, there were 115 communities in MBC category who were left to share the remaining 9.5% reservation.
- As per the first Tamil Nadu Backward Classes Commission report submitted before the then CM Karunanidhi in 1970 by the Sattanathan Commission, the population of Vanniyars was higher in northern districts of Chengalpattu, South Arcot, North Arcot, Salem, Dharmapuri, Trichirappalli and Thanjavur districts. Their population was very thin in the southern districts.
- As the community population was very less and in most of the districts, the Madras High court, while quashing the quota said, "If 10.5 per cent reservation is given to the Vanniyar caste all over the state, it would prevent the other MBCs in getting admissions in the educational institutions and posts in the government employments."
- There are 38 districts in the state now.
- In other words, the candidates from Vanniyars would automatically get selected in the educational institutions or in the government employment without there being any competition.
- On the other hand, the candidates of other Most Backward Communities would find it difficult to get admission in the Educational Institutions and in the government employment for the reason that their reservation would be decreased from 20 per cent to 9.5 per cent.

The new I-T Annual Information Statement

(Source: [Indian Express](#))

Context: *The Income-Tax Department has rolled out a new Annual Information Statement (AIS) which includes additional categories of information such as those related to interest, dividend, securities transactions, mutual fund transactions and remittances from abroad.*

What is the AIS, and how will it help?

- At present, Form 26AS is detailed by the Tax Department, which is a consolidated annual tax statement that includes information on tax deducted/collected at source, advance tax, and self-assessment that is available on the Income-Tax website against a taxpayer's Permanent Account Number (PAN).

- The Budget for 2020-21 had announced the revised Form 26AS, giving a more comprehensive profile of the taxpayer, going beyond just the details of tax collected and deducted at source.
- The revised Annual Information Statement (AIS) includes additional categories of information of interest, dividend, securities transactions, mutual fund transactions, and remittances from abroad, along with information on many other transactions that are at present available with the Income Tax Department.
- “There may be other transactions relating to the taxpayer which are not presently displayed in the AIS,” the Tax Department said.

Will Form 26A cease to exist now?

- Form 26AS will continue to exist until the new AIS is validated and is completely operational, the Tax Department said.
- In May last year, the Department had notified the new annual information statement in Form 26AS, effective June 1, 2020.
- The revised Form 26AS included all details provided by banks and financial institutions, which were earlier recorded in their Statement of Financial Transactions (SFTs).

What will taxpayers have to do now?

- The new AIS can be accessed by clicking on the link “Annual Information Statement (AIS)” under the “Services” tab on the new Income tax e-filing portal.
- If the taxpayer feels that the information is incorrect, relates to another person/year, is a duplicate etc., a facility has been provided to submit feedback online.
- Feedback can also be furnished by submitting multiple information in bulk. An AIS Utility has also been provided for taxpayers to view AIS and upload feedback in offline manner.
- The reported value and value after feedback will be shown separately in the AIS. In case the information is modified/denied, the information source may be contacted for confirmation.
- A simplified Taxpayer Information Summary (TIS) has also been generated for each taxpayer, which shows aggregated value for the taxpayer for ease of filing returns.
- If the taxpayer submits feedback on AIS, the derived information in TIS will be automatically updated in real time, and that information will be used for pre-filing of returns. Pre-filing will be enabled in a phased manner.
- Taxpayers have been asked to check all related information, and to report complete and accurate information in their Income Tax Returns.

The Khasi Inheritance of Property Bill, 2021

(Source: [Indian Express](#))

Context; Last week, a district autonomous council in Meghalaya announced that it would introduce the ‘Khasi Inheritance of Property Bill, 2021, aimed at “equitable distribution” of parental property among siblings in the Khasi community. If implemented, the proposed Bill would modify an age-old customary practice of inheritance of the matrilineal Khasi tribe. While commentators say it is unlikely it would be made into a legislation, the Bill has brought into focus the practice of matriliney in Meghalaya.

What does matriliney in Meghalaya entail?

- The three tribes of Meghalaya — Khasis, Jaintias, and Garos — practise a matrilineal system of inheritance. In this system, lineage and descent are traced through the mother’s clan.



- In other words, children take the mother's surname, the husband moves into his wife's house, and the youngest daughter (khatduh) of the family is bequeathed the full share of the ancestral — or the clan's — property.
- The khatduh becomes the “custodian” of the land, and assumes all responsibility associated with the land, including taking care of aged parents, unmarried or destitute siblings.
- Custom also dictates that the khatduh cannot sell the property, without permission of her mother's brother (maternal uncle) — since he technically belongs to the mother's clan, through which descent is traced.
- This inheritance tradition applies only to ancestral or clan/community property, which has been with the family for years. On the other hand, self-acquired property can be distributed equally among siblings.
- In this traditional set-up, if a couple does not have any daughters, then the property goes to the wife's elder sister, and her daughters. If the wife does not have sisters, then the clan usually takes over the property.

Does it really empower women?

- Women activists have often pointed out that the matrilineal system in Meghalaya rarely empowers women.
- For one, custodianship is often misconstrued as ownership vested in just one person, that is the youngest daughter, said Shillong-based activist Angela Rangad. “This custodianship comes with the responsibility to care for aged parents, unmarried or destitute siblings and other clan members,” she said.
- Moreover, the custodian cannot buy or sell the land, without taking permission from her maternal uncle.
- People often confuse matrilineal with matriarchal, where women function as heads. “Of course, while women may have freedom of mobility and easier access to education, they are not decision makers in Meghalaya.
- There are barely any women in positions of power, in politics, or heading institutions. The Dorbar Shnong (traditional Khasi village governing bodies) debar women from contesting elections. These are questions we need to introspect and ask.

What does the Bill aim to change?

- The Bill is yet to be introduced in the Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council (KHADC), and its provisions have not been made public.
- However, the main objective, according to Titosstarwell Chyne, who is the chief of the KHADC of the Bill, is “equitable distribution” of parental property among siblings – both male and female.
- Another provision would let parents decide who they want to will their property to. The third provision would prevent a sibling from getting parental property if they marry a non-Khasi and accept the spouse's customs and culture.
- Over the years, a few groups have protested the system of property inheritance, saying it “disinherits” men, and pressed for equitable property distribution between all children in the family.
- Commentators in Meghalaya say that it is too early to say whether such a Bill will actually be made into a legislation as the process is long-drawn and may draw opposition. Since KHADC is a body under the
- Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, it does not have the power to legislate. Paragraph 12 A of the Sixth Schedule gives the final right of passing a law to the state legislature.

INTERNATIONAL

Irish Backstops

(Source: [Indian Express](#))

Context: *There is concern that the UK might trigger Article 16 of the Northern Ireland Protocol, popularly known as the Irish Backstops, several media reports have said. The Irish Backstops determine the nature of post-Brexit trade and in case the UK does invoke it, it would further strain relations with the EU as well as with Ireland. The UK is expected to trigger the article just after COP26, which is taking place in Glasgow right now. Some reports also suggest that the UK might act before COP26.*

Firstly, what are the Irish Backstops?

- The Irish Backstop, formally known as the Northern Ireland Protocol, is an agreement that was reached between the UK and the EU that there would be no new checks on goods crossing the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.
- Before Brexit, people and goods could move freely between the two areas because both were part of the EU's single market and customs union, but the border situation changed post-Brexit.
- The UK comprises Wales, Scotland, England and Northern Ireland. Out of these, Northern Ireland is the only country, which still remains within the EU's single market system for goods.
- Having the backstops means that there would be no border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. It also means that goods cross to and from the country into the EU without customs checks, tariffs and extra paperwork.
- The backstops were opposed by the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) of Northern Ireland since they saw them as weakening Northern Ireland's position within the UK.

What is Article 16?

- Article 16 of the protocol, titled "Safeguards", says that if the application of this agreement leads to "serious economic, societal or environmental difficulties that are liable to persist, or to diversion of trade," then the UK can unilaterally take appropriate safeguard measures.
- But the UK will have to prove that it is facing these difficulties if it wants to trigger it.
- Essentially, invoking this article would pause the protocol and will create a space for further negotiations about how trade should be conducted.
- The Irish Times reported that there are fears that triggering Article 16 could lead the EU to take retaliatory action, ultimately leading to the suspension of the free trade agreement between the EU and UK.

What was the situation at the Irish border before Brexit?

- Before Brexit, the border between the Republic of Ireland and the UK was the only significant land border between the UK and the rest of the EU, and the negotiations for the withdrawal of the UK from the EU recognised the Irish border issue as one of the three most important issues any withdrawal agreement would need to satisfactorily resolve.
- The governments of both Ireland and the UK stated their desire to avoid a "hard" border, that is, a border marked by checkpoints and supervised crossing posts.
- Since around 2005, the presence of physical infrastructure on the Irish border has been practically non-existent, with only a single sign on an uninterrupted road bearing a welcome message and a change from miles per hour to kilometres per hour, or vice-versa.

- The existence of such a border was made possible by the processes that began with the Good Friday Agreement, which was signed on 10th of April, 1998.
- This agreement ended The Troubles — a decades-long conflict in Northern Ireland between the Unionists, who wanted Northern Ireland to remain within the UK, and the Republicans, who wanted Northern Ireland to leave the UK and unify with the Republic of Ireland.
- When the question of Brexit arose, there also emerged the Northern Ireland Protocol, also known as the Irish Backstop.

Global Methane Pledge

(Source: [Indian Express](#))

Context: *The Global Methane Pledge was launched at the ongoing UN COP26 climate conference in Glasgow. So far, over 90 countries have signed this pledge, which is an effort led jointly by the United States and the European Union.*

Methane is the second-most abundant greenhouse gas in the atmosphere, after carbon dioxide, and, therefore, pledges related to cutting down its emissions are significant.

What is the Global Methane Pledge?

- The pledge was first announced in September by the US and EU, and is essentially an agreement to reduce global methane emissions.
- One of the central aims of this agreement is to cut down methane emissions by up to 30 per cent from 2020 levels by the year 2030.
- According to the latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report, methane accounts for about half of the 1.0 degrees Celsius net rise in global average temperature since the pre-industrial era.
- Rapidly reducing methane emissions is complementary to action on carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases, and is regarded as the single most effective strategy to reduce global warming in the near term and keep the goal of limiting warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius within reach.

What is methane?

- According to the UN, 25 per cent of the warming that the world is experiencing today is because of methane, a greenhouse gas, which is also a component of natural gas.
- Because it is a greenhouse gas, its presence in the atmosphere increases Earth's temperature.
- There are various sources of methane including human and natural sources.
- Human sources of methane include landfills, oil and natural gas systems, agricultural activities, coal mining, wastewater treatment, and certain industrial processes, the US Environmental Protection Agency notes.
- The oil and gas sectors are among the largest contributors to human sources of methane. NASA notes that human sources (also referred to as anthropogenic sources) of methane are responsible for 60 per cent of global methane emissions.
- These emissions come primarily from the burning of fossil fuels, decomposition in landfills and the agriculture sector.
- In India, for instance, in 2019, the Ministry of Coal asked state-run coal miner Coal India Limited (CIL) to produce 2 MMSCB (million metric standard cubic metres) per day of coalbed methane (CBM) gas in the next 2 to 3 years.

- CBM, like shale gas, is extracted from what are known as unconventional gas reservoirs — where gas is extracted directly from the rock that is the source of the gas (shale in case of shale gas and coal in case of CBM).
- The methane is held underground within the coal and is extracted by drilling into the coal seam and removing the groundwater. The resulting drop in pressure causes the methane to be released from the coal.

Why is dealing with methane important for climate change?

- According to the International Energy Agency (IEA), while methane has a much shorter atmospheric lifetime (12 years as compared to centuries for CO₂), it is a much more potent greenhouse gas simply because it absorbs more energy while it is in the atmosphere.
- In its factsheet on methane, the UN notes that methane is a powerful pollutant and has a global warming potential that is 80 times greater than carbon dioxide, about 20 years after it has been released into the atmosphere.
- Significantly, the average methane leak rate of 2.3 per cent “erodes much of the climate advantage gas has over coal”, the UN notes.
- The IEA has also said that more than 75 per cent of methane emissions can be mitigated with the technology that exists today, and that up to 40 per cent of this can be done at no additional costs.

