

April (Week 1)

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Prelims

NATIONAL

New criminal Bill

(Source: [The Hindu](#))

Context: On March 28, Minister of State for Home Ajay Kumar Mishra introduced The Criminal Procedure (Identification) Bill, 2022 in Lok Sabha. If passed, it will allow police and prison authorities to collect, store and analyse physical and biological samples including retina and iris scans of convicted, arrested and detained persons. At the introduction stage, Opposition members opposed the Bill terming it “unconstitutional” and an attack on privacy.

What is the legislation about?

- The Bill seeks to repeal The Identification of Prisoners Act, 1920. The over 100-year-old Act’s scope was limited to capturing of finger impression, foot-print impressions and photographs of convicted prisoners and certain category of arrested and non-convicted persons on the order of a Magistrate.
- The Statement of Objects and Reasons of the 2022 Bill said that new “measurement” techniques being used in advanced countries are giving credible and reliable results and are recognised the world over.
- It said that the 1920 Act does not provide for taking these body measurements as many of the techniques and technologies had not been developed then.

What are the major changes proposed?

- It proposes four major changes. First, it would define “measurements” to include “signature, handwriting, iris and retina scan, physical, biological samples and their analysis, etc.” It does not specify what analysis means, implying that it may also include storing DNA samples.
 - The “etc.” mentioned in the text of the Bill could give unfettered powers to law enforcement agencies to interpret the law as per their convenience, sometimes to the disadvantage of the accused.
- Second, it empowers the National Crime Records Bureau of India (NCRB), under the Union Home Ministry, to collect, store and preserve the record of measurements for at least 75 years. The NCRB will be able to share the data with other law enforcement agencies as well. Police is a State subject and NCRB works under the Union government, and experts contend this provision may impinge on federalism.
- Third, it empowers a Magistrate to direct any person to give vital details, which till now was reserved for convicts and those involved in heinous crimes. Fourth, it empowers police or prison officers up to the rank of a Head Constable to take details of any person who resists or refuses to do so.

What are some other changes?

- The Bill also seeks to apply to persons detained under any preventive detention law. The Bill also authorises taking vital details of “other persons” for identification and investigation in criminal matters.
- It doesn't define the “other persons”, implying its ambit extends beyond convicts, arrested persons, or detainees.
- The Bill’s stated objective is it provides legal sanction for taking such details and will make the investigation of crime more efficient and expeditious, and help in increasing the conviction rate. Congress member Manish Tewari pointed out in the Lok Sabha that Article 20(3) of the Constitution states that “no person accused of any offence shall be compelled to be a witness against himself.”

- BSP member Ritesh Pandey opposed the Bill saying it proposes to collect samples even from those engaged in political protests.

Is there a precedent?

- The Karnataka Assembly passed The Identification of Prisoners (Karnataka Amendment) Bill in 2021, to amend the 1920 Act for application in the State. The Bill expands the collection to include blood samples, DNA, voice and iris scans “for effective surveillance and prevention of breach of peace and crime.”
- It empowers the Superintendent of Police or Deputy Commissioner of Police to order collection in addition to a magistrate to avoid delays and reduce the workload on the judiciary. As the provisions of the Bill were repugnant with the 1920 Act, a Central Government’s Act, Governor Thawar Chand Gehlot reserved the Bill for consideration of the President of the India.
- Under the process, the Bill is examined by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) and is sent for inter-ministerial consultation. The Bill is yet to be cleared by the MHA. Now, the government has introduced a fresh legislation to replace the 1920 Act that will be applicable across the country.
- The States have been empowered to notify rules under the Act to specify the manner in which details could be recorded, preserved, disseminated and destructed and “any other matter which is to be prescribed, or in respect of which provision is to be made.”
- Tamil Nadu introduced and notified The Identification of Prisoners (Tamil Nadu Amendments) Act in 2010. The Act allows the police to draw “blood samples” other than the specified measurements from the limited categories of suspects and convicts defined in the 1920 Act.
- Though President’s assent is awaited for the Karnataka Bill, the Tamil Nadu Act has been in practice for more than a decade after it received the assent of the Governor.

Denotified tribes

(Source: [Indian Express](#))

Context: A standing committee of Parliament, tabled last week, has criticised the functioning of the development programme for de-notified, nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes.

Who are de-notified, nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes?

- These are communities who are the most vulnerable and deprived. Denotified tribes (DNTs) are communities that were ‘notified’ as being ‘born criminal’ during the British regime under a series of laws starting with the Criminal Tribes Act of 1871.
- Nomadic and semi-nomadic communities are defined as those who move from one place to another rather than living at one place all the time.
- A National Commission for De-notified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Tribes (NCDNT) was constituted in 2006 by the then government. It was headed by Balkrishna Sidram Renke and submitted its report in June 2008, in which it said, “It is an irony that these tribes somehow escaped the attention of our Constitution makers and thus got deprived of the Constitutional support unlike Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.”
- The Renke commission estimated their population at around 10.74 crore based on Census 2001. A new Commission constituted in February 2014 to prepare a state-wise list, which submitted its report on January 8, 2018, identified 1,262 communities as de-notified, nomadic and semi-nomadic.



- While a number of these tribes are categorised under SC, ST and OBC, many are not: The standing committee report in Parliament has cited a statement by the Secretary, Department of Social Justice and Empowerment, that 269 DNT communities are not covered under any reserved categories.
- These communities are frequently left out because they are less visible and difficult to reach.
- About the functioning of the Development and Welfare Board for De-notified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Communities (DWBDNC), the standing committee said: “At present 269 such Denotified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic communities are specified and a survey is now in under process to place these castes in SC, ST and BC categories. The Committee are surprised to find that the Department has not been able to take any decision till date hence they would like the Department to take necessary action in this regard so that these castes are placed either under SCs, STs or BCs and avail benefits.”

What is DWBDNC, and what is its role?

- The commission report submitted in 2018 had recommended the setting of up a permanent commission for these communities.
- But since most DNTs are covered under SC, ST or OBC, the government felt setting up a permanent commission, which would deal with redress of grievances, would be in conflict with the mandate of existing commissions for SCs (National Commission for Scheduled Castes), STs (National Commission for Scheduled Tribes) and OBCs (National Commission for Backward Classes).
- The government therefore set up the DWBDNCs under the Societies Registration Act, 1860 under the aegis of Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment for the purpose of implementing welfare programmes.
- The DWBDNC was constituted on February 21, 2019 under the chairmanship of Bhiku Ramji Idate. Also, a committee has been set up by the NITI Aayog to complete the process of identification of the de-notified, nomadic and semi-nomadic communities (DNCs).
- Ethnographic studies of DNCs are being conducted by the Anthropological Survey of India, with a budget of Rs 2.26 crore sanctioned. On March 30, 2022 the DoPT issued an advertisement for the recruitment of consultants in the DWBDNC.

The Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act

(Source: [The Hindu](#))

Context: On March 31, the Ministry of Home Affairs announced the reduction of “disturbed areas” under the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act in Assam, Manipur and Nagaland with effect from April 1. The decision was based on the recommendations of a committee the Ministry had constituted on December 26, 2021, to study the possibility of withdrawing the AFSPA from areas in Nagaland in the wake of public anger against a botched ambush by an elite unit of the Army that led to the killing of 13 civilians at Oting in Mon district on December 4.

How did the AFSPA come about?

- The British colonial government had on August 15, 1942, promulgated the Armed Forces Special Powers Ordinance to suppress the Quit India movement.
- It was the foundation for four ordinances, including one for the “Assam disturbed areas” invoked in 1947 to deal with Partition-induced internal security challenges.
- The Armed Forces (Assam and Manipur) Special Powers Act, 1958, followed the Assam Disturbed Areas Act of 1955 to deal with the uprising in the Naga Hills and adjoining areas. The Act was replaced by the AFSPA for wider application. A similar Act specific to Jammu and Kashmir was enacted in 1990.

How is the AFSPA imposed?