Bridgmanite

(Source: [The Hindu](#))

Context: *The key findings of a study led by IIT Kharagpur researchers could help us understand the formation and evolution of the Earth. They have studied a meteorite that fell near the town of Katol in Nagpur District of Maharashtra on May 22, 2012, reporting for the first time, presence of veins of the mineral bridgmanite, which is the most abundant mineral in the interior of the Earth, within the Katol L6 Chondrite meteorite. This finding adds evidence to the Moon-forming giant impact hypothesis.*

Abundant mineral

- Bridgmanite is the most volumetrically abundant mineral of the Earth’s interior. It is present in the lower mantle (from 660 to 2700 km), and it is important to understand its formation mechanism to better comprehend the origin and evolution of planetary interiors.
- The Moon-forming giant impact hypothesis is that long ago, nearly 4.5 billion years ago, the Earth collided with a planet the size of Mars named Thela, and the force of this impact was so huge as to melt the Earth down from the surface to a depth of 750 km to 1,100 km.
- The hypothesis goes that this caused the Earth to be bathed in a magma ocean, and the ejecta from the collision led to the formation of the Moon.
- This is the most favoured hypothesis on the formation of the Moon and the present finding by the Kharagpur team lends further support to it.

Magma ocean

- Earth was an ocean of magma in the past. The heavier iron and nickel went to the core while the lighter silicates stayed in the mantle.
- By studying the meteorite, we can understand more details about the formation of the Earth and other planets.
- Bridgmanite consists of magnesium, iron, calcium aluminum oxide and has a perovskite structure

- While the crystal structure of natural bridgmanite has been reported in other meteorites such as the Tenham and Suizhou meteorites, their chemical composition does not fully match with the terrestrial bridgmanite present in the Earth's interior between 660 and 2700 km depth.

Molnupiravir

(Source: [Indian Express](#))

Context: *Researchers have engineered enzymes to enable faster manufacture of molnupiravir, an investigational oral antiviral being developed for the treatment of Covid-19. The study appears in ACS Central Science.*

Details:

- Molnupiravir works by causing viruses to make errors when copying their own RNA, introducing mutations that inhibit replication.
- Manufactured by Merck, the drug was originally developed to treat influenza. It has been submitted to the US FDA for review as a Covid-19 treatment .
- In India, the Optimus Group recently announced the results of phase 3 clinical trials, which found 91.5% of patients given the drug tested RT-PCR negative compared to 43% in the placebo group.
- In the new study, researchers developed a three-step synthesis route, which was 70% shorter and had a seven-fold higher overall yield than the original route.

One Sun, One World, One Grid

(Source: [The Hindu](#))

Context: *On the second day of COP26, an initiative by India and the United Kingdom to tap solar energy and have it travel seamlessly across borders was announced.*

Details:

- It includes a group of Governments called the Green Grids Initiative — One Sun One World One Grid group — and was announced at COP26 by summit host United Kingdom's Prime Minister Boris Johnson and Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- In the presence of other heads of government, including U.S. President Joe Biden, the two Prime Ministers presented the One Sun Declaration, endorsed by more than 80 countries, setting out the group's aims.
- A Ministerial Steering Group will work towards accelerating the making of large solar power stations and wind farms in the best locations, linked together by continental-scale grids crossing national borders.
- The Ministerial Steering Group includes France, India, the United Kingdom and the United States, and will also have representatives from Africa, the Gulf, Latin America and Southeast Asia, said an accompanying press statement by the Green Grids Initiative.
- Germany attended the first meeting as an observer, while post-election negotiations on a new government continue, as did Australia.



- Research support for the Green Grids Initiative is being provided by the Climate Compatible Growth consortium of universities, which includes Cambridge, Imperial College, Oxford and University College London.
- The Green Grids Initiative Working Groups made up of national and international agencies have already been established for Africa and for the Asia-Pacific region.
- Their membership includes most major multilateral development banks, such as the African Development Bank (AfDB), the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the World Bank.



Mains

GS I

Resisting patriarchy in politics

Context: Just when its leadership was coming to terms with its poor performance in the Assembly polls, the Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) saw a tussle break out between the men and women of its student organisation, the Muslim Students' Federation. Some 10 leaders of Haritha, the women's wing of MSF, accused the office-bearers of making sexist remarks against them in Kozhikode in June. In response, the IUML leadership dissolved the State committee of Haritha and said that the issue is a "closed chapter" but the case is still under investigation.

A label to shake off

- Amid this controversy, Noorbina Rasheed, national general secretary of the IUML's women's wing, defended the party asserting that its ideology is minority politics and not gender politics.
- While maintaining that there is no discrimination between men and women in the party, Ms. Rasheed said that women in the IUML should not forget that they were "Muslims first and only then women".
- She said that her role model is Hajira Beevi, wife of Prophet Ibrahim, while former Haritha leader Fathima Thahiliya had stated that she drew inspiration from the legendary communist leader, K.R. Gowri Amma.
- For the IUML, the label of patriarchy is not easy to shake off. It fielded a woman candidate (Kamarunnisa Anwar) in the Assembly elections for the first time only in 1996.
- The second time it fielded a woman candidate was 25 years later, in 2021. The candidate was Ms. Rasheed, who lost the election.
- Early last month, after Haritha leaders attacked the party leadership for being patriarchal, the IUML State working committee adopted a policy to reserve 20% of organisational posts for women in party-linked outfits despite the IUML-backed Samastha Kerala Jamiat-ul-Ulema reportedly expressing its reservations about the move.
- And yet, no woman figured in the list of office-bearers of the newly constituted committee of the Muslim Youth League, the IUML's youth wing, over a week ago.
- The IUML leadership believes that its defectors are responsible for the Haritha controversy.

A snowball effect

- Meanwhile, while the IUML grapples with the churn, the alleged misogyny in the party has triggered demands in other political parties for more representation for women.
- The newly constituted 56-member Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee has only five women leaders, including three general secretaries, which has become a subject of discussion.
- The party leadership was left embarrassed when a former District Congress Committee president, Bindu Krishna, burst into tears while demanding an assurance on her candidature in the Kollam seat in March, and the party's women's wing president, Lathika Subhash, resigned from her post and shaved her head as a mark of protest against the denial of ticket to her at Ettumanoor. The CPI(M), despite its tall claims about gender equality in the State, faces awkward questions about representation at times, although women are assuming leadership roles now in the party committee.



- It remains to be seen how many women will occupy positions in the State committee as well as the Central committee of the party. The BJP State unit underwent a revamp recently, but the party is still male-dominated.
- Not one of the general secretaries is a woman. The party vice-president, Sobha Surendran, often perceived as a disgruntled leader, was dropped from the reconstituted national executive committee.
- Kerala has an impressive Human Development Index and has produced inspirational women leaders. But the representation of women in political parties in leadership and decision-making roles remains low. It is no wonder that the 140-member Legislative Assembly has only 11 women legislators. The recent developments are little steps towards change.

GS II

Lower judiciary and centralised recruitment debate

(Source: [Indian Express](#))

Context: *The central government is preparing to give a fresh push to the establishment of an All India Judicial Service (AIJS) on the lines of the central civil services. Law Minister Kiren Rijiju has called a meeting of state law ministers in the last week of this month to discuss the AIJS and issues related to infrastructure in the lower judiciary. The idea of centralised recruitment of judges has been debated in legal circles for decades, and remains contentious.*

What is the proposed All India Judicial Service (AIJS)?

- The AIJS is a reform push to centralise the recruitment of judges at the level of additional district judges and district judges for all states.
- In the same way that the Union Public Service Commission conducts a central recruitment process and assigns successful candidates to cadres, judges of the lower judiciary are proposed to be recruited centrally and assigned to states.

How are district judges currently recruited?

- Articles 233 and 234 of the Constitution of India deal with the appointment of district judges, and place it in the domain of the states.
- The selection process is conducted by the State Public Service Commissions and the concerned High Court, since High Courts exercise jurisdiction over the subordinate judiciary in the state. Panels of High Court judges interview candidates after the exam and select them for appointment.
- All judges of the lower judiciary up to the level of district judge are selected through the Provincial Civil Services (Judicial) exam. PCS(J) is commonly referred to as the judicial services exam.

Why has the AIJS been proposed?

- The idea of a centralised judicial service was first mooted in the Law Commission's 1958 'Report on Reforms on Judicial Administration'.
- The idea was to ensure an efficient subordinate judiciary, to address structural issues such as varying pay and remuneration across states, to fill vacancies faster, and to ensure standard training across states.
- A statutory or constitutional body such as the UPSC to conduct a standard, centralised exam to recruit and train judges was discussed.

- The idea was proposed again in the Law Commission Report of 1978, which discussed delays and arrears of cases in the lower courts.
- In 2006, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law and Justice in its 15th Report backed the idea of a pan-Indian judicial service, and also prepared a draft Bill.

What is the judiciary's view on the AIJS?

- In 1992, the Supreme Court in All India Judges' Assn. (1) v. Union of India directed the Centre to set up an AIJS. In a 1993 review of the judgment, however, the court left the Centre at liberty to take the initiative on the issue.
- In 2017, the Supreme Court took suo motu cognizance of the issue of appointment of district judges, and mooted a "Central Selection Mechanism".
- Senior advocate Arvind Datar, who was appointed amicus curiae by the court, circulated a concept note to all states in which he recommended conducting a common examination instead of separate state exams.
- Based on the merit list, High Courts would then hold interviews and appoint judges. Datar submitted that this would not change the constitutional framework or take away the powers of the states or High Courts.

What is the opposition to the AIJS?

- A centralised recruitment process is seen as an affront to federalism and an encroachment on the powers of states granted by the Constitution. This is the main contention of several states, which have also argued that central recruitment would not be able to address the unique concerns that individual states may have.
- Language and representation, for example, are key concerns highlighted by states. Judicial business is conducted in regional languages, which could be affected by central recruitment.
- Also, reservations based on caste, and even for rural candidates or linguistic minorities in the state, could be diluted in a central test, it has been argued.
- The opposition is also based on the constitutional concept of the separation of powers. A central test could give the executive a foot in the door for the appointment of district judges, and dilute the say that High Courts have in the process.
- Additionally, legal experts have argued that the creation of AIJS will not address the structural issues plaguing the lower judiciary.
- The issue of different scales of pay and remuneration has been addressed by the Supreme Court in the 1993 All India Judges Association case by bringing in uniformity across states.
- Experts argue that increasing pay across the board and ensuring that a fraction of High Court judges are picked from the lower judiciary, may help better than a central exam to attract quality talent.

Why is the government seeking to revive the idea of AIJS?

- The government has targeted the reform of lower judiciary in its effort to improve India's Ease of Doing Business ranking, as efficient dispute resolution is one of the key indices in determining the rank.
- Officials have said that the AIJS is a step in the direction of ensuring an efficient lower judiciary.
- The government has countered the opposition by states, saying that if a central mechanism can work for administrative services — IAS officers learn the language required for their cadre — it can work for judicial services too.

What is the controversy over Mullaperiyar?

(Source: [The Hindu](#))

Context: Coinciding with an episode of erratic, cataclysmic rain in Kerala's high-ranges, the Supreme Court last week considered a public interest litigation petition filed by a Kerala physician and two former local body representatives on the operation of the Mullaperiyar dam over which Kerala and Tamil Nadu have been sparring for long. With the threat of floods looming large and the reservoirs filling up, the court asked both States to abide by the rule curve for the period set by the Supervisory Committee constituted at its instance. Accordingly, the water level in the dam would be limited to 138 feet till October 31 and 139.5 feet till November 10. The court will hear the case again on November 11.

What is the status now?

- Three shutters of the dam were opened on October 30 to release water.
- While people living downstream were evacuated beforehand, water release from the Mullaperiyar dam did not alter the level in the much larger Idukki reservoir, at over 94% of its storage capacity, located 35 km downstream.

Why is Mullaperiyar dam a sore point?

- The Maharaja of Travancore signed a 999-year Periyar Lake lease agreement with the British government on October 29, 1886, for the construction of the Mullaperiyar dam across the Periyar in the present Idukki district. The dam became a reality nine years later.
- The water supplied from it through a tunnel to the water-scarce southern region of Tamil Nadu, especially the Vaigai basin, would be the lifeline for farmers of Theni, Dindigul, Madurai, Sivaganga and Ramanathapuram districts.
- On an average, 22 thousand million cubic feet (tmc ft) of water is diverted, irrigating about 2.20 lakh acres and meeting the drinking water requirements of people in the region.
- Concerns over the safety of the gravity dam built using lime-surkhi (burnt brick powder) mortar came to the fore in 1979.
- In November that year, a tripartite meeting chaired by the then chairman of the Central Water Commission (CWC), K.C. Thomas, decided that the level had to be brought down from the full reservoir level of 152 feet to 136 feet to enable Tamil Nadu, which owns and maintains it, to carry out dam strengthening works. By the mid-1990s, Tamil Nadu started demanding restoration of the level.