- Section 3 of the AFSPA empowers the Governor of a State and the administrator of a Union Territory (UT) to declare an area “disturbed” and issue an official notification in The Gazette of India to give the Centre the authority to deploy the “armed forces in aid of the civil power”.
- A government considers an area “disturbed” if it perceives a threat to “public peace and tranquility, by reason of differences or disputes between members of different religious, racial, language or regional groups or castes or communities.”
- The Act is said to give unbridled power to the armed forces and the Central Armed Police Forces deployed in “disturbed areas” to kill anyone acting in contravention of the law, arrest and search any premises without a warrant and protection from prosecution and legal suits without the Central government’s sanction.
- It says any commissioned officer, warrant officer, non-commissioned officer or any other person of equivalent rank in the armed forces can for the maintenance of public order “fire upon or otherwise use force” after giving such due warning as he may consider necessary.
- The situation is reviewed periodically for extension of the AFSPA. While the Assam and Manipur governments issue a notification in this regard, the Ministry of Home Affairs does it for Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh, where it is applicable in Tirap, Changlang, Longding and areas falling under Namsai and Mahadevpur police stations bordering Assam.
- Once declared “disturbed”, a region has to maintain the status quo for a minimum of three months according to The Disturbed Areas (Special Courts) Act, 1976.

How is the AFSPA viewed?

- The AFSPA has often been under the scanner for giving the armed forces personnel the “license to kill”.
- Rights groups have panned it as a tool of State abuse, oppression and discrimination while the United Nations has often pointed out it has no place in Indian democracy.
- Various State governments have over the years yielded to public demand and changed political scenarios to revoke the AFSPA. Punjab was the first to do so in 1997 followed by Tripura in 2015.
- In April 2018, Meghalaya withdrew the Act from a 20-km area along the 885-km boundary with Assam.
- Manipur had in 2004 withdrawn AFSPA from seven Assembly constituencies straddling the State capital Imphal following unrest over the custodial death of a woman deemed an extremist.

HDFC Limited and HDFC Bank merger

(Source: [Indian Express](#))

Context: *HDFC Bank and HDFC Ltd on Monday announced the merger of the two entities, setting the stage for one of the biggest deals in the Indian financial sector. The announcement of the merger led to a sharp rise in the share prices of the two entities which were up by over 7 per cent in the early trading hours. HDFC Bank said that the transaction is expected to close over the next 18 months, subject to completion of regulatory approvals and other customary closing conditions.*

What is the plan of merger?

- As per the transaction structure, HDFC Limited, India’s largest housing finance company with Assets Under Management (AUM) worth Rs 5.26 trillion and a market cap of Rs 4.44 trillion will merge with HDFC Bank, India’s largest private sector bank by assets with a market cap of Rs 8.35 trillion.
- The subsidiary or associates of HDFC Limited will also be transferred to HDFC Bank

What is the share swap ratio of the transaction?

- Shareholders of HDFC Limited, as on record date, will receive 42 shares of HDFC Bank for 25 shares of HDFC Limited.

How will the ownership change?

- Post the merger, HDFC Limited's shareholding in HDFC Bank will be extinguished and HDFC Bank will be 100 per cent owned by public shareholders. Existing shareholders of HDFC Limited will own 41% of HDFC Bank.

How will the merger benefit the two entities?

- While this will improve the ability to cross-sell products to a larger customer base, the move will help them leverage their distribution across urban, semi-urban and rural geographies. The combined balance sheet of Rs 17.87 trillion and Rs 3.3 trillion net worth will enable larger underwriting at scale.

The Indian Antarctic Bill

(Source: [Indian Express](#))

Context: Nearly 40 years after India first signed the Antarctic Treaty, the government has brought in a draft Indian Antarctic Bill, 2020. Earth Sciences Minister Dr Jitender Singh tabled the draft Bill in Lok Sabha.

What is the Antarctica Bill?

- The draft bill is the first domestic legislation with regard to Antarctica in India.
- Twenty-seven countries including Argentina, Australia, Belarus, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Columbia, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Peru, Russian Federation, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States of America, Uruguay and Venezuela already have domestic legislations on Antarctica. Many others, such as India, are now following suit.
- While India has been sending expeditions to Antarctica for the past 40 years, these expeditions have been circumscribed by international law. The Bill now puts into place a comprehensive list of regulations related to Antarctica, for such scientific expeditions, as well as for individuals, companies and tourists.
- The Ministry has explained that it expects activity in Antarctica to increase in the coming years, making the enforcement of a domestic set of protocols essential.
- A domestic legislation will further provide more validity to the Antarctic Treaty, and subsequent protocols, of which India is a signatory.
- The most significant part of the Bill is extending the jurisdiction of Indian courts to Antarctica, for crimes on the continent by Indian citizens, or foreign citizens who are a part of Indian expeditions. So far there was no recourse for crimes committed during an expedition, including crimes against the environment.

What is the Antarctica Treaty?

- The Antarctic Treaty was signed in 1959 by 12 countries — Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Chile, French Republic, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, Union of South Africa, USSR, the UK of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the US of America, and came into force in 1961.
- The Treaty covers the area south of 60°S latitude.



- The objectives of the treaty are to demilitarize Antarctica and establish it as a zone used for peaceful research activities and to set aside any disputes regarding territorial sovereignty, thereby ensuring international cooperation.
- Currently, 54 nations are signatories to the Antarctic Treaty, but only 29 nations have a right to vote at the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meetings – this includes India.
- India signed the Antarctic Treaty in 1983 and received consultative status the same year.
- The Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) was set up in 1980 for the protection and preservation of the Antarctic environment and, in particular, for the preservation and conservation of marine living resources in Antarctica.
- The Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty was signed in 1991 and came into force in 1998. It designates Antarctica as a “natural reserve, devoted to peace and science”.

What are the main provisions of the Bill?

- While the most significant provision of the Bill remains the extending of jurisdiction of Indian courts to Antarctica, and the investigation and trial for crimes committed on the Arctic continent, the Bill is a comprehensive document of regulations, particularly keeping in mind environmental protection and the fragile nature of the region.
- The Bill introduces an elaborate permit system for any expedition or individual who wishes to visit the continent.
- These permits will be issued by a Committee that will be set up by the government. The Committee will comprise of the Secretary Earth Sciences ministry and will also have officials from Defence, Ministry of External Affairs, Finance, Fisheries, Legal Affairs, Science and Technology, Shipping, Tourism, Environment, Communication and Space ministries along with a member from the National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research and National Security Council Secretariat and experts on Antarctica.
- The permits can be cancelled by the Committee if deficiencies are found or activities in contravention of the law are detected.
- While India does not carry out commercial fishing in the area, since every country has an allotted quota, the Bill now provides for this activity. However, strict guidelines are in place in accordance with international law.
- Like fishing, while India does not carry out any tourism activity in the region, and very few Indian tourists visit Antarctica, when they do, they do so through foreign tour operators. Antarctica receives a number of tourists from foreign countries.
- The Bill now enables Indian tour operators to operate in Antarctica, although, like for commercial fishing, this is circumscribed by strict regulations.
- The Bill further enlists elaborate standards for environmental protection as well as waste management.

What are the prohibitions?

- The Bill prohibits drilling, dredging, excavation or collection of mineral resources or even doing anything to identify where such mineral deposits occur — the only exception is for scientific research with a granted permit.
- Damaging of native plants, flying or landing helicopters or operating vessels that could disturb birds and seals, using firearms that could disturb the birds and animals, remove soil or any biological material native to Antarctica, engage in any activity that could adversely change the habitat of birds and animals, kill, injure or capture any bird or animal have been strictly prohibited.
- The introduction of animals, birds, plants or microscopic organisms that are not native to Antarctica are also prohibited. Extraction of species for scientific research needs to be done through a permit. The central government can also appoint an officer to carry out inspections.



What is the penalty system that has been introduced?

- The draft Bill proposes the setting up of a separate designated court to try crimes committed in Antarctica.
- The Bill further sets high penal provisions — the lowest penalty comprising an imprisonment between one-two years and a penalty of Rs 10-50 lakh. Extraction of any species native to Antarctica, or introduction of an exotic species to the continent can draw imprisonment of seven years and a fine of Rs 50 lakh.
- For dumping of nuclear waste or a nuclear explosion, the imprisonment can range between 20 years to life imprisonment with a fine of Rs 50 crore.

The Punjab-Haryana dispute over rivers waters and SYL Canal

(Source: [Indian Express](#))

Context: *The Haryana Vidhan Sabha has passed a resolution seeking completion of the Sutlej Yamuna Link Canal (SYL) Canal, bringing back into focus the contentious issue of sharing of river waters between Haryana and Punjab.*

The river waters

- The canal, once completed, will enable sharing of the waters of the rivers Ravi and Beas between the two states.
- The issue dates back to 1966 at the time of reorganisation of Punjab and formation of Haryana was formed. Punjab was opposed to sharing the waters of the two rivers with Haryana, citing riparian principles.