What happened in the legal battles?

- The Central Government set up an expert committee in 2000 to look into the dam's safety.
- The committee recommended raising the level to 142 feet, which was endorsed by the Supreme Court in February 2006. Kerala sought to restrict the level to 136 feet by way of an amendment to the Kerala Irrigation and Water Conservation Act, prompting the Tamil Nadu Government to move the Supreme Court.
- In February 2010, the court constituted an empowered committee to study the whole gamut of issues concerning the dam. Based on the committee's finding that the dam was "structurally and hydrologically safe", the court, in May 2014, struck down Kerala's Act and allowed Tamil Nadu to maintain the level at 142 feet. It also asked the Central Government to set up a three-member Supervisory Committee to monitor dam safety.

Why is it a social issue?



- Commissioned by the Kerala Government in the latter part of the 2000s, a study by IIT-Roorkee raised questions about the survival of the dam, located in seismic zone-3, in the event of an earthquake of a fairly high magnitude.
- A series of tremors felt in the area in 2011 caused alarm. Subsequently, the floods of 2018 and the erratic nature of annual monsoons ever since brought the focus back on the 126-year-old dam.

Why is the case in the Supreme Court again?

- Joe Joseph, a doctor who was the candidate of the corporate-backed Twenty20 in the recent Kerala Assembly election from Kothamangalam, downstream of the Mullaperiyar and Idukki dams, moved the court, along with two others, last year contending that the Supervisory Committee had abdicated its responsibilities to a sub-committee constituted at the direction of the court for water management in the dam. They also urged the court to ask the CWC to fix the ‘rule curve’, ‘instrumentation scheme’ and ‘gate operation schedule’ of the dam.
- Massive landslides had devastated the hilly regions in central Kerala and weather prediction was ominous when the court’s attention was drawn to a report prepared by the United Nations University-Institute for Water, Environment and Health, which cited “significant structural flaws” in the dam and said it “may be at risk of failure”.
- “Leaks and leaching are also concerning, as the methods and materials used during construction are considered outdated, compared to the current building standards,” it said.
- The Kerala Government, a respondent, argued for lowering the full reservoir level to 139 feet as the ageing dam was in a ‘deteriorating condition’. In the event of a dam failure, it would result in unfathomable human tragedy and submitted a case for decommissioning the dam, in whose place a new dam could be built to cater to Tamil Nadu’s water needs.
- However, Tamil Nadu, relying on the Supreme Court’s two judgments, has been opposing any suggestion for lowering the level from 142 feet, apart from rejecting the idea of a new dam.
- It says it is taking steps to complete the remaining works to strengthen the dam, including those meant for the ‘baby dam,’ situated alongside the main dam, for which clearances from the Kerala and Central Governments are required.

What’s on the cards?

- Design of a new dam by Kerala’s Irrigation Design and Research Board is in the final stages. However, without Tamil Nadu on board, this is not going to be a reality.
- Meanwhile, in the backdrop of bad weather forecast, Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan wrote to his Tamil Nadu counterpart M.K. Stalin, urging him to draw maximum quantum of water from the dam through the tunnel so that a large volume release would be avoided altogether.
- Assuring Mr. Vijayan of all support, Mr. Stalin informed him that the level in the dam was being closely monitored and the current storage was well within the level permitted by the Supreme Court.
- A meeting between the Chief Ministers to discuss the issue is being planned in December.

When can land use of allotted plots be amended?

(Source: [The Hindu](http://TheHindu.com))

Context: *The Supreme Court is hearing a petition challenging the change of land use of a plot near Rashtrapati Bhavan, initially allotted for a recreational park and bus terminal, to residential. The plot, according to the Central Public Works Department (CPWD), will be the site of the new Vice-President’s Enclave, which will include the residence and office of the Vice-President. In an affidavit, the Central Government informed the court that the plot had housed government offices for decades and had never been opened for the public or sported recreational space.*

How has the land use been changed?

- On October 28, 2020, the government notified the change in use of the 15-acre plot, called Plot No. 1, on Church Road near Rashtrapati Bhavan and North Block.
- The plot is proposed to be the site of a new residence and office space for the Vice-President, as a part of the larger Central Vista revamp project.
- The plot had been allocated for “transportation (bus terminal/parking) and “government (President Estate and Parliament House) use in the masterplan of Delhi-2021 and further in the Zonal Development Plan as transportation as well as recreational (neighbourhood play area)”.
- With the 2020 notification, the land use of the plot was changed to “residential”. The plot has had offices of the Ministry of Defence since pre-Independence. With two new MoD buildings outside the Central Vista being completed recently, defence personnel have begun shifting from the hutments on this plot as well as others along the Central Vista.

What are the rules on recreational areas in the land acts?

- Section 11-A of the Delhi Development Act, 1957, gives the “Central Government” the authority to “make any modifications to the masterplan or the zonal development plan”.
- This section was cited when the Delhi Development Authority published a notice inviting objections and suggestions regarding the then-proposed land-use change on March 4, 2020. As many as 90 submissions were received and “considered” before the change was notified in October.
- The plot is owned by the Land & Development Office, under the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, which is executing the project through the CPWD.

Why does the amendment matter?

- The government has said the change was required for it to go ahead with its plan to build the Vice-President’s Enclave, for which the CPWD invited bids and shortlisted construction agencies in October. Financial bids have been invited till November 2.
- The CPWD has proposed construction of three of the nine office buildings planned as the new Central Secretariat on the site of the current Vice-President’s residence on Maulana Azad Road. The government has argued the plots occupied by hutments are under-utilised.

What lies ahead?

- The CPWD submitted its affidavit on October 28, and hearing the matter the next day, the Supreme Court gave the petitioner time to file a rejoinder. It adjourned the matter till November 16.
- The CPWD has said the petition is misconceived and liable to be dismissed with costs.
- It said overall the space open to the public in the Central Vista would increase with the shifting of Ministries from the 27-acre North Block and South Block, which are to be converted into “national museums”.

Getting nutrition back on the school high table

(Source: [The Hindu](https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/article-getting-nutrition-back-on-the-school-high-table.html))

Context: With COVID-19 cases reducing in the country, several establishments, including schools, are opening again. While the reopening of all schools is on the anvil, the festive season ahead and the fact that children are not yet in the ambit of the vaccination drive are causing apprehension. We, as a society, must focus on the nutrition of children to ensure they are armed with good immunity as they get ready to take on new challenges especially after emerging from the confines of their homes. However, It is important to remember that even before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, India was facing significant nutritional

challenges. Hence, there is a need to pivot on children's nutrition, using the novel coronavirus pandemic to better understand current nutrition and nutritional requirements for a healthy body and mind.

Tackling India's triple burden

- India faces multiple problems of under-nutrition and overweight/obesity coexisting with deficiencies of micronutrients such as iron, zinc, calcium and several vitamins.
- This triple burden of malnutrition has to be identified, understood and addressed. It is much more important especially in the case of children and adolescents as it is during these phases of life that we see rapid growth of the body and development of food habits.
- Childhood and adolescence are two conjoined periods of continuous growth and development — a seamless duration. For instance, between two and 10 years of age, children tend to grow at an average of 6-7 cm in height and 1.5 to 3 kg in weight every year. But specifically, when the growth spurt happens at about 10-12 years in girls and two years later in boys during adolescence, their nutritional needs are vastly increased.
- In the case of girls, their nutritional status impacts not only their health but that of generations to come. Malnutrition in any form can put children and adolescents at risk of compromised immune function, thus making them vulnerable to infections.

Social factors

- To understand and foster their immunity, one also needs to understand disruptive social environment factors that affect diet quality.
- In urban as well as among middle class and affluent communities, restricted movement, constrained socialisation and even dwindling physical contact have become the new normal.
- COVID-19 isolation and fatigue have led to generalised stress, adding to the immunity challenge for children.
- These challenges coupled with a lack of diet diversity leading to imbalanced micronutrient intake or consumption of high carbohydrate and high sugar foods, endanger the child's health by compromising their immunity and making them vulnerable to infections.
- Hence, the way we approach nutrition needs to change.

Need for a balanced diet

- It is essential to look beyond minimum calorie requirements and ensure children consume a balanced diet with adequate diversity in order to ensure the required balance of all necessary nutrients. Providing children with a balanced diet packed with all the necessary nutrients provides them with a solid foundation for an active and healthy life.
- Often overlooked, micronutrients are essential for production of enzymes, hormones and other substances for good immune function, healthy growth and development. Each stage of the body's immune response relies on the presence of many micronutrients.
- To combat hidden hunger, affordable, accessible and diverse food sources must be made available across India. Micronutrients that are primarily available in fruits, vegetables, greens, nuts, legumes and whole grains play a crucial role in enhancing the native and adaptive immune function and also aid 'immune memory' formation.
- A substantial serving of fresh fruits and vegetables, as much as about 300-500 gm per day per child is recommended depending on the age group. These, along with curd and nuts, can increase beneficial probiotic bacteria in the intestine. But it is better to help them choose fresh fruits rather than fruit juices.
- Thoroughly cooked meat/poultry and sea fish are very good for protein; sea fish also provide essential fats.
- About 300ml-400 ml of milk or curd can provide the required calcium, good quality protein and other nutrients.
- Among urban and affluent groups, indulgence in frequent munching of high-calorie snacks and sweetened beverages that are devoid of beneficial nutrients should be discouraged.



- However, fats need not be seen as a villain — children and adolescents need about 25g-50g a day, which should ideally be derived from more than two varieties of oils. Maintaining ideal body weight, regular physical activity, adequate water intake along with adequate sleep and low screen time can go a long way in building and regulating their immunity.

Noon meal scheme

- The Pradhan Mantri Poshan Shakti Nirman Yojana (PM POSHAN) — the mid-day meal programme in its new avatar — is all set to broad base itself even to students of pre-primary levels or Bal Vatikas of government and government-aided primary schools along with primary and upper primary schoolchildren who are already within the ambit of the mid-day meal programme.
- The PM POSHAN envisages providing 450 Kcal energy and 12g of protein for primary; 700 Kcal and 20g protein for upper primary children through diet diversity.
- In addition, monitoring haemoglobin levels of schoolchildren, appointment of nutritional experts to ensure the haemoglobin and growth status are continuously monitored; focus on nutrigardens are all welcome steps as we prepare to reopen schools.
- Moreover, special provisions for nutritional items for children in districts with high prevalence of anaemia and the involvement of farmer producer organisations and self-help group women will strengthen linkages and convergence for promoting children's nutrition.
- COVID-19 or no COVID-19, good immunity will lay the foundation for long-term well-being. After all, good nutrition, safe food, and positive lifestyles are the cornerstones of great immune function.
- To ensure this, schools, when they reopen, should be avenues for teaching nutrition as a life skill than rhetorical pedagogy. It is our collective responsibility to ensure that our children are nurtured and nourished.

On dealing with false criminal cases

(Source: [The Hindu](#))

Context: *It is often alleged that false cases of cruelty are registered by the police at the behest of the estranged wife under Section 498A of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), and many innocent relatives of the husband are roped in overzealously. This Section, along with Section 304B on dowry deaths, was brought in to check the menace of increasing dowry deaths and the cruelty meted out to married women by their in-laws in 1983. But its misuse has outraged many since then. Similarly, allegations are levelled sometimes for the misuse of certain provisions of the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989. This special law was enacted to remove the discrimination faced by the SC and ST communities, who remain vulnerable and are sometimes denied their civil rights. But it is alleged that, at times, cases are registered to settle personal scores.*

Judgment modified

- Realising the misuse of Section 498A, the Supreme Court in Rajesh Sharmavvs State of Uttar Pradesh (2017) issued certain guidelines, including the formation of district Family Welfare Committees (FWCs), restraint on arrest till the complaint was examined by the committee, the disposal of the proceedings by a senior judicial officer in case of a settlement between the parties, etc.
- However, in 2018, the Supreme Court in Social Action Forum for Manav Adhikar vs Union of India modified the same judgment, stating that most of the directions had the potential to enter into the legislative field, which was not permissible.
- It was held that the constitution of the extrajudicial FWCs was contrary to the procedure prescribed under the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC).



- Similarly, the Supreme Court in Subhash Kashinath Mahajan vs State of Maharashtra (2018), taking cognisance of the abuse of the process of the courts with regard to certain provisions of the SCs and STs (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, issued certain guidelines, including the holding of a mandatory preliminary inquiry to avoid false implication of an innocent individual, the approval of the appointing authority before the arrest of a public servant, etc.
- However, in 2019, the Supreme Court in Union of India vs State of Maharashtra and Ors., overruled the above judgment and held that the guidelines were opposed to the protective discrimination given to members of SC and ST communities as envisaged under the Constitution. Lodging a false report, the court said, “is due to the human failing and not due to the caste factor”.

Genuineness of allegations

- These judgments indicate that the courts cannot lay additional guidelines when the existing law is unambiguous and only legislature can modify such law in its wisdom.
- This also means that the onus is on the police to ensure that once the law is set into action, no undue advantage of the special law is taken by the complainant. The investigating officer must not jump to conclusions as soon as a First Information Report (FIR) is registered.
- Some investigation must be done to confirm the genuineness of a complaint before an arrest takes place. It is a settled law that no arrest can be made in a routine manner on a mere allegation. The arrest must be necessary and justified. Mere authority to arrest is not sufficient.
- The Supreme Court, in its landmark judgment in Arnesh Kumar vs State of Bihar (2014), asked the police to satisfy themselves on the necessity of an arrest under the parameters laid down in Section 41 of the CrPC.
- Police officers, in fact, are duty-bound to ensure that the principles set by the Supreme Court in its various judgments are implemented by the investigating officers.
- Further, the judicial magistrate is also required to peruse the report furnished by the police officer and satisfy themselves before authorising further detention.
- Though there are legal remedies available against those lodging false reports, the general perception, however, is that the remedial measures are not only insufficient but also ineffective. The first remedial measure is to initiate criminal action against the person who gives false information to the police or levels specific criminal charges against a person.
- The police, after completing the investigation, may initiate action under Section 182 or 211 of the IPC respectively.
- However, both these offences are non-cognisable and a magistrate's nod is necessary for initiating further legal action. The court, on its own, in certain cases directs the police to take action under these Sections if, on the completion of the trial, it is found that the allegations were completely false.
- Second, the complaint may be filed before a judicial magistrate having jurisdiction, who, after an inquiry, can take appropriate action against a person who filed a false case with the police. Third, the complainant may approach a High Court for anticipatory bail and for quashing the FIR.
- The Supreme Court recently held that even in non-compoundable cases that are not so serious or private in nature, the High Court, using its inherent powers under Section 482 of the CrPC, may quash the judicial proceedings even after a conviction, in case a genuine compromise is reached between the warring parties.
- The Law Commission, in its 243rd report in 2012, had suggested making Section 498A compoundable with the permission of the court, but it was not accepted by the Government. Fourth, in addition to the above, damages may be claimed under the law of tort for malicious prosecution and causing injuries.

What data show

- As per data compiled by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) in the report Crime in India 2020, about 5% of the cases under Section 498A were found to be false. About 9.4% were either non-cognisable or civil in nature or with insufficient evidence in the end.



- Similarly, about 12% of the cases under the SCs and STs (Prevention of Atrocities) Act were found to be false by the police, and about 7% were either non-cognisable or civil in nature or with insufficient evidence in the end.
- Further, out of the 17,765 cases under Section 498A decided by the courts, 3,425 cases ended with a conviction. Out of the 8,138 cases under the SCs and STs (Prevention of Atrocities) Act decided by the courts, 3,588 cases ended with a conviction.
- Although there are varied reasons for acquittal, including a delay in lodging the FIR, witnesses turning hostile, compromise between the parties, lack of proper presentation by the prosecution and an appreciation of the evidence by the court, etc., the problem arises when a court concludes that a case is false.
- Since the onus of arriving at the truthfulness of a case lies primarily with the investigating officer, it is their duty to investigate the case thoroughly and collect all the facts and circumstances fearlessly. This would ensure that false cases are closed in time and no innocent individuals have to suffer the rigours of the law.

GS III

The race to tackle global warming

(Source: [The Hindu](#))

Context: *IPCC warned in August that the observed increase in global surface temperature showed unusual warming during the 1850-2020 period.*

Details:

- The gap between a projected emissions cut against the actual need could lead to a rise in temperature by 2.7°C by 2100, says a UN report
- India, which has pledged to cut the emissions by 33-35% of GDP by 2030, has declared its pre-2020 performance on this metric achieved, at 24%
- The COP26 UN Climate Change Conference opening in Glasgow, Scotland, on Sunday has raised expectations, just as the COP21 conference in Paris did six years ago, that there will be determined action by 2030 on the defining challenge before humanity.
- After the COVID-19 pandemic forced a postponement of the event in 2020, nearly 120 countries are now ready to engage in environmental diplomacy until November 12, when major emitters of greenhouse gases, such as China, the U.S., the EU and India, and developing countries, including small island states, will try for consensus on rules to cut emissions, mechanisms to adapt to climate impacts and compensation for nations for loss and damage.
- The climate negotiations seek to raise the ambition of countries under the Paris Agreement of 2015 to cut carbon dioxide emissions, after a long spell of drift since 2015 caused by economic declines, an upsurge of nationalism, the withdrawal of the U.S. from the pact under President Donald Trump and the pandemic.
- Under President Joe Biden, the U.S. returned to multilateral diplomacy and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), giving new life to the idea that advanced nations will transfer green technologies without hard intellectual property barriers and provide the agreed \$100 billion funding for developing countries annually from 2020 to help reduce emissions.
- The funds will also help them adapt to extreme climate events such as intense storms, fires, droughts, floods and food deficits.

Climate impact

- The impact of the climate on the frequency and intensity of these events was documented by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in its special report of 2018 on 1.5 degrees C warming, and the just-released assessment on the physical science behind a warming world.
- All the headline points in the latest report point to a narrowing window for the world to taper down emissions before the temperature rises beyond 2 degrees C.
- At Glasgow, the poorer half of the world, which did not contribute to the problem but faces disastrous impacts, will press the key question of equity. Under the UNFCCC, all countries do not have the same responsibilities, given their respective levels of development. This principle of common but differentiated responsibilities guides the Paris Agreement.
- India, which has pledged to cut the emissions intensity of its growth by 33-35% of GDP from 2005 levels by 2030, has declared its pre-2020 performance on this metric achieved, at 24%, while it is working to fulfil other Paris promises — raising renewable energy capacity to make up a 40% share and expanding forest cover to create a 2.5 to 3 billion tonne carbon sink.

- More recently, it announced a scale-up of its renewable power plans to 450 GW by the end of the decade, and a national hydrogen policy to produce the chemical element through green methods, aiding its deployment in industrial sectors as well as transport, and aiming for export.

Science sets tempo

- The tempo for the Glasgow conference has been set by scientific reports, warning of continuing extreme human pressure on the climate system.
- One IPCC report of August 2021 warned that the observed increase in global surface temperature showed unprecedented warming during the 1850-2020 period compared with reconstructed temperature data over a period of 2,000 years.
- On the eve of the climate meet, the UN Environment Programme issued its 12th Emissions Gap Report, comparing the updated emissions reduction pledges made by countries for 2030, with what is needed to keep the rise in global temperature to 1.5 degrees C or even 2 degrees C.
- That gap, between a projected emissions reduction of 7.5% for 2030 against the need for 30 to 55% cuts, and even taking into account the latest promises by countries, could lead to a rise in temperature by 2.7 degrees C by the end of the century.
- Moreover, G20 countries, accounting for nearly 80% of global emissions, are not on a clear course to achieving net zero (balancing out emissions) based on 2030 commitments.
- The net zero concept remains contentious, because of the uncertainties surrounding long-term targets, but big countries such as China have set such a goal, while the EU as a bloc, Germany, the U.K., France, Canada and others have legal mandates.
- At COP26, the road to these targets is set to become the focus of debate. Article 6 of the Paris pact provides for the establishment of rules, modalities and procedures, which will enable countries, public and private entities to reduce emissions, and which will be accounted towards national pledges.
- The private sector sees the potential for a market mechanism for emissions credits, while critics see scope for juggled numbers that do not cut real emissions, and lead to deception through creative accounting.
- Another conference priority is to raise the ambition of high carbon countries, notably China, to phase out coal in energy production.
- This is a contentious issue, since coal is a reliable option for many, despite its contribution to high emissions and atmospheric pollution, and even the U.S., along with India, emphasises carbon capture technology — expensive and nascent at present — rather than a quick move to alternatives. Australia too bats for coal.

Power shortage

- The International Energy Agency (IEA) predicted a “rebound” in global coal use in 2021 spurred by COVID-19 recovery, and the recent power shortages worldwide have increased attraction for coal. Solar and wind are not adequate to meet the surge.
- That setback, however, has not eased up the pressure from young climate activists on countries to move away from “dirty” coal. Their disinvestment campaign is hurting, as public and private sectors pull out their money. The militant campaigners, led by the face of the youth movement, Greta Thunberg, will be heard in Glasgow.
- Scientists too are disappointed with the progress. James Hansen, the former NASA researcher whose testimony to the U.S. Congress in 1988 on human-caused global warming proved greatly influential, has called COP26 a ‘gas bag season’ since politicians are not ready to talk about the gravity of scientific evidence.
- The IPCC says in its latest report, “It is unequivocal that human influence has warmed the atmosphere, ocean and land. Widespread and rapid changes in the atmosphere, ocean, cryosphere and biosphere have occurred.” COP26 will be a stocktake of whether political will is strong enough to stave off disaster.



NREGA: low funds, caste-based payment delays, and implications for the economy

(Source: [Indian Express](#))

Context: *Two organisations that track the implementation of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) brought out a report — called MGNREGA Tracker — by using the government’s Management Information System (MIS) data. These two organisations are the People’s Action for Employment Guarantee (or PAEG, which is an umbrella organisation for several activists and academics who initially lobbied for the rural employment guarantee scheme and now track its implementation) and LibTech India (which brings together engineers, social workers and social scientists interested in improving public service delivery). This is the fourth such “tracker” on MGNREGA and it is significant for the simple reason that MGNREGA’s performance is possibly the most important proxy for the health of the informal economy, which accounts for anywhere between 80% to 90% of all employment in India. Before we look at the main takeaways from the latest MGNREGA tracker, it is best to understand what is MGNREGA, why was it started in the first place and why is it so heavily politicised.*

A brief history of MGNREGA

- The MGNREGA was enacted in 2005 by the Congress-led UPA government. But it faced a lot of opposition within the ruling coalition, especially within the Congress.
- The draft NREGA entered national policy debates in India... like a wet dog at a glamorous party.
- Eventually, however, it was seen as a response to the deep economic distress that existed in rural India where farming was proving to be increasingly unremunerative even as cities failed to create adequate job opportunities.
- Thus, MGNREGA was started to provide a lifeline to millions of rural households. It did so by the government providing 100 days of “guaranteed” employment in a year to any rural household (or family) at minimum wages.
- While the Congress-led UPA government believed that fast economic growth will eventually reduce poverty and bring prosperity, it did agree — albeit after a lot of internal wrangling — that in the meantime there should be some kind of safety net for the millions of rural Indians who may not benefit immediately from economic growth.
- Broadly speaking, it was thought that between a bare minimum payout through this rural job guarantee scheme on the one hand and the expansion of subsidised food grains on the other, the government would be able to make the growth process — which was to a great extent unequal — more “inclusive”.
- Soon, MGNREGA’s “performance” became the most visible measure of the economy’s health. It was expected that if the Indian economy is booming and creating new jobs, one should expect less demand for jobs under the MGNREGA. Conversely, if the economy is struggling, MGNREGA would see exalted levels of activity.
- As it turned out, MGNREGA continued to gain in popularity among rural Indians during a phase of India’s economic life when the country witnessed its fastest GDP growth.
- However, Prime Minister Narendra Modi came to power in 2014 after berating MGNREGA (as well as the National Food Security Act or NFSA, which provides for subsidised food grains to the poor); he described them as the “politics of dole”.
- His vociferous criticism was not in isolation. There were many who argued that MGNREGA payouts were making Indians lazy and taking away the incentive to migrate and work hard while also raising the cost of doing business for business firms.
- In fact, in February 2015, the PM mocked the Congress party for needing MGNREGA.