The shares

- A decade before the formation of Haryana, the water flowing down Ravi and Beas was assessed at 15.85 million acre feet (MAF) per year.
- The Union government had organised a meeting in 1955 between the three stake-holders — Rajasthan, undivided Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir — and allotted 8 MAF per year to Rajasthan, 7.20 MAF to undivided Punjab and 0.65 MAF to J&K.
- A decade after reorganisation, the Centre issued a notification allocating 3.5 MAF to Haryana out of the 7.2 MAF allotted to Punjab before reorganisation. In a reassessment in 1981, the water flowing down Beas and Ravi was estimated at 17.17 MAF, of which 4.22 MAF was allocated to Punjab, 3.5 MAF to Haryana, and 8.6 MAF to Rajasthan.

The canal

- On April 8, 1982, then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi launched the construction of the SYL Canal with a groundbreaking ceremony in Kapoori village in Patiala district. A stretch of 214 km was to be constructed, out of which 122 km was to cross Punjab and 92 km in Haryana.
- But the Akalis launched an agitation in the form of Kapoori Morcha against the construction of the canal. Then in July 1985, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and then Akali Dal chief Sant Harchand Singh Longowal signed an accord agreeing for a new tribunal to assess the water.

The tribunal

- The Eradi Tribunal headed by Supreme Court Judge V Balakrishna Eradi was set up to reassess availability and sharing of water.
- In 1987, the tribunal recommended an increase in the shares of Punjab and Haryana to 5 MAF and 3.83 MAF, respectively.

Electoral bonds

(Source: [Indian Express](#))

Context: Chief Justice of India N V Ramana has assured petitioners that the Supreme Court will take up for hearing a pending plea challenging the Electoral Bond Scheme, 2018. Two NGOs — Common Cause and Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) — have challenged the scheme, alleging that it is “distorting democracy”. The CJI has not specified any date for the hearing.

What are electoral bonds?

- Simply put, electoral bonds are an instrument through which anyone can donate money to political parties.
- Such bonds, which are sold in multiples of Rs 1,000, Rs 10,000, Rs 1 lakh, Rs 10 lakh, and Rs 1 crore, can be bought from authorised branches of the State Bank of India.
- As such, a donor is required to pay the amount — say Rs 10 lakh — via a cheque or a digital mechanism (cash is not allowed) to the authorised SBI branch.
- The donor can then give this bond (just one, if the denomination chosen is Rs 10 lakh, or 10, if the denomination is Rs 1 lakh) to the party or parties of their choice.
- The political parties can choose to encash such bonds within 15 days of receiving them and fund their electoral expenses. On the face of it, the process ensures that the name of the donor remains anonymous.

Weapons of Mass Destruction

(Source: [Indian Express](#))

Context: The Weapons of Mass Destruction and their Delivery Systems (Prohibition of Unlawful Activities) Amendment Bill, 2022 has been unanimously passed in Lok Sabha.

Details:

- The Bill seeks to amend The Weapons of Mass Destruction and their Delivery Systems (Prohibition of Unlawful Activities) Act, 2005, to provide against the financing of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems in line with India’s international obligations.
- The 2005 Act prohibited the manufacturing, transport, and transfer of weapons of mass destruction, and their means of delivery.
- According to the Statement of Objects and Reasons of the Bill, the need to amend the Act has arisen from the fact that “in recent times, regulations relating to proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems by international organisations have expanded”, and “the United Nations Security Council’s targeted financial sanctions and the recommendations of the Financial Action Task Force have mandated against financing of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems”.

Weapons of Mass Destruction

- The expression “weapon of mass destruction” (WMD) is usually considered to have been used first by the leader of the Church of England, the Archbishop of Canterbury, in 1937 to refer to the aerial

bombing of civilians in the Basque town of Guernica by German and Italian fascists in support of General Franco during the Spanish Civil War.

- The expression WMD entered the vocabularies of people and countries around the world in the early 2000s after the US under President George W Bush and the UK under Prime Minister Tony Blair justified the invasion of Iraq on the grounds that the government of Saddam Hussain was hiding these weapons in the country. No WMDs were ever found.

NBC weapons

- While there is no single, authoritative definition of a WMD in international law, the expression is usually understood to cover nuclear, biological, and chemical (NBC) weapons. According to the United States Department of Homeland Security, “A weapon of mass destruction is a nuclear, radiological, chemical, biological, or other device that is intended to harm a large number of people.”
- India’s 2005 WMD Act defines:
 - “Biological weapons” as “microbial or other biological agents, or toxins...of types and in quantities that have no justification for prophylactic, protective or other peaceful purposes; and weapons, equipment or delivery systems specially designed to use such agents or toxins for hostile purposes or in armed conflict”; and
 - “Chemical weapons” as “toxic chemicals and their precursors” except where used for peaceful, protective, and certain specified military and law enforcement purposes; “munitions and devices specifically designed to cause death or other harm through the toxic properties of those toxic chemicals”; and any equipment specifically designed for use in connection with the employment of these munitions and devices.

Control over use of WMDs

- The use of chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons is regulated by a number of international treaties and agreements.
- Among them are the Geneva Protocol, 1925, that banned the use of chemical and biological weapons; and the Biological Weapons Convention, 1972, and Chemical Weapons Convention, 1992, which put comprehensive bans on the biological and chemical weapons respectively.
- India has signed and ratified both the 1972 and 1992 treaties. There are very few non-signatory countries to these treaties, even though several countries have been accused of non-compliance.
- The use and proliferation of nuclear weapons is regulated by treaties such as Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT).

How does India acquire forex?

(Source: [Indian Express](#))

Context: *Between April and December 2021, India’s foreign exchange reserves grew by US\$ 63.5 billion. At the same period, the country recorded a Current Account Deficit of 1.2 per cent of GDP, as against a surplus of 1.7 per cent in April-December 2020.’*



HOW DOES INDIA ACQUIRE FOREX?

- Last week, RBI announced that between April and December 2021, India's foreign exchange reserves grew by **US\$ 63.5 billion**. Understanding how this happens requires understanding the functioning of India's Balance of Payment (BoP).
- The BoP details how money flows in and out of India based on millions of transactions between India and the rest of the world.

#QUIXPLAINED

1



HOW DOES BoP WORK?

The BoP has two accounts.

- The Current Account details all exchange of money for transactions based on current consumption. It is divided into two sub-parts.
- The Trade Account, which details all the exports and imports of physical goods, and the Invisibles Account, which details all non-physical transactions such as services (banking, travel and tourism etc.), remittances, and income from investments.

#QUIXPLAINED

2

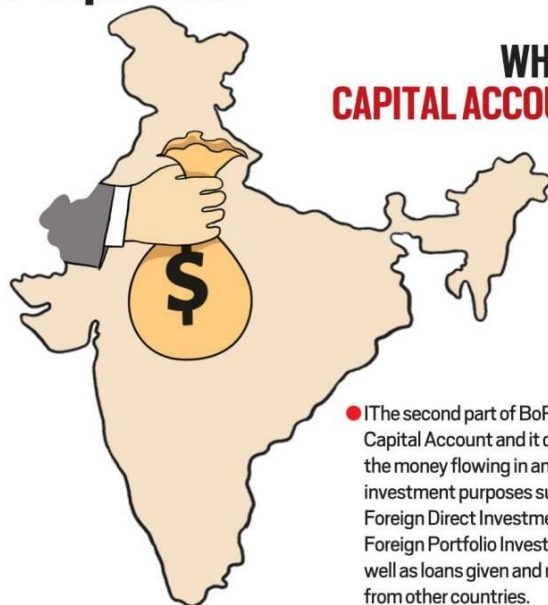


WHAT IS CURRENT ACCOUNT DEFICIT?

- In most years, India has a deficit on the trade account, implying that in \$ terms, India imports more goods than it exports.
- Often India enjoys a surplus on the Invisibles account.
- However, since the trade deficit is typically higher than the Invisibles surplus, India records a Current Account Deficit.

#QUIXPLAINED

3



WHAT IS CAPITAL ACCOUNT?

- The second part of BoP is the Capital Account and it details all the money flowing in and out for investment purposes such as Foreign Direct Investment and Foreign Portfolio Investment as well as loans given and received from other countries.
- Typically, India has a surplus on the Capital Account.