- Oddly enough, PM Modi's statement not only captured the harsh reality of India's economic growth but also explained the rationale for MGNREGA. Not surprisingly, be it the aftermath of demonetisation or the Covid-induced disruption, MGNREGA and NFSA continue to be the go-to schemes every time the BJP government senses economic distress.
- However, such starkly opposite views by the principal political parties have made MGNREGA a highly politicised intervention.

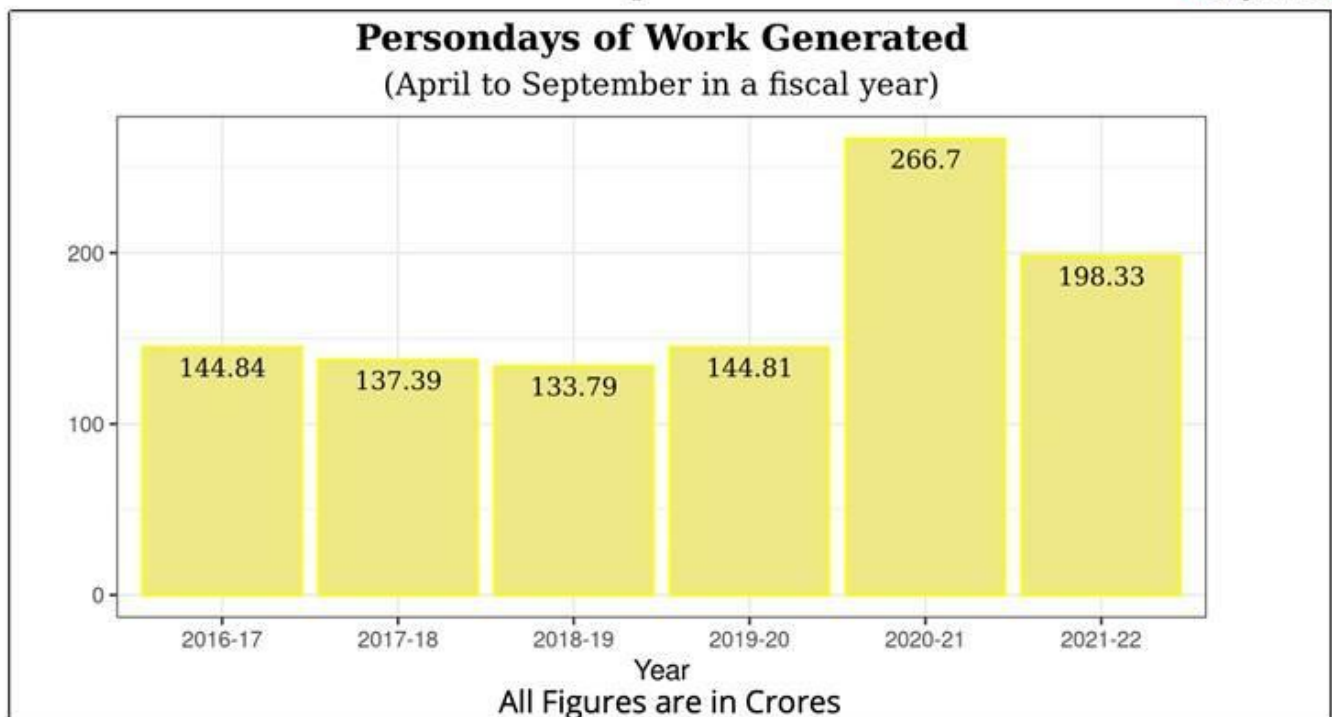
Main takeaways from the latest 'tracker'. Here are some of the key findings:

1. Inadequate Allocation and repeated payment delays

- The first finding has to do with the Government of India not allocating adequate funds for MGNREGA in the Budget for the current financial year. According to the PAEG, the total budget allocation for MGNREGA this year was 34% less than the revised budget of the last financial year (2020-21).
- At one level, this is hardly surprising since this year's (2021-22) Budget even saw the central government cut down the health budget by 10%. If the government can cut the health budget by 10% immediately after being struck by the Covid pandemic, it is hardly surprising that the MGNREGA budget was cut by 34%.
- Presumably, at the time of the Budget — February 1, 2021 — the government thought the pandemic had ended and the economic recovery would start in full flow from April onwards.
- Of course, as it turned out, from April onwards, it was the Covid pandemic that surged, not the economic recovery. That is why, as of September end, the government had already spent 90% of its MGNREGA budget.
- What's more, it is in this dire state even though the demand for MGNREGA jobs is down 25% from last year (SEE CHART 1); it is noteworthy, however, that the demand is still higher than the pre-Covid period.

Graph 1

EXPRESS
explained.



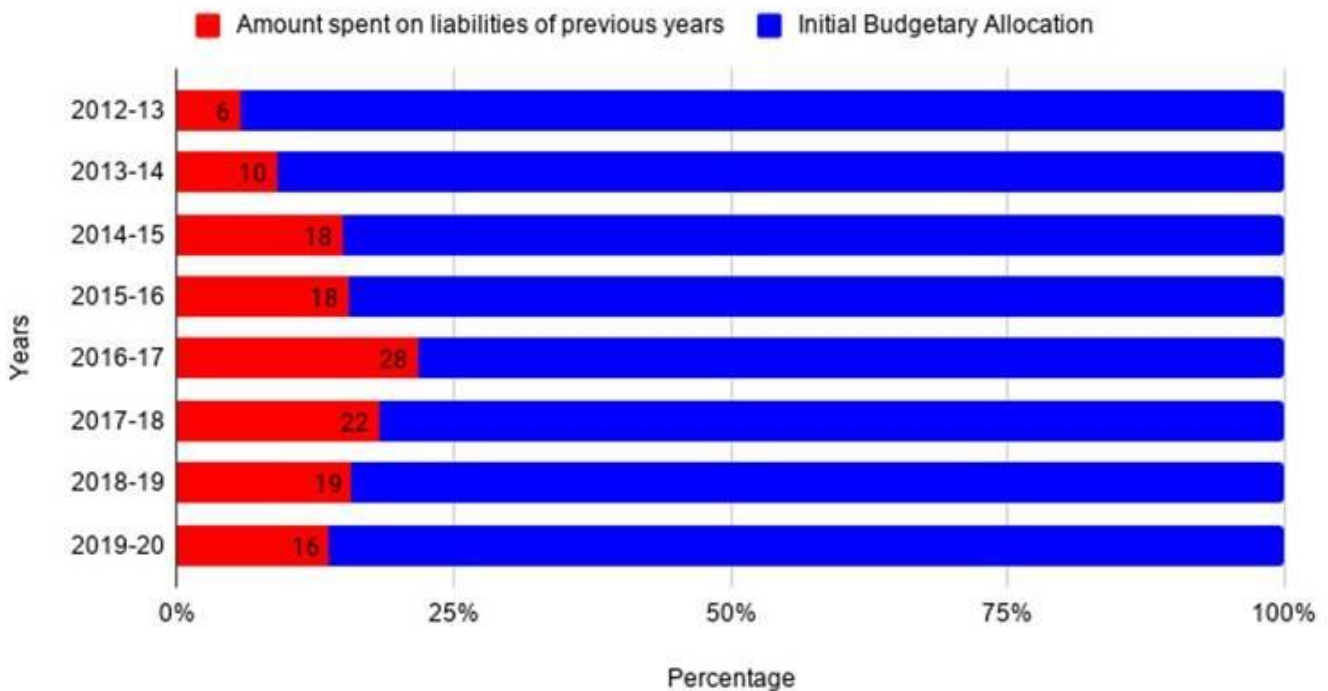
- Part of the problem, as pointed out by researchers at LibTech, led by Rajendran Narayanan (who teaches at Azim Premji University), is that since the inadequate budget allocation is an annual occurrence, each year's Budget allocation also has to contend with the previous year's arrears or unpaid dues.
- In the current year, for example, of the total allocation of Rs 73,000 crore, over Rs 17,000 crore will be used just to pay off the payments to rural poor for the work they did in the last financial year.



- This is again a regular occurrence (SEE CHART 2) even though these thousands of crores of rupees is what the Government of India owes to some of the poorest Indian households, most of whom may not be earning even Rs 10,000 per month.

Percentage of budget spent clearing previous years liabilities

EXPRESS explained.



- According to PAEG, funds remaining as of September end can cover at most 13 days of employment per household until the financial year ends in March.
- In fact, as TABLE 1 shows, there are many states — such as West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu — that have a negative net balance of funds remaining. This places a question mark on the possibility of effective implementation of NREGA in these states for the rest of the year.

Table 1

EXPRESS explained.

Select States	Total Funds Available	Funds Sanctioned	% of Available Funds Sanctioned	Total Expenditure	Pending Liabilities (from previous year)	Net Balance
West Bengal	5,956	2,383	40	7,543	2,860	-2,393
Andhra Pradesh	6,272	4,571	73	6,281	1,061	-2,090
Tamil Nadu	5,079	3,525	69	6,001	1,200	-1,234
Madhya Pradesh	5,161	3,426	66	5,380	901	-930
Rajasthan	6,000	3,333	56	6,227	2,115	-819
Assam	1,016	1,147	113	992	38	-82
Gujarat	1,285	776	60	1,277	192	-69
Karnataka	4,452	3,019	68	3,912	854	7
Bihar	5,540	2,092	38	4,963	2,675	65
Chhattisgarh	2,487	1,665	67	2,200	702	90
Maharashtra	1,225	801	65	1,039	131	100
Uttar Pradesh	4,649	2,731	59	4,184	618	180
Jharkhand	2,095	1,613	77	1,659	87	219
Odisha	4,170	2,720	65	3,233	449	321
Telangana	3,623	2,220	61	2,844	622	512
All India	66,231	40,015	60	64,462	17,180	-6,646

Source: MGNREGA MIS Report R 7.1 accessed on September 30 2021

All figures in Rs. Crore

- To be sure, it is not the states that have to pay. As per the Act, all the labour wages are to be paid by the central government. In the past, the Supreme Court has pulled up the central government for causing delays in wage payments.
- “The wages due to the worker...must be transferred immediately and the payment made to the worker forthwith failing which the prescribed compensation would have to be paid. The Central Government cannot be seen to shy away from its responsibility...” stated a 2018 order by the apex court.

2. Demand suppression

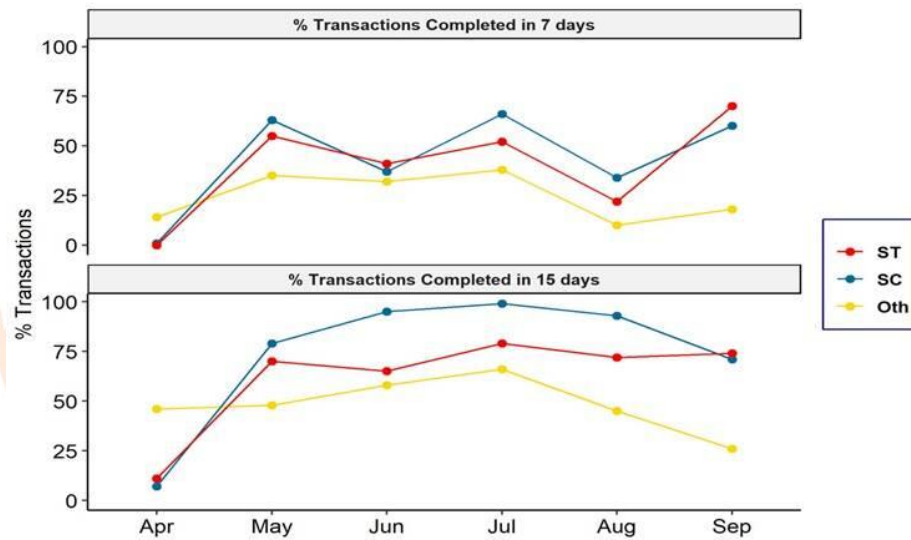
- Another key takeaway is that inadequate allocation has a detrimental impact on people asking for a job. That’s because — argue the researchers to study the MGNREGA work sites — people seeking MGNREGA work cannot afford to not be paid for so long.
- There are two important legislative provisions of MGNREGA. One, work should be provided within 15 days of demanding work failing which the workers are entitled to an unemployment allowance. Two, workers should be paid within 15 days of completion of work, failing which they are entitled to compensation for the delays.
- If due to inadequate budget allocation and resultant delays the rural workers do not get their dues in time, it discourages them to the extent that they do not ask for as much work as they would want to.
- There is an additional factor.
- There is little clarity on how and why MGNREGA budgets are decided, says Narayanan. Once an arbitrarily low number is chosen, officials are discouraged from even registering all the demand for jobs.
- According to Narayanan, the scale of such unmet demand is around 33%.
- He points out that typically this trend starts from the second quarter (July, August, September) onwards. That’s because by this time budget allocations are largely exhausted and officials have to stretch out whatever money remains.
- Of course, repeated governments — both UPA and NDA — have argued that MGNREGA is a “demand-driven” scheme. As such, if there is greater demand, a higher allocation can be made in time. But researchers studying the implementation on the ground state that the initial allocation is of critical importance. If it is low, it delays payments and eventually suppresses demand.

3. Caste-based payment delays

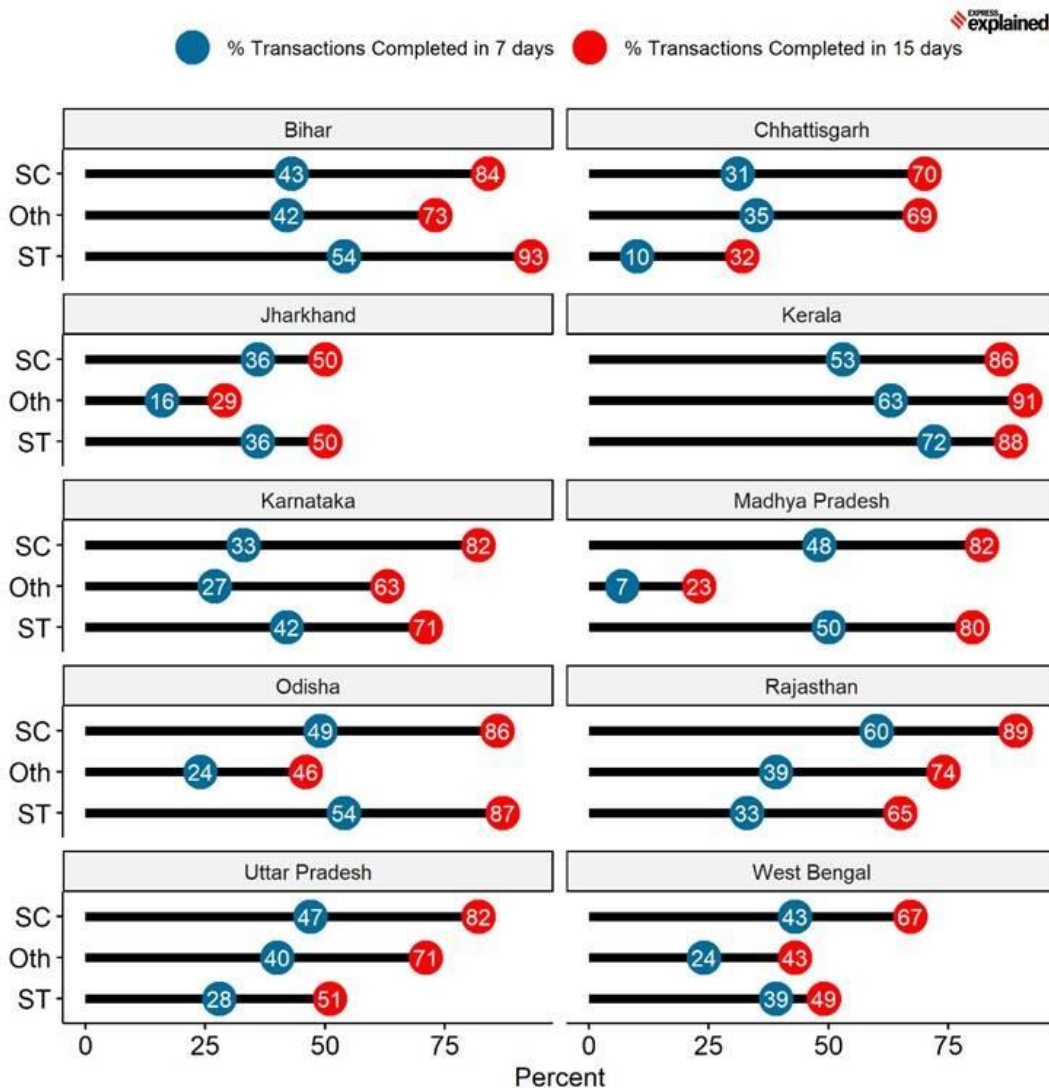
- This is perhaps the most unique finding of this year’s MGNREGA tracker — thanks largely to an odd demand by the central government.
- In March 2021, the central government came out with a circular asking state governments to send three bills, officially called Funds Transfer Orders or FTOs, instead of just one for MGNREGA payments.
- So, instead of a single FTO stating that, say these 100 people have completed the work and that they should be paid their wages, the Union government has asked states to give 3 FTOs — one each for MGNREGA workers belonging to “SC” (Scheduled Castes), “ST” (Scheduled Tribes) and “Other” categories.
- It is still unclear why the government chose to do so. But when LibTech did a fairly representative sample study — of over 1.8 million FTOs over 10 states between April and September this year — they found that, after the Caste-based circular, workers belonging to the “others” categories ended up facing much longer delays in payments. This is crucial because workers belonging to the “others” category account for over 87% of all MGNREGA workers.
- Look at CHART 3 to understand how different caste categories got hit by delays in payment. The yellow line corresponds to the “others” category and it shows that a lower percentage of such workers got their money within the stipulated time.
- What is worse, this percentage is falling with each passing month — as Narayanan argued.

Delays by Caste over Time

EXPRESS
explained.



- Look at CHART 4 which details how the payments were delayed by caste for each of the 10 states. Jharkhand, Odisha, and Madhya Pradesh saw a particularly poor record of payments for non-SC, non-ST workers.



What is the upshot of these findings?

- Jayati Ghosh, Professor of Economics, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, says that “India’s economy cannot really recover until domestic demand recovers, and that in turn requires a recovery in mass consumption, which had been languishing even before the pandemic and since then has been devastated.
- The NREGA can play a critical role in reviving this for rural India — and we know that this feeds into urban demand as well over time.”
- Ghosh argues that Indian policymakers should not be blinded by surging foreign inflows and equity markets.
- “The high capital inflows are the result of the massive liquidity expansion in advanced countries along with low interest rates, which have led global finance to search for quick returns wherever they can be found. This is highly mobile capital, which is likely to depart at the first sign of changed conditions (such as tighter monetary conditions in the US and other advanced economies) — but it is also very expensive capital since India pays higher interest rates and dividend rates on such inflows than it earns on its investments abroad, including RBI holding its increasing forex reserves in safe but low return foreign assets like US Treasury Bills. So the rise in capital inflows and in the stock market is not of much use if they do not lead to higher investment in productive assets in India. Instead, they can indicate bubbles that can burst with even slight changes in expectations,” she warns.
- She states that the delays in wage payments are a very serious issue. “We now know through the work of LibTech that much of it is because of central government delays.”
- The caste-based wage payments make no sense, she says. “They go against the universal nature of the programme, lead to more bureaucratic work at the lower levels and delays, and create unnecessary grievances,” she points out.
- To be sure, many ground-level researchers pointed out that these delays have resulted in caste-based tensions at work sites.
- For instance, if an MGNREGA worksite manager belongs to an SC or ST category and the bulk of the “other” category workers face wage payment delays even when SC & ST workers receive their wages sooner, it naturally creates social friction. Over time, such discrepancies may discourage non-SC, non-ST workers from demanding work at the MGNREGA work sites.
- In the end, Ghosh underlines the importance for the Indian government to redouble its efforts towards MGNREGA and NFSA.
- “The free food grain was important but insufficient given the need (and the capacity of the FCI which is holding food reserves several times the buffer stock requirement). We know that around 100 million deserving people were excluded from this anyway. But if the macroeconomic intent is to revive domestic demand, this is nowhere near sufficient. A self-targeted programme like NREGA that puts money in the hands of workers who will almost definitely spend all of it is quite different: in addition to immediate improvement of lives and better bargaining conditions for rural workers, it can have very strong positive multiplier effects that generate a wider expansion of the economy.”
- It would appear that India’s economic recovery is a tale of two nations.

Trade and climate, the pivot for India-U.S. ties

(Source: [The Hindu](https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/india-us-trade-climate-pivot/article66411111.ece))

Context: *When the history of the 21st century is written, India and the United States and the strategic alliance they forge should play starring roles. Granted, it is far too early to predict how successful their*

joint efforts will be in creating a free and open Indo-Pacific — one that advances democratic values and confronts autocracies globally and locally. As 2021 closes, with COVID-19 still a present danger and China, the emerging superpower on the global stage, viewed by both as a strategic competitor, India and the U.S. have a long way to go before they can inspire confidence that this blossoming alliance will endure for the long term.

Areas of convergence

- We believe that the fate of the grand strategic ambitions of the relationship may in fact depend substantially on how well they collaborate in two areas to which their joint attention is only belatedly turning — climate and trade.
- The first presents an existential threat while the second is too often dismissed as a secondary consideration, even dispensable in the name of pursuing larger strategic interests.
- Such thinking ignores the lessons of history: strategic partnerships capable of re-shaping the international global order cannot be based simply on a negative agenda. Shared concerns about China provide the U.S.-India partnership a much-needed impetus to overcome the awkward efforts for deeper collaboration that have characterised the past few decades.
- What risks being lost is a reckoning with how interrelated climate and trade are to securing U.S.-India leadership globally, and how their strategic efforts can flounder without sincere commitment to a robust bilateral agenda on both fronts.

Some encouraging signs

- There has been progress. The U.S. Special Presidential Envoy for Climate, John Kerry, has visited India twice already, and India and the U.S. are collaborating under the Climate and Clean Energy Agenda Partnership.
- In parallel, there are hopeful signs that they are now prioritising the bilateral trade relationship by rechartering the Trade Policy Forum. Both countries are also taking leading roles, articulating their climate concerns and commitments.
- However, early signs suggest we might be headed for a replay of previous showdowns at COP26 in Glasgow: while India just announced a net zero goal for 2070 — a welcome development even if well after catastrophic climate scenarios may be baked in — it has called for western countries to commit to negative emissions targets. India's rhetoric of climate justice is likely to be received poorly by U.S. negotiators, particularly if it aligns with China's messaging and obstructs efforts to reach concrete results.
- Likewise, the failure of the U.S. and India to articulate a shared vision for a comprehensive trade relationship raises doubts about how serious they are when each spends more time and effort negotiating with other trading partners.
- Protectionist tendencies infect the politics of both countries these days, and, with a contentious U.S. mid-term election a year away, the political window for achieving problem-solving outcomes and setting a vision on trade for the future is closing fast.

The interlinks

- Climate and trade are interrelated in many ways, from commercial dissemination of cutting-edge carbon mitigation and adaptation products and technologies to the carbon emissions that come with the transport of goods and humans from one country to another.
- If governments, such as India and the U.S., coordinate policies to incentivise sharing of climate-related technologies and align approaches for reducing emissions associated with trade, the climate-trade inter-relationship can be a net positive one.

Work on early solutions

- For example, India and the U.S. could find opportunities to align their climate and trade approaches better, starting with a resolution of their disputes in the World Trade Organization (WTO) on solar panels.
- As they have dithered in pursuing cases in the WTO and settling them, China has effectively captured the global market, leaving each dependent on a source they view as a threat. The two countries could also chart a path that allows trade to flow for transitional energy sources, such as fuel ethanol.
- India currently bans imports of fuel ethanol even as it seeks to ramp up its own ethanol blend mandates and build a domestic sector that can join the U.S. and Brazil in exporting to the world. Left unaddressed, this will be another missed opportunity for the two economies to work to mutual benefit.
- Shared strategic interests will be undermined if India and the U.S. cannot jointly map coordinated policies on climate and trade.
- The most immediate threat could be the possibility of new climate and trade tensions were India to insist that technology is transferred in ways that undermine incentives for innovation in both countries or if the U.S. decides that imports from India be subject to increased tariffs in the form of carbon border adjustment mechanisms or “CBAMs”.
- Climate-inspired trade tensions that might even lead to new trade wars can hardly bolster the strategic partnership.