#QUIXPLAINED

4



EXPRESS
explained.



HOW WE GET OUR **FOREX**

- The key thing about BoP is that it always balances. So, a Current Account Deficit (\$26.6 bn) and a Capital Account Surplus (\$90.1 bn) must be balanced. The main way this happens is by the RBI taking away the excess dollars (\$63.5 bn) out of the BoP and turning them into forex.

Text: Udit Misra; Illustrations: Suvajit Dey

#QUIXPLAINED

5

Fortified rice

(Source: Indian Express)

Context: The Union Cabinet approved a scheme to distribute fortified rice under government programmes. Food Corporation of India and state agencies have already procured 88.65 LMT (lakh tonnes) of fortified rice for supply and distribution.

What is rice fortification?

- The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) defines fortification as “deliberately increasing the content of essential micronutrients in a food so as to improve the nutritional quality of food and to provide public health benefit with minimal risk to health”.
- Various technologies are available to add micronutrients to regular rice, such as coating, dusting, and ‘extrusion’.
- The last mentioned involves the production of fortified rice kernels (FRKs) from a mixture using an ‘extruder’ machine. It is considered to be the best technology for India.
- The fortified rice kernels are blended with regular rice to produce fortified rice.

How does the extrusion technology to produce FRK work?

- Dry rice flour is mixed with a premix of micronutrients, and water is added to this mixture. The mixture is passed through a twin-screw extruder with heating zones, which produces kernels similar in shape and

size to rice. These kernels are dried, cooled, and packaged for use. FRK has a shelf life of at least 12 months.

- As per guidelines issued by the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, the shape and size of the fortified rice kernel should “resemble the normal milled rice as closely as possible”. According to the guidelines, the length and breadth of the grain should be 5 mm and 2.2 mm respectively.

But why does rice have to be fortified in the first place?

- India has very high levels of malnutrition among women and children. According to the Food Ministry, every second woman in the country is anaemic and every third child is stunted.
- Fortification of food is considered to be one of the most suitable methods to combat malnutrition. Rice is one of India’s staple foods, consumed by about two-thirds of the population.
- Per capita rice consumption in India is 6.8 kg per month. Therefore, fortifying rice with micronutrients is an option to supplement the diet of the poor.

What are the standards for fortification?

- Under the Ministry’s guidelines, 10 g of FRK must be blended with 1 kg of regular rice.
- According to FSSAI norms, 1 kg of fortified rice will contain the following: iron (28 mg-42.5 mg), folic acid (75-125 microgram), and vitamin B-12 (0.75-1.25 microgram). Rice may also be fortified with zinc (10 mg-15 mg), vitamin A (500-750 microgram RE), vitamin B-1 (1 mg-1.5 mg), vitamin B-2 (1.25 mg-1.75 mg), vitamin B-3 (12.5 mg-20 mg) and vitamin B-6 (1.5 mg-2.5 mg) per kg.

Does fortified rice have to be cooked differently?

- The cooking of fortified rice does not require any special procedure. The rice needs to be cleaned and washed in the normal way before cooking.
- After cooking, fortified rice retains the same physical properties and micronutrient levels as it had before cooking.

How can a beneficiary distinguish between fortified rice and regular rice?

- Fortified rice will be packed in jute bags with the logo (+F) and the line “Fortified with Iron, Folic Acid, and Vitamin B12”.

Standing Deposit Facility

Source: ([Indian Express](#))

Context: While retaining the reverse repo rate at 3.35 per cent, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) introduced the Standing Deposit Facility (SDF), an additional tool for absorbing liquidity, at an interest rate of 3.75 per cent.

Role of SDF

- The main purpose of SDF is to reduce the excess liquidity of Rs 8.5 lakh crore in the system, and control inflation.
- In 2018, the amended Section 17 of the RBI Act empowered the Reserve Bank to introduce the SDF – an additional tool for absorbing liquidity without any collateral. By removing the binding collateral constraint on the RBI, the SDF strengthens the operating framework of monetary policy.
- The SDF is also a financial stability tool in addition to its role in liquidity management.



- The SDF will replace the fixed rate reverse repo (FRRR) as the floor of the liquidity adjustment facility corridor.
- Both the standing facilities — the MSF (marginal standing facility) and the SDF will be available on all days of the week, throughout the year.

How it will operate

- The SDF rate will be 25 bps below the policy rate (Repo rate), and it will be applicable to overnight deposits at this stage.
- It would, however, retain the flexibility to absorb liquidity of longer tenors as and when the need arises, with appropriate pricing.
- The RBI's plan is to restore the size of the liquidity surplus in the system to a level consistent with the prevailing stance of monetary policy.

Reverse repo rate

- The fixed rate reverse repo (FRRR) rate which is retained at 3.35 per cent will remain part of the RBI's toolkit, and its operation will be at the discretion of the RBI for purposes specified from time to time.
- The FRRR along with the SDF will impart flexibility to the RBI's liquidity management framework, the RBI said.

INTERNATIONAL

NFC technology for instant payments

(Source: [The Hindu](#))

Context: Google Pay has recently launched a new feature in India, 'Tap to pay for UPI', in collaboration with Pine Labs. The feature makes use of Near Field Communication (NFC) technology. The functionality will allow users with NFC-enabled Android smartphones and UPI accounts linked to Google Pay to carry out transactions just by tapping their phones on any Pine Labs Android point-of-sale (POS) terminal across the country, Google said in a release. Till now, Tap to Pay was only available for cards.

What is NFC and how does it work?

- NFC is a short-range wireless connectivity technology that allows NFC-enabled devices to communicate with each other and transfer information quickly and easily with a single touch — whether to pay bills, exchange business cards, download coupons, or share a document.
- NFC transmits data through electromagnetic radio fields, to enable communication between two devices.
- Both devices must contain NFC chips, as transactions take place within a very short distance. NFC-enabled devices must be either physically touching or within a few centimetres from each other for data transfer to occur.

How will this technology work with the recently launched feature, 'Tap to pay for UPI'?

- Google Pay has been the first among UPI apps to bring the Tap to Pay feature working on POS terminals.
- It will allow users with UPI accounts configured on Google Pay to make payments just by tapping their NFC-enabled Android smartphones on any Pine Labs Android POS terminal.
- Once users tap their phones on the POS terminal, it will automatically open the Google pay app with the payment amount pre-filled. Users can then verify the amount and merchant name and authenticate the payment, using their UPI PIN. They will be notified once the payment is successful, Google told The Hindu.
- The process is much faster compared to scanning a QR code or entering the UPI-linked mobile number which has been the conventional way till now.

Are other companies using NFC tech for payments using smartphones?

- In February this year, Apple introduced Tap to Pay on the iPhone. It will allow merchants across the U.S. to use their iPhones to accept Apple Pay, contactless credit and debit cards, and other digital wallets through a tap to their iPhone without the need for any additional hardware or payment terminal.
- At checkout, the customer just needs to hold their iPhone or Apple Watch to pay with Apple Pay, their contactless credit or debit card, or other digital wallet near the merchant's iPhone to complete the payment using NFC technology, Apple said in a release earlier.

What are the other applications of NFC technology?

- NFC tech has a wide range of applications besides driving payment services like Google Wallet and Apple Pay. It is used in contactless banking cards to perform money transactions or to generate contactless tickets for public transport.
- Contactless cards and readers use NFC in several applications from securing networks and buildings to monitoring inventory and sales, preventing auto theft, keeping tabs on library books, and running unmanned toll booths, according to investopedia.



- NFC is behind the cards that we wave over card readers in subway turnstiles and on buses to check tickets. It is present in speakers, household appliances, and other electronic devices that we monitor and control through our smartphones. With just a touch, NFC can also set up WiFi and Bluetooth devices in our homes, investopedia noted.
- It also has an application in healthcare, to monitor patient stats through NFC-enabled wristbands. NFC is used in wireless charging too.

How safe is this technology ?

- NFC technology is designed for an operation between devices within a few centimetres from each other. This makes it difficult for attackers to record the communication between the devices compared to other wireless technologies which have a working distance of several metres, according to the NFC forum, a non-profit industry association.
- The user of the NFC-enabled device determines by the touch gesture which entity the NFC communication should take place with, making it more difficult for the attacker to get connected. The security level of the NFC communication is by default higher compared to other wireless communication protocols.
- The NFC Forum has also added Peer to Peer communication which is a mechanism to cipher all exchanged data to avoid external interpretation of recorded communication. Since the receiving device reads your data the instant you send it, NFCs also reduce the chance of human error, according to investopedia.

Where does it stand in comparison to other wireless technologies?

- There are other wireless technologies available which are replacing cable-based connections. The IrDa technology is a short range (a few metres) connection based on the exchange of data over infrared light where the two communication devices must be positioned within a line of sight.
- Today, this technology is mainly used for remote control devices. For larger data communication with computer devices this technology was replaced by Bluetooth or WiFi connections.
- However, for these technologies' receiver devices need their own power supply due to the larger working distance. Therefore, the receiving device cannot be powered by the radiofrequency (RF) field like in NFC, the NFC forum highlighted.
- Another consequence of the larger working distance is the need for the user to configure their device and to pair them together for communication. Connection cannot be initiated by a simple touch gesture like in NFC.

When did NFC tech start?

- In 2004, consumer electronics companies, Nokia, Philips and Sony together formed the NFC Forum, which outlined the architecture for NFC technology to create powerful new consumer-driven products.

Why is Sri Lanka under a state of Emergency?

(Source: [The Hindu](#))

Context: A day after angry citizens converged in front of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's Colombo residence, demanding he step down immediately, he declared a state of Emergency in Sri Lanka. An extraordinary gazette notification said the Emergency, coming into immediate effect, was "in the interests of public security, the protection of public order and the maintenance of supplies and services essential to the life of the community." On Saturday, the government imposed an all-island curfew, restricting movement

until Monday morning. Sri Lanka is in the midst of a sharp economic downturn that has led to severe food shortages and growing public resentment.

What triggered the crisis?

- Sri Lanka's economic crisis can be traced to two key developments in the immediate past — the Easter Sunday bombings of 2019 that deterred tourists, and the pandemic since early 2020 that stalled recovery and further drained the economy.
- As it grappled with an unprecedented challenge, the Rajapaksa regime made policy choices that are now proving to be costly.
- It cut the government's tax revenue substantially and rushed into an 'organic only' agricultural policy that will likely slash this year's harvest by half.
- The weak and debt-ridden economy with the lingering strain of the pandemic, and ill-advised policies accelerated the downward spiral.

What were the economic indicators?

- COVID-19 hit Sri Lanka's key foreign revenue earning sectors hard. Earnings from tourism, exports, and worker remittances fell sharply in the last two years.
- But the country could not stop importing essentials, and its dollar account began dwindling. Fast draining foreign reserves, a glaring trade deficit, and a related Balance of Payments problem came as crucial signals.
- Colombo's huge foreign loan obligations and the drop in domestic production compounded the economic strain.

What is the situation now?

- The value of the Sri Lankan rupee has dropped to 300 against a U.S. dollar (and even more than 400 in the black market), putting importers in a difficult spot.
- The government is unable to pay for its import shipments, forcing consignments to leave the Colombo port. For the average citizen contending with COVID-induced salary cuts and job losses, the soaring living costs have brought more agony.

Has the government sought help?

- Yes, including from India which has extended \$2.4 billion this year, and China, that is considering a fresh request from Colombo for \$2.5 billion assistance, in addition to the \$2.8 billion it has extended since the pandemic broke out.
- The government has decided to negotiate an International Monetary Fund programme, while seeking support from other multilateral and bilateral sources. But even with all this help, Sri Lanka can barely manage. Recovery will neither be fast nor easy, say experts.

The key takeaways of a UNEP report on noise pollution

(Source: [The Hindu](#))

Context: *A February report commissioned by the United Nations Environment Programme on the environmental challenges posed by noise, wildfires and the disruption of biological rhythms of plants, animals and ecological cycles became controversial on account of the mention of a single city, Moradabad.*

What was the controversy?



- The first chapter of the report, called Frontiers 2022: Noise, Blazes and Mismatches, deals with noise. It compiles studies about noise levels in several cities around the world and illustrates a subset of 61 cities and the range of dB (decibel) levels that have been measured.
- Delhi, Jaipur, Kolkata, Asansol and Moradabad are the five Indian cities mentioned in this list and Moradabad in Uttar Pradesh was shown as having a dB range from 29 to 114. At a maximum value of 114, it was the second-most-noisiest city in the list. The first was Dhaka, Bangladesh at a maximum value of 119 dB.
- While road traffic, industry and high population density are well-known factors associated with high dB levels, the inclusion of Moradabad appeared strange because similar studies in the past had never suggested it to be an unusually noisy city.
- There was no mention of the city in any of the scientific reports listed out in the bibliography of sources. A perusal of the list of research articles, linking each city to the scientific study undertaken to measure noise levels, pointed to a study, “Environmental noise challenges and policies in low-and middle-income countries. South Florida Journal of Health.” This was authored by Dietrich Schwela, a researcher at the University of York, but surprisingly had no reference to Moradabad.
- There were references to noise levels in Aurangabad (40-102), Chandigarh (51-75) and Kolkata (70-83). Schwela’s study itself is a compilation of studies by several authors from around the world and the studies on Aurangabad, Chandigarh and Kolkata were done by independent authors. Another place that finds itself in the Frontiers report is Asansol, India, again referenced to Schwela’s study and like Moradabad has no mention in the study.

Why are measurements of noise important?

- The latest 2018 World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines established a health-protective recommendation for road traffic noise levels of 53 dB.
- The Frontiers report compiled a host of evidence, including the adverse effects of noise on public health, which range from mild and temporary distress to severe and chronic physical impairment. Night-time noise disturbs sleep and affects well-being the following day.
- Estimates suggest that in Europe 22 million and 6.5 million people suffer from chronic noise annoyance and sleep disturbance, respectively. The elderly, pregnant women and shift workers are among those at risk of noise-induced sleep disturbance.
- Noise-induced awakenings can trigger a range of physiological and psychological stress responses because sleep is necessary for hormonal regulation and cardiovascular functioning.
- Traffic noise exposure is a risk factor for the development of cardiovascular and metabolic disorders such as elevated blood pressure, arterial hypertension, coronary heart disease and diabetes. Long-term exposure to environmental noise contributes to 48,000 new cases of ischemic heart disease and causes 12,000 premature deaths annually in Europe.
- Two 15-year-long studies of long-term residents of Toronto, Canada found that exposure to road traffic noise elevated risks of acute myocardial infarction and congestive heart failure, and increased the incidence of Type 2 diabetes by 8%, and hypertension by 2%, says the report.

What is India doing about noise pollution?

- The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) is mandated to track noise levels, set standards as well as ensure, via their State units, that sources of excessive noise are controlled.
- The agency has a manual monitoring system where sensors are installed in major cities and few cities have the facility to track noise levels in real time. The CPCB also measures noise levels before and after Diwali in major cities, to publicise the impact of firecrackers.

Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change

(Source: [Indian Express](#))

Context: *The Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) delivered a dire assessment and warning in its latest report released on Monday (April 4), revealing what UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said was “a litany of broken climate promises” by governments and corporations.*

The climate change panel

- The IPCC is the United Nations body for assessing the science related to climate change. The IPCC was set up in 1988 by the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) and the UN Environment Programme (UNEP). Its main activity is to prepare Assessment Reports, special reports, and methodology reports assessing the state of knowledge of climate change.
- However, the IPCC does not itself engage in scientific research. Instead, it asks scientists from around the world to go through all the relevant scientific literature related to climate change and draw up the logical conclusions.

Assessment Reports

- The IPCC’s Assessment Reports (ARs), which are produced every few years, are the most comprehensive and widely accepted scientific evaluations of the state of the Earth’s climate. They form the basis for government policies to tackle climate change, and provide the scientific foundation for the international climate change negotiations.
- Six Assessment Reports have been published so far, the sixth report (AR6) coming in three parts — **the first** in August 2021, **the second** in February 2022, and the third on Monday.
- The first part of AR6 flagged more intense and frequent heat-waves, increased incidents of extreme rainfall, a dangerous rise in sea-levels, prolonged droughts, and melting glaciers — and said that 1.5 degrees Celsius warming was much closer than was thought earlier, and also inevitable.
- The second part warned that multiple climate change-induced disasters were likely in the next two decades even if strong action was taken to reduce the emissions of greenhouse gases.