A point to ponder over

- Diplomats on both sides have worked hard over the past few years to paper over such differences so that they do not distract from the efforts to lay the foundations for a closer strategic partnership, but the fissures have not disappeared and ignoring them will not make them go away.
- Rather, the danger is that they will widen and deepen and come to undermine shared longer-term goals.
- A mutual failure to confront these issues and present a united front in relations with other countries will surely have strategic consequences.
- So, even as they continue to embrace warmly in various strategic settings, U.S. President Joe Biden and India’s Prime Minister Narendra Modi might want to ask how this partnership is clearly falling short of its potential, and why.
- Concerted action on both the climate and trade fronts is mutually beneficial and will lend additional strength to the foundation of a true partnership for the coming century.

Batting for ‘One South Asia’ makes more sense

(Source: [The Hindu](#))

Context: Over the course of four days, at the G-20 in Rome and COP26 (the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference) in Glasgow, Scotland, Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke at nearly a dozen events, expanding on India’s plans to counter climate change. India’s record since the 2015 Paris Accord and initiatives such as the International Solar Alliance (ISA) and Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI), as a part of which Mr. Modi (along with other leaders) launched the ‘Infrastructure for Resilient Island States (IRIS)’ at the World Leaders Summit at COP26 were widely welcomed. The announcement of India’s new Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and the “Panchamrit” or five goals for the future elicited applause from across the audience. Missing however, was any reference to India’s own region, the subcontinent, South Asia, without which India’s multiple forays on fighting climate change could well prove fruitless.

South Asia’s feeble voice



- The absence of a South Asian initiative on climate change led by India, accrues to a number of obvious reasons:
 - India-Pakistan tensions that have led to the degradation of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) process, especially since 2014, when the last SAARC summit was held;
 - events in Afghanistan and the Taliban takeover which will bring it closer to its Central Asian rather than South Asian neighbours;
 - the differences over pollution issues within the Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal (BBIN) grouping that has held up its initiatives like the common Motor Vehicle Agreement (due mainly to Bhutan's opposition);
 - and slow movement amongst the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) countries along the Bay of Bengal that have yet to bring about a common charter at the global level despite adding climate change as an area of cooperation a decade ago.

Impact of climate change

- To begin with, regardless of relations between any of the countries in South Asia (India-Pakistan being the only notable rivalry), there is no question that this is a cohesive geographical unit that is sheltered by the Himalayas to the north, fed by its many glaciers in an intricate network of rivers that fall into the ocean, and buffeted by the same climate and monsoon conditions.
- Second, South Asia is slowly becoming the world's biggest area of concern when it comes to climate change. According to this year's Global Climate Risk Index, India and Afghanistan are among the top 10 countries worldwide in terms of vulnerability, but South Asia classifies for the overall lowest values.
- By one estimate, 20 out of 23 major cyclone disasters in the world in the past have occurred around the Bay of Bengal region, and global warming, coastal degradation and soil salinity as well as water scarcities cause the deaths of thousands in South Asia each year.
- The Asian Development Bank now predicts a decrease of 11% in South Asian GDPs by 2100 if "Business-As-Usual (BAU) Emissions" are maintained. With global warming and sea levels rising, other estimates predict there will be nearly 63 million climate migrants in South Asia by 2050 ("Costs of Climate Inaction: Displacement and Distress Migration").
- Second, all these grim figures build a logic for a combined push for global reparations and assistance for the entire region.
- As a part of the developing world, the Indian subcontinent is not responsible for the massive damage done to the environment already wrought by the developed world, and according to 2019 figures, no single regional bloc has lower per capita emissions than South Asia does.

Green potential

- When New Delhi speaks of the need for climate justice, global funding and climate adaptation technology transfer, India's voice would only be strengthened multiple times if it speaks for South Asia as a whole.
- According to the World Bank's newly launched South Asia road map, climate-smart investment opportunities in South Asia total a whopping \$3.4 trillion, with "energy-efficient green buildings" alone representing an investment potential of more than \$1.5 trillion.
- Green transport connectivity and infrastructure, electric vehicles could represent another \$950 billion in investment opportunities by 2030. This does not include the vast sums of funding available for cross-regional solar grids, windfarms and run-of-river energy projects.

Other drawbacks, China

- However, while India and other countries in the region access global banks, including the BRICS-led New Development Bank (NDB), the Beijing-based Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, and Asian



Development Bank for projects individually, there is no single South Asian entity the banks could work with for a more targeted focus and more concessional financing for the problem that faces the region.

- Third, growing carbon footprints as well as post-COVID-19 economic compulsions are driving countries into closer regional coalitions, looking for solutions closer home, than those provided by globalisation and long-distance supply chains.
 - South Asia has remained an exception, persistently showing lower inter-regional trade and connectivity, and lower levels of cooperation on migrant labour issues, inter-state tourism and cross-border employment than other regions.
- Finally, New Delhi has often warned of the pernicious influence of ‘Chinese solutions’ to problems in the subcontinent, ranging from unsustainable infrastructure financing to environmentally harmful projects as part of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), but it has been unable to proffer a viable alternative, with or without its Quad partners.
- On certain issues, where India has failed, South Asian neighbours have learned to seek help from other international partners or even each other: when India stopped COVID-19 vaccine exports this year for example, Bhutan, which received vaccines from Denmark and a number of other countries including the United States and China after a desperate global appeal, in turn helped Nepal with stocks of AstraZeneca.
- When New Delhi failed to respond to Sri Lanka’s request for assistance with its currency and debt crisis last year, the Rajapaksa government turned to Bangladesh for a currency swap arrangement.
- The problems between India and Pakistan that have multiplied manifold in the past few years are no doubt a major obstacle, but not one that cannot be surmounted in the face of a common challenge, as the special SAARC conference on COVID-19 in March 2020 showed.

New Delhi can show the way

- When it comes to climate change, there is a chance to turn this trend, and for India, the largest country in the region sharing the most boundaries with other South Asian neighbours, to lead the way to find holistic solutions: accessing funding, tapping the latest climate adaptation technology, and finding cross-border markets for renewable energy networks.
- Mr. Modi’s “One Sun One World One Grid” and ‘Panchamrit plans’ would clearly pack more punch if they contain a clear road map for the region, and strive for a common South Asian taskforce to tackle the enormous challenge that lies ahead for India and its neighbourhood this century.

Charting a trade route after the MC12

(Source: [The Hindu](#))

Context: *The World Trade Organization (WTO)’s 12th Ministerial Conference (MC12) is being convened in Geneva, Switzerland at the end of this month, a year-and-a-half after it was scheduled to be held in Kazakhstan (June 2020, but postponed due to the novel coronavirus pandemic). The MC12 is being held at an important juncture when the global trade scenario is quite upbeat.*

The outlook

- Recent WTO estimates show that global trade volumes could expand by almost 11% in 2021, and by nearly 5% in 2022, and could stabilise at a level higher than the pre-COVID-19 trend.
- The buoyancy in trade volumes has played an important role in supporting growth in economies such as India where domestic demand has not yet picked up sufficiently.

- Therefore, these favourable tidings provide an ideal setting for the Trade Ministers from the WTO member-states to revisit trade rules and to agree on a work programme for the organisation, which can help maintain the momentum in trade growth.
- But above all, the MC12 needs to consider how in these good times for trade, the economically weaker countries “can secure a share in the growth in international trade commensurate with the needs of their economic development”, an objective that is mandated by the Marrakesh Agreement Establishing the World Trade Organization.
- Does the run-up to the MC12 provide any evidence that the global trading system can be slightly less iniquitous than it has been? The answer lies in the possible outcomes in some of the areas that are currently witnessing intense negotiations.
- These include adoption of WTO rules on electronic commerce, investment facilitation, and fisheries subsidies. But there is one issue that surmounts all others, namely, the WTO’s response to demands that technologies necessary for producing vaccines, medicines, and other medical products for COVID-19 treatment should be available without the restrictions imposed by intellectual property rights (IPRs).

IPRs and vaccine issue

- From the very outset of the COVID-19 pandemic it had become clear that IPRs protected using the provisions of the WTO Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) are formidable barriers to ensuring equitable access to vaccines.
- Pharmaceutical companies controlling the global markets have used monopoly rights granted by their IPRs to deny developing countries access to technologies and know-how, thus undermining the possibility of production of vaccines in these countries.
- The involvement of developing countries in vaccine production could have increased supplies of affordable vaccines to the low-income countries. Availability of vaccines remains a critical problem in these countries even after a year since the first dose of COVID-19 vaccine was administered. Recent statistics show that until now, a mere 4.1% of the population in low-income countries have received at least one dose of the vaccine.
- To remedy this situation, India and South Africa had tabled a proposal in the WTO in October 2020, for waiving enforcement of several forms of IPRs on “health products and technologies including diagnostics, therapeutics, vaccines, medical devices ... and their methods and means of manufacture” useful for COVID-19 treatment.
- By doing so, barriers created by IPRs to timely access to affordable medical products could be removed. This proposal, supported by nearly two-thirds of the organisation’s membership, was opposed by the developed countries battling for their corporates.
- However, after the Joe Biden Administration in the United States lent limited support to the India-South Africa proposal, there was a glimmer of hope that WTO members would agree to lift restrictions on access to technologies for COVID-19 vaccines and medicines; at least by the MC12.
- The unfortunate reality of the current discussions is that an outcome supporting affordable access to COVID-19 vaccines and medicines looks distant.
- A further confirmation of this possibly came from the WTO Director General, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, when in her recent musings on the MC12 in The Economist, she was completely silent on this issue.

Fisheries, e-commerce

- Although discussions on fisheries subsidies have been hanging fire for a long time, there is considerable push for an early conclusion of an agreement to rein in these subsidies.
- However, the current drafts on this issue are completely unbalanced as they do not provide the wherewithal to rein in large-scale commercial fishing that are depleting fish stocks the world over, and at the same time, are threatening the livelihoods of small fishermen in countries such as India.
- In recent months, the proposal by the members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the G-20 members to introduce global minimum taxes on digital companies has made

headlines. But in the WTO, most of these countries have been investing their negotiating capital to facilitate the expansion of e-commerce firms.

- Discussions on e-commerce are being held in the WTO since 1998, after the adoption of the Ministerial Declaration on Global Electronic Commerce wherein WTO members agreed to “continue their ... practice of not imposing customs duties on electronic transmissions”.
- The more substantive outcome was the decision to “establish a comprehensive work programme” taking into “account the economic, financial, and development needs of developing countries”.
- Fast forward to the discussions in 2021, and a key focus of the 1998 e-commerce work programme, namely “development needs of developing countries”, is entirely missing from the text document that is the basis for the current negotiations.
- On the negotiating table are issues relating to the liberalisation of the goods and services trade, and of course guarantee for free flow of data across international boundaries, all aimed at facilitating expansion of businesses of e-commerce firms.
- In fact, the decision on a moratorium on the imposition of import duties agreed to in 1998 has become the basis for a push towards comprehensive trade liberalisation — a perfectly logical way forward, given that the sole objective of the negotiations on e-commerce is to facilitate expansion of e-commerce firms.

Divisions over investment

- Complementing the current focus of the WTO to promote the global interests of oligopolies is the initiative for the adoption of an investment facilitation agreement. Inclusion of substantive provisions on investment in the WTO has been one of the more divisive issues.
- In 2001, the Doha Ministerial Declaration had included a work programme on investment, but it was soon taken off the table as developing countries were opposed to its continuation because the discussions were geared to expanding the rights of foreign investors through a multilateral agreement on investment.
- An investment facilitation has reintroduced the old agenda of concluding such an investment agreement. The proponents have been careful not to load the agenda by seeking substantial commitments from the Government to promote the interests of foreign investors, but it should be clear even to the uninitiated that the ultimate objective is to bind host governments into a multilaterally agreed commitment to comprehensively protect investor interests.

One-sided negotiations

- Besides the bias in favour of global oligopolies, the current negotiating processes in the WTO are fundamentally flawed. The negotiations on e-commerce and investment facilitation are being conducted not by a mandate given by the entire membership of the WTO in a transparent manner that are also consistent with the objectives of the WTO.
- Instead, these negotiations owe their origins to the so-called “Joint Statement Initiatives” (JSI) in which a section of the membership has developed the agenda with a view to producing agreements in the WTO.
- This will then be offered to the rest of the membership on a “take-it-or-leave-it” basis.
- This entire process is “detrimental to the very existence of a rule-based multilateral trading system under the WTO”, as India and South Africa have forcefully argued in a submission against the JSIs early this year.