What previous reports have said

- The first Assessment Report (1990) noted that emissions resulting from human activities are substantially increasing the atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases. Global temperatures have risen by 0.3 to 0.6 degree Celsius in the last 100 years. In the business-as-usual scenario, temperatures were likely to increase by 2 degrees Celsius compared to pre-industrial levels by 2025, and 4 degrees Celsius by 2100. Sea levels were likely to rise by 65 cm by 2100.
- This report formed the basis for the negotiation of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 1992, known as the Rio Summit.
- The second Assessment Report (1995) revised the projected rise in global temperatures to 3 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels by 2100, and sea-level rise to 50 cm, in light of more evidence. Global rise in temperature by 0.3 to 0.6 degree Celsius since the late 19th century was “unlikely to be entirely natural in origin”, it said.
- AR2 was the scientific underpinning for the Kyoto Protocol of 1997.
- The third Assessment Report (2001) revised the projected rise in global temperatures to 1.4 to 5.8 degrees Celsius by 2100 compared to 1990. The projected rate of warming was unprecedented in the last 10,000 years, it said. The report predicted increased rainfall on average, and that by 2100, sea levels were likely to rise by as much as 80 cm from 1990 levels.



- Glaciers would retreat during the 21st century, and the frequency, intensity, and duration of extreme weather events would increase, it said. The report presented new and stronger evidence to show global warming was mostly attributable to human activities.
- The fourth Assessment Report (2007) said greenhouse gas emissions increased by 70 per cent between 1970 and 2004, and atmospheric concentrations of CO₂ in 2005 (379 ppm) were the most in 650,000 years. In the worst-case scenario, global temperatures could rise 4.5 degrees Celsius by 2100 from pre-industrial levels, and sea levels could be 60 cm higher than 1990 levels.
- The report won the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize for IPCC. It was the scientific input for the 2009 Copenhagen climate meeting.
- The fifth Assessment Report (2014) said more than half the temperature rise since 1950 was attributable to human activities, and that the atmospheric concentrations of carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide were “unprecedented” in the last 800,000 years.
- The rise in global temperatures by 2100 could be as high as 4.8 degrees Celsius from pre-industrial times, and more frequent and longer heat waves were “virtually certain”. A “large fraction of species” faced extinction, and food security would be undermined, it said.
- AR5 formed the scientific basis for negotiations of the Paris Agreement in 2015.

UN Human Rights Council

(Source: [Indian Express](#))

Context: *The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) was scheduled to vote on Thursday (April 7) on a draft resolution to suspend Russia from the United Nations Human Rights Council as part of the global response to the alleged war crimes in Bucha, a town outside Kyiv, where more than 300 bodies of civilians have been found after the withdrawal of the Russian forces.*

Human Rights Council

- The Human Rights Council is an inter-governmental body within the United Nations system, which is responsible for strengthening the promotion and protection of human rights around the world.
- It also addresses and makes recommendations on situations of human rights violations, and can discuss all thematic human rights issues and situations.

Working of the Council

- The Human Rights Council replaced the former UN Commission on Human Rights. It was created by the UNGA on March 15, 2006, and the body met in its first session from June 19-30, 2006.
- In 2007, the Council adopted an “institution-building package” to set up its procedures and mechanisms. Among these were the mechanism of Universal Periodic Review to assess the human rights situations in all UN Member States, the Advisory Committee that serves as the Council’s think tank providing it with expertise and advice on thematic human rights issues, and the Complaint Procedure, which allows individuals and organisations to bring human rights violations to the Council’s attention.
- The Council also works with the UN Special Procedures established by the former Commission on Human Rights, consisting of special rapporteurs, special representatives, independent experts, and working groups that monitor, examine, advise and report on thematic issues or human rights situations in specific countries.

Membership of the Council

- The Council, which meets at the UN Office in Geneva, Switzerland, is made up of 47 UN Member States who are elected by majority vote through a direct and secret ballot at the UNGA.

- According to the Council's website, the UNGA takes into account the candidate States' contribution to the promotion and protection of human rights, as well as their voluntary pledges and commitments in this regard.
- The membership of the Council is based on equitable geographical distribution. African and Asia-Pacific states have 13 seats each, Latin American and Caribbean states have 8 seats, Western European and other states 7 seats, and Eastern European states 6 seats.
- The members serve for three years and are not eligible for immediate re-election after serving two consecutive terms.
- "With membership on the Council comes a responsibility to uphold high human rights standards. This is a criteria insisted on by States themselves when they adopted resolution 60/251 in March 2006 to create the Human Rights Council," says the Council.
- It is this responsibility that Russia is alleged to have wilfully violated in Ukraine. Russia's three-year term as member of the Council began on January 1, 2021.

Leadership of the Council

- The Council has a five-person Bureau, consisting of a president and four vice-presidents, each representing one of the five regional groups. They serve for a year each, in accordance with the Council's annual cycle.
- The Human Rights Council President of the 16th Cycle (2022) is Federico Villegas, who is the Permanent Representative of Argentina to the UN and other international organisations in Geneva. He was elected president of the Human Rights Council for 2022 in December 2021.

Meetings of the Council

- The Human Rights Council holds no fewer than three regular sessions a year, for a total of at least 10 weeks. These sessions take place in March (4 weeks), June (3 weeks) and September (3 weeks). The Council met in its latest (49th) regular session from February 28 to April 1, 2022
- If a third of the Member states requests, the Council can decide at any time to hold a special session to address human rights violations and emergencies.
- Under the presidency of Nazhat S Khan of Fiji, the Council held a record five special sessions in 2021 — on Myanmar, the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Israel, Afghanistan, Sudan, and Ethiopia.

Mains

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Making sports accessible for all

(Source: [The Hindu](#))

Context: *The Tokyo 2020 Paralympics was a watershed moment for Indian sports. History was written when a Paralympic gold medal was won by a female Indian athlete for the first time. This achievement was an important symbol of how far India has come in using sports to foster inclusion. It also became a conversation starter about how Indian women are finally claiming space for themselves in what is traditionally seen as a male-dominated field. To build on the successes of the Paralympics, it is important to provide more opportunities and an enabling environment for greater participation of women and persons with disabilities in sport.*

Overcoming barriers

- We know that when sports become inclusive, they have the potential to transform not just the lives of those playing but also of the wider community by encouraging the values of fair play.
- Systems and structures that give a voice and opportunities to everyone tend to be more stable and peaceful. It is no wonder, therefore, that sports are at the heart of the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- In its contribution towards achieving educational, health and equality outcomes, sport plays a vital role in furthering the UN Sustainable Development Goals.
- However, in India, like in many other parts of the world, COVID-19 challenged the inclusive legacy of the 2020 Paralympics, in turn threatening the wider benefits that sports can generate for individuals and communities.
- As lockdowns and social distancing measures were imposed, fewer people were practising and benefiting from sports. This intensified physical inactivity and the deterioration of mental health.
- Data from UNESCO's worldwide survey of school physical education show that some 70% of physical education teachers consider their students' physical and mental health to have worsened during the pandemic, with children with disabilities among the most affected.
- This crisis context is backlit by a landscape where already not enough was being done to ensure equal participation for all in sports.
- Budget allocations for physical education and sport remain low. In addition, social and cultural barriers restrict the participation of women and girls in sport.
- The sports landscape is far more unfavourable for women and girls with disabilities, with opportunities minimised due to discriminations based on gender and disability.
- This necessitates the need for making sports accessible and inclusive for all by challenging the stigma and stereotypes that surround women and persons with disabilities in sport.
- In this respect, sports are a creative tool that can be used to reach across divisions to promote inclusion and equality. Inertia is always an easy choice, but it is time that we use sports as an enabler in COVID-19 response and recovery strategies.
- Recovering from the crisis means making communities healthier, stronger and more resilient. Societies will need to prioritise solutions that benefit all people to 'build back better'.
- Creating an inclusive sporting culture requires effective policies, progressive curricula focused on quality physical education, and well-equipped/trained physical education professionals.



- It also requires good coordination among the different organisations and bodies with an interest in sports, and flexibility to account for the cultural, demographic, and infrastructural diversity in India.

The Fit for Life flagship initiative

- To support this vision, UNESCO is launching its Fit for Life flagship initiative in India. Fit for Life is designed to activate smart investments in impactful sport policies, school curricula, and grassroots participation to scale up effective solutions tackling rising physical inactivity, mental health issues, social exclusion, and inequalities.
- In doing so, and alongside complementary ongoing initiatives such as the Fit India campaign and Khelo India, it is hoped that there will be greater collaboration for healthier, more inclusive and equitable communities.
- Since marginalised communities, women and persons with disabilities are often ignored in sporting policies and activities, increasing their visibility in all aspects of sport should be considered as an important tool to enhance their participation in sport. Promoting female role models is therefore an imperative to strengthen the engagement of women and girls in sports.
- Today, as we mark the UN International Day of Sport for Development and Peace, we are presented with an opportunity to recognise the role sport plays in making our world a better place. Through our efforts, we hope to break stereotypes so that everyone feels confident to engage and excel in sports.

Strengthen secularism, save the republic

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

Context: *The High Court of Karnataka has not been able to settle the hijab issue. Its judgment has further provoked the hijab-wearing college students in Udupi, who have now approached the Supreme Court of India to contest the order. The judgment of the High Court is very technical. It almost reads like a petition and betrays an excessive eagerness to disprove the other side. This unusual eagerness goes to the point where the court has dismissed a plea of a violation of fundamental rights by merely stating that there was no proper pleading.*

Political dimension will fester

- The issue of the hijab is political as well as constitutional. The top court will examine the constitutional aspect and its judgment will hopefully settle the issue. But the political dimension of the hijab issue will continue to trouble Indian society for a long time.
- No great research is needed to unearth the fact that the seemingly sudden eruption of this issue reflects an insidious intolerance which is quite uncharacteristic of the majority religious community. As a matter of fact, Hindu and Sikh women in northern India cover their heads on all important occasions such as a marriage, a funeral, religious ceremonies, etc.
- It is a measure of the transformation that has taken place in Indian society that a piece of cloth is enough to serve as provocation for people to come out onto the street and fight against each other. In such an environment of intolerance, the claims of traditional tolerance, pluralism and catholicity seem like a bad joke.

A moral framework

- But the fact is that India does have such a past where people from other parts of the world were welcomed with open arms and allowed to live here in peace and amity for millennia.

- Proselytising religions did gain some following here but they never posed any serious challenge to the majority religion. A tolerance of other faiths and compassion toward fellow beings became an integral part of Indian traditions because of the Buddha.
- He gave India the moral framework within which to shape our exchanges with other fellow human beings. The transformation which is being brought about today is clearly outside that moral framework. The Buddha bequeathed to us great wisdom which is being frittered away with a vengeance.
- The Constitution of India adopted that moral framework for the governance of India. Equality, justice and fraternity are as much a part of the great Buddhist tradition as of the modern European Renaissance. It is in fact the good fortune of India and perhaps a historical inevitability that leaders such as Jawaharlal Nehru and B.R. Ambedkar were there to give shape to the ideas of a modern nation, rooted essentially in the moral traditions of Buddhism and assimilating the egalitarian impulses of the modern world.
- Thus, the Indian Constitution provides for freedom of religion and conscience on the one hand and secularism for the governance of the country on the other.
- Many in this country passionately argue that secularism in India means that the state has equal respect for all religions. This mistaken emphasis leads rulers to attend religious ceremonies donning religion-specific dresses and performing rituals publicly. This is more political grandstanding than any genuine demonstration of faith.

A ‘separation’

- But the point being made here is that under the Indian Constitution too there is a separation of religion from the state as in Europe. In fact, this separation was a major inflection point in the history of the Renaissance in Europe. The essence of India’s secularism is that the state has no religion. This is clear from Articles 27 and 28 of the Constitution.
- Article 27 says that no tax can be levied for promoting any particular religion. In other words, no public revenue is permitted to be spent in favour of any particular religion.
- Article 28 says that no religious instruction shall be given in any educational institutions wholly maintained out of state funds. The same Article says that no educational institution recognised or aided by the state shall compel any person to attend religious classes or worship therein.
- Article 25(2)(a) empowers the state to regulate secular activities associated with religious practice. Article 15 prohibits any kind of discrimination on the ground of religion. Above all, freedom of religion is made subject to other fundamental rights, apart from the reasonable restrictions on the grounds of public order, morality and health. Thus, the freedom of religion under the Constitution does not enjoy the same status as other secular rights such as equality before law, non-discrimination, right to life and liberty, etc.
- It is clear from the above that secularism enshrined in the Indian Constitution is based on the principle that the state has no religion. The Indian state is organised on this foundational principle. In *Indira Nehru Gandhi vs Shri Raj Narain & Anr*, the Supreme Court of India had reaffirmed this principle. The Court said: “the state shall have no religion of its own”.

Religiosity in public life

- There is too much religiosity in public life in India. So, we have conveniently changed the meaning of secularism into ‘sarva dharma sambhav’ which would only lead to majoritarianism and, ultimately, to the establishment of a theocratic state.
- We have seen that such a state of mind as “samabhav” does not exist in reality in today’s India. Theocracy will ensure the disintegration of the country.
- The reasons are not far to seek. India is a multi-religious country where the largest minority is around 200 million. The Government of India had notified as many as six minority religions in the country. So, a theocratic state with the majority religion as the state religion is an unworkable proposition.
- Another crucial factor which makes a theocratic state impossible in India is the complex, inequalitarian, hierarchical and oppressive social structure of the majority religion.



- A theocratic state functions on the basis of religious laws, which in India means the Dharma Shastras according to which only a particular caste has the right to rule and a large majority of the population will have no right to be a part of the power structure.
- They will have no human rights and will be perennial victims of systemic oppression and injustice. Since a theocratic state based on the religious texts, in the Indian context, would mean a state which would deny equality before law and equal protection of law to the subaltern class and discriminate against them on the basis of caste, it will be inherently unstable. This may lead to perennial conflicts and the eventual disintegration of society.

A foundational principle

- Therefore, we reach the inevitable conclusion that India, as a nation, can survive only as a secular state where the state has no religion and does not promote any religion. It is a measure of the thoughtlessness of people that educated Indians speak derisively of secularism and have begun to support the idea of a theocratic state based on the majority religion.
- Their mood is being shaped by the razzmatazz of the religio-political campaigns of today. The wise men who led the freedom struggle and framed the Constitution had a deep understanding of India's multi-religious and multicultural character and also the complexities of its social structure.
- Secularism was chosen as the foundational principle of the republic to keep the nation united. Enlightened citizens should realise that if secularism is jettisoned, the hard-won national unity will be in peril. It is the patriotic duty of every citizen to strengthen secularism and thus save the republic.

Caste hierarchies and migration patterns

Context: *This paper outlines how caste identities of migrants can influence migration patterns and the benefits attained through migration.*

Details:

- Among the many studies on migration and its socio-economic effects, H. Arokkiaraj's article 'International Migration and Caste Dynamics: Three villages in Tamil Nadu', draws attention to the inter-connections that exist between caste and international migration
- It denotes how caste hierarchies and privileges enable certain castes to access better jobs, higher pays and profitable remittances through channels of international migration.
- In this process, other castes are excluded from garnering better opportunities. Even though migration is undertaken to improve one's living standards, Arokkiaraj mentions how caste identities of migrants can influence migration patterns and the benefits attained.
- Unlike the upper castes, who migrate voluntarily for professional reasons seeking enhanced incomes and better lifestyles, Arokkiaraj observes how for lower castes and Dalits, their dismal socio-economic conditions compel them to migrate for survival purposes.
- From field findings based on methods of mixed sampling and semi-structured interviews (132 samples) conducted in three village panchayats — Thamarakki South, Sakkanthi, and Kottakudi Keelpathi in Sivagangai district in Tamil Nadu — this paper examines the role of caste in international migration and the differential socio-economic impact of migration on caste groups.
- The paper takes into consideration three social groups who belong to the above mentioned villages – the Kallars who are the Backward Castes (BC) and the dominant landowning caste, the Moopanars who belong to the category of Most Backward Castes (MBC) and work as agricultural labourers in the lands owned by the Kallars and the Paraiyars who are registered among the Scheduled Castes (SC), barred from working in the farms of the Kallars, and are engaged in manual scavenging.

- This paper delves into how migration affects the wives of the migrants (the left-behind wives) and describes the experiences and consequences of migration on different caste groups through insights gathered from the wives of the migrants from these villages.