The right time for India to have its own climate law

(Source: [The Hindu](#))

Context: *As the world watches the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26, from October 31 to November 12, 2021), the most important climate summit in years at Glasgow, Scotland, India has said it wants to be a part of the climate solution.*

The Indian proposals

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced, on November 1 at Glasgow, a ‘Panchamrit solution’ which aims at reducing fossil fuel dependence and carbon intensity (reduce one billion tonnes of total projected carbon emissions by 2030), and ramping up its renewable energy share to 50% by 2030.
- Glasgow is important as it will call for practical implementation of the 2015 Paris Accord, setting the rules for the Accord. And as the world recovers from the biological and environmental stresses of the COVID-19 pandemic and natural disasters, climate change has also become personal.
- Union Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change Bhupender Yadav has reasserted the call for the promised \$100 billion a year as support (from the developed world to the developing world) but as we consider new energy pathways, we must also consider the question of climate hazard, nature-based solutions and national accountability.
- This is the right time for India to mull setting up a climate law while staying true to its goals of climate justice, carbon space and environmental protection. There are a few reasons for this.

Current laws and gaps

- Which law covers climate? First, our existing laws are not adequate to deal with climate change. We have for example the Environment (Protection) Act (EPA), 1986, the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981 and Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974. Yet, climate is not exactly water or air.
- Which law would cover the impacts of a cyclone, for instance or work to reduce future climate impacts? And neither are we ready to tackle environmental/climate violations.
- The Environment (Protection) Act is grossly inadequate to deal with violations on climate. Clause 24 of the Act, “Effect of Other Laws”, states that if an offence is committed under the EPA or any other law, the person will be punished under the other law (for example, Code of Criminal Procedure). This makes the EPA subordinate to every other law.
- Second, there is a need to integrate climate action — adaptation and mitigation — and monitor progress. Comprehensive climate action is not just technological (such as changing energy sources or carbon intensity), but also nature-based (such as emphasising restoration of ecosystems, reducing natural hazard and increasing carbon sinks.)
- Finally, India’s situation is unique. Climate action cannot come by furthering sharpening divides or exacerbating poverty, and this includes our stated renewable energy goals. The 500 Gigawatt by 2030 goal for renewable, solar or wind power for example (of installed power capacity from non-fossil sources), can put critically endangered grassland and desert birds such as the Great Indian Bustard at risk, as they die on collision with wires in the desert.

Create a commission

- A climate law could consider two aspects. One, creating an institution that monitors action plans for climate change. A ‘Commission on Climate Change’ could be set up, with the power and the authority to issue directions, and oversee implementation of plans and programmes on climate.
- The Commission could have quasi-judicial powers with powers of a civil court to ensure that its directions are followed in letter and spirit. It should be assisted by a technical committee which can advise the commission in the discharge of its functions as well as guide various private and public agencies in meeting their climate-related obligations.
- As an example, the commission could look at agencies or institutions that have a disproportionate impact on climate or environment, and suggest lower energy pathways that are adhered to.

Tracing carbon footprints

- What, for example, is the carbon footprint of a single activity from start to finish? We have the Bureau of Energy Efficiency, but we also need overall carbon efficiency that looks beyond electronics.
- How could intelligent interventions be made for reduction of footprints, along with common sense, and practical public health interventions which are unaccounted for so far? In a recent case in the National Green Tribunal it was revealed that the National Thermal Power Corporation did not even cover coal wagons with tarpaulin on railways, decades after environmental clearances were granted in 1999, in Chhattisgarh.
- In 2020, the Supreme Court passed an order directing for the wagons to be covered within a month's time. There will be eventual emissions by coal use.
- But there is also the issue of respirable coal dust that is spewed into the air through irresponsible transportation.
- As of now, many environmental mediations remain glaringly haphazard. The ban on plastic bags in Delhi is a failure because plastic bag substitutes were never really pushed at scale by the understaffed environment department.
- A plastic bag ban to succeed in one State requires a similar commitment from neighbouring States. A nation-wide intervention here, led by a Climate Commission, considering substitutes at scale for plastic-based products (which are derived from petroleum) and looking at both innovation and implementation, would be useful.

Need for accountability

- Second, we need a system of liability and accountability at short-, medium- and long-term levels as we face hazards. This also means having a legally enforceable National Climate Change Plan that goes beyond just policy guidelines.
- Are climate vagaries acts of god, or do certain actions exacerbate them? In an order of the National Green Tribunal in 2016, the court examined the damage caused when floods occurred in 2013 in Pauri, Uttarakhand.
- When Srinagar dam (Uttarakhand) opened its sluice gates, muck created 8-foot tall deposits, destroying property and fields.
- While muck is not hazardous, the handling of the dam — especially in a mountainous area in the face of climate events — created serious damage. The court held the damage was not an 'Act of God' and invoked the Principle of No Fault liability.
- The Alaknanda Hydro Power Company was asked by the Tribunal to pay more than ₹9 crore in damages. But all this was after the disaster. A Climate Commission could ideally prevent such gross negligence in fragile areas and fix accountability if it arises.
- We have an urgent moral imperative to tackle climate change and reduce its worst impacts. But we also should Indianise the process by bringing in a just and effective law — with guts, a spine, a heart, and, most importantly, teeth.

Current Affairs Quiz

1) Which of the following statements is/are correct with respect to Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)?

1. Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment is the nodal agency for the implementation of the Scheme.
2. This act was introduced with an aim of improving the employment status of the rural people.

Codes:

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 nor 2

Answer : d

The Ministry of Rural Development (MRD), Government of India is monitoring the entire implementation of this scheme in association with state governments.

This act was introduced with an aim of improving the purchasing power of the rural people, primarily semi or un-skilled work to people living below poverty line in rural India.

2) Consider the following statements:

1. Indus dolphins are the State aquatic animal of Himachal Pradesh.
2. Vikramshila Dolphin Sanctuary is in the state of Uttar Pradesh.
3. Gangetic dolphins are generally blind and catch their prey using ultrasonic sound.

Select the correct answer code:

- a. 1 and 2 only
- b. 2 and 3 only
- c. 3 only
- d. 1 and 3 only

Answer : c

Vikramshila Gangetic Dolphin Sanctuary is in the state of Bihar.

Punjab Government has declared the Indus river dolphin as Punjab's state aquatic animal in 2019.

3) Consider the following statements:

1. Net Zero Emissions is a condition in which a country would bring down its emissions to zero, taking pre-industrial levels as base range.
2. India has recently pledged to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2070.

Select the CORRECT answer code:

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 nor 2

Answer : b

Net Zero is a commitment which sets a year by which it would ensure its net carbon dioxide emissions would be zero.

It does not mean that a country would bring down its emissions to zero.

4) Consider the following statements:

1. Climate Equity Monitor is an online dashboard for assessing equity in climate action, inequalities in emissions, energy and resource consumption across the world.
2. It was conceptualized and developed by the Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change.



3. It will compare the policies and actions of Annex-I and Non Annex-I Parties from the perspective of equity and Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities (CBDR-RC).

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a. 3 only
- b. 1 and 2 only
- c. 1 and 3 only
- d. 1, 2 and 3

Answer : c

5) Consider the following countries:

- 1. India
- 2. China
- 3. Brazil
- 4. Russia
- 5. Australia
- 6. South Africa

Which of the above are part of the BASIC Countries Grouping?

- a. 1, 2, 3 and 4 only
- b. 2, 3, 4 and 5 only
- c. 1, 2, 3 and 6 only
- d. All of the above

Answer : c

6) Consider the following statements:

- 1. Global Methane Pledge aims to slash emissions of the potent greenhouse gas Methane 30% by 2030 from 2020 levels.
- 2. It is a joint effort led by the United States and European Union.
- 3. India, one of the world's five biggest emitters of methane, signed the pledge.

Select the correct answer code:

- a. 1 only
- b. 1 and 2 only
- c. 1, 2 and 3
- d. None of the above

Answer : b

7) Consider the following statements with respect to methane:

- 1. Methane is more short-lived in the atmosphere than Carbon dioxide.
- 2. Methane is 80 times more potent in warming the earth than Carbon dioxide.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 nor 2

Answer : c

8) In which of the following, Methane gas is generated?

- 1. Old Coal Mines
- 2. Oil and Gas Production
- 3. Cows' Digestive Systems
- 4. Agricultural & Landfill Sites

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

- a. 1 and 2 only
- b. 2 and 4 only
- c. 1, 3 and 4 only
- d. 1, 2, 3 and 4

Answer : d

9) Consider the following statements :

- 1. Solar Flares are highly energetic phenomena that happen inside the sunspots which are regions that rise to the surface of the sun and appear like dark spots.
- 2. In a solar flare, the energy stored in the sun's magnetic structures is converted into light and heat energy.
- 3. They sometimes cause hot plasma to be ejected from the Sun, causing a solar storm called Coronal Mass Ejection (CME).

Which of the statement(s) given above is/are correct?

- a. 3 only
- b. 2 only
- c. 1, 2 and 3 only
- d. None of the above

Answer : d

10) Consider the following statements:

- 1. Battle of Bhima Koregaon was fought between the British East India Company and the Peshwa faction of the Maratha Confederacy in 1818.
- 2. The battle was a part of third Anglo Maratha war which resulted in the overthrow of the Peshwas.
- 3. In 1921, Dr B.R. Ambedkar visited the site.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- a. 1 and 2 only
- b. 1 and 3 only
- c. 2 and 3 only
- d. 1, 2 and 3

Answer : d

11) Consider the following statements:

- 1. Mullaiperiyar Dam is located on the confluence of the Mullayar and Periyar River in Kerala's Idukki district.
- 2. It is a gravity dam built using lime-surkhi (burnt brick powder) mortar.
- 3. Although the dam is located in Kerala, it is operated by Tamil Nadu.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a. 1 and 2 only
- b. 1 and 3 only
- c. 2 and 3 only
- d. 1, 2 and 3

Answer : d

12) Velakali is a traditional martial dance form of-

- a. Tamil Nadu
- b. Kerala
- c. Karnataka
- d. Andhra Pradesh

Answer : b



13) Consider the following statements:

1. Under the Forest Conservation Act, 1980, any diversion of any forest land for any purpose, including assignment of leases, needs prior approval of the State Government.
2. The Forest Conservation Act, 1980 had applied largely to reserve forests and national parks.
3. In 1996, the Supreme Court had expanded the definition and scope of forest land to include all areas recorded as forest in any government record, irrespective of ownership, recognition and classification.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- a) 1 and 2 only
- b) 1 and 3 only
- c) 2 and 3 only
- d) All of the above

Answer: c)

14) Consider the following statements:

1. The World Bank releases its World Economic Outlook (WEO) twice every year.
2. The World Economic Outlook reports act as benchmark for all economies to compare and contrast.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Solution: b)

Twice every year — April and October — the IMF comes out with its World Economic Outlook (WEO).

15) Consider the following statements:

1. During the election period, the Election Commission of India (ECI) can order the government to observe election related guidelines.
2. When on election duty, government officers work under the control of the ECI and not the government.

Which of the above statements is/are incorrect?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: d)

16) Consider the following statements:

1. The Rajya Sabha indirectly represents the States whose legislators elect it.
2. Rajya Sabha acts as a federal chamber to politically resolve most of India's federal conflicts.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: a)

17) Build Back Better World (B3W) is the initiative launched by which of the following:

- a) G 20 Countries
- b) G7 countries
- c) OECD

d) BRICS

Answer: b)

18) Consider the following statements with respect to SDG and MDG:

1. India successfully achieved the Millennium Development Goals on good health and well-being.
2. Government of India cannot hold State Governments responsible and accountable for their poor performance in achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: b)

19) Debtor Reporting System (DRS) was established by which of the following?

- a) IMF
- b) World Bank
- c) New Development Bank
- d) Asian Development Bank

Answer: b)

20) Consider the following statements:

1. The Indus river dolphin is a freshwater dolphin that is found in river Beas.
2. A viable population of Indus dolphins is present in Punjab's Harike wildlife sanctuary.
3. Indus river dolphin was declared the State aquatic animal of Himachal Pradesh.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- a) 1 and 3 only
- b) 1 and 2 only
- c) 2 and 3 only
- d) All of the above

Answer: b)

The Indus river dolphin was declared the State aquatic animal of Punjab in 2019.