Social capital, caste and migration

- The field data on the relationship between caste and international migration provides information on how migrants from the BC and MBC communities were well equipped in terms of their ability to afford more money to meet their costs of migration.
- When compared to the MBCs and SCs, migrants belonging to the BC community were able to manage their migration expenses through their personal savings, whereas migrants from the MBC and SC communities had to borrow money from friends, relatives or moneylenders to meet their migration costs. BC migrants were also better placed in sending higher remittances back home.
- In the information gathered through interviews of left-behind wives belonging to the Moopanar community, it was found that the remittances of their migrant husbands were not enough to meet their household requirements. They had to share the responsibility of meeting the financial expenses by working on the agricultural lands of the BC (Kallar) community.
- The narratives of women from the Moopanar community also explains the relative economic affluence of the BCs (Kallars), as Kallars possess agricultural lands, livestock and higher remittances. The Moopanars and the Paraiyars in comparison are economically disadvantaged as both the husband and wife have to work hard and engage in economic activities to attain socio-economic status equal to that of the Kallars.
- On the contrary, owing to their higher economic capabilities, women belonging to the Kallar community do not need to engage in economic activities and are able to run their households with the remittances received.
- For women belonging to MBC and SC communities, migrant remittances alone do not guarantee economic affluence. The financial benefits of remittances are marginal or meagre to them, whereas field data suggest that the BC community was able to benefit from/achieve economic solvency through migrant remittances.
- Narratives from left-behind wives belonging to MBC and SC communities also indicate how caste functions as a decisive factor in the pre-migration process and the post-migration effects. Their stories show how BC migrants through their high caste status, community connections and financial resources, were able to get better job offers.
- After gaining direct employment with high salaries overseas, they further enhance their socio-economic well-being. Such narratives show how caste-determined migration acts to the detriment of migrants belonging to the MBC and SC communities, resulting in discriminatory outcomes for them.
- Among the left-behind wives of the three caste groups, BC women made better educational progress and higher ownership of livestock than MBC and SC women.
- While the left-behind wives of the BC community were homemakers, women of MBC and SC communities had to engage in agricultural labour, MGNREGA works and other caste-based occupations to make their ends meet. In terms of income earnings and less financial burdens, left-behind wives of BC community fared far better than those belonging to the MBC and SC communities.

Differential access and outcomes

- This paper brings to light the occupational shifts in the three caste groups caused by international migration.
- BC migrants who were agricultural landholders worked in the sectors of construction and labour overseas and the MBC and SC migrants who were earlier engaged in caste-based occupations in the village, were able to shift to other job sectors and improve their economic positions through overseas migration.
- Although international migration enabled those from the lower castes and the Dalit community to move to non-caste job sectors, their economic activities in their resident villages were still governed by caste.



- While the men from MBC and SC communities shifted to non-caste job sectors via overseas migration, women from these communities continue to work in caste-based occupations to support the financial needs of their families.
- International migration proved more advantageous to the men and women of the BC community, with the existent socio-economic privileges adding to their advancements, whereas the same did not bring about any substantial change in the lives of the migrant families belonging to the MBC and SC communities.
- This makes clear how in international migration, caste-based socio-economic privileges facilitated the access and advancement of one community (BC Kallars) while simultaneously prejudicing the economic prospects of the migrants of the MBC and SC communities. Such a disadvantaged outcome requires more academic attention and analysis.

The manacles of caste in sanitation work

(Source: [The Hindu](#))

Context: According to the Social Justice and Empowerment Ministry, a total of 971 people lost their lives while cleaning sewers or septic tanks since 1993, the year law prohibiting employment of manual scavengers was enacted. In this piece dated October 22, 2020, Raees Muhammad wrote about the problematic definitions in the law and the lack of labour safety. He argued that since sanitation work is caste-ridden, it is essential to first disassociate caste from labour.

Details:

- Even in 2020, the Indian government and our civil society continue to grapple with the inhuman nature of manual scavenging.
- While civil society started a movement in the 1990s to abolish dry latrines, the focus now is on manhole deaths and provision of safety equipment to sanitation workers.
- The movement has been demanding the abolition of the dehumanising practice of the manual removal of human excreta and calls for the introduction of mechanisation for handling waste.
- Various State governments and the previous Central governments have responded to these civil society demands by introducing different laws to stop manual scavenging and provide incentives to build toilets.
- If, on the one hand, the civil society has tended to approach this issue as a collective problem that needs to be addressed by the State, on the other, the current ruling dispensation seems to be framing the issue as a spectacle in the form of Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, and is addressing the problem in terms of an obstacle in the way of tourism promotion.

Problematic descriptions

- In 1993, the then government promulgated an Act prohibiting the construction of unsanitary dry latrines and employing manual scavengers.
- The Act defined ‘manual scavenger’ as a person engaged in or employed for manually carrying human excreta.
- The government’s description of dry latrine was a problem, as it defined dry latrine as “latrine other than a water-seal latrine”.
- Manual scavenging was not just a practice related to dry latrines, but also to insanitary latrines and open defecation. Until the introduction of the Employment of Manual Scavengers and Construction of Dry Latrines (Prohibition) Act in 1993, State governments had a post called ‘scavengers’.
- A scavenger’s job was to manually remove human excreta in households and designated places. The local authorities levied scavenging tax on houses for availing this service. But after the Act was



introduced, State governments themselves became agencies that would enforce prohibition of the construction or usage of dry latrines.

- Ten years later, the Safai Karamchari Andolan, a social movement that campaigned against manual scavenging, along with other organisations, filed a public interest litigation in the Supreme Court. The demand was to direct State governments and Union Territories to strictly enforce the law to stop the practice of manual removal of human excreta.
- Mounting pressure from civil society, coupled with the intervention of the Supreme Court, forced the Central government to conduct a survey of manual scavengers in 2013. The survey found that dry latrines and manual removal of human excreta still persisted. In the same year, the government introduced the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act.
- Though the construction of dry latrines has drastically reduced, the number of deaths in manholes, sewers and septic tanks continues to remain high. The present government had plans to amend the 2013 Act to completely mechanise the cleaning of sewers and manholes and build new sewers.
- But neither the past nor the present amendment addresses the issue of labour safety. Same is the case with the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, which skirts the issue of labour rights and the stigma attached to sanitation.
- As a matter of fact, in Tamil Nadu, all political parties have trade unions for government servants, except for sanitation workers. Bodily wastes are seen as unholy elements that need to be kept away from places of living, cooking, studying, or worshipping.
- Not only toilets, but even cleaning work is seen as a lowly job in India. Dalit movements have been found wanting in this regard — there have hardly been any organised movements to demand permanent job status for sanitation workers.
- Most sanitation contracts are given to private contractors or self-help groups, and such staff hardly have ID cards, leave alone the protection of medical insurance policies.
- Workforce in sanitation departments is recruited via open competition. The local administration usually approaches particular caste members during such hiring. The situation is so dire that while we find volunteers to distribute food and undertake rescue operations during natural calamities, hardly any volunteer offers to do clean-up work or dispose of dead bodies.
- During the last Chennai floods, sanitation workers from the Nilgiris district were made to travel in garbage trucks to Chennai. This situation has continued even during the COVID-19 pandemic. In Tamil Nadu, sanitation workers are asked to work in newly formed COVID-19 wards.
- For example, the Gudalur municipality in the State issued an order to six of its staff members to work in COVID-19 wards. Similarly, in Kotagiri town panchayat, officials asked the sons of sanitation workers to work in COVID-19 wards.

Question of dignity

- Unlike other labour forces, sanitation workers do not have a separate rule-book that lays down guidelines for their work timings, holidays, a proper place for roll call, removal from duty, etc. For example, in the Nilgiris district of Tamil Nadu, all the sanitation workers have to stand outside the office during the morning and afternoon roll calls.
- If they reach early, they are seen sitting on roadside pavements. Even though there are spaces within the office premises, the officers force them to stand outside. The officials claim that the practice is traditional and that for any change, new rules need to be formed.
- There are no vehicles for sanitation workers to travel to their designated workspaces, and they have to either walk for kilometres or use garbage vehicles. This is a forced choice and is connected to the dignity of a worker. To put this in contrast, no supervisor would stand and travel with the sanitation workers.
- There are hardly any exclusive trade unions for sweepers, and unlike other sections in government or private workforce, their problems are voiced by only those who are not associated with sanitation work — often NGOs. This is because in India, sanitation work is caste-ridden and hence, there is an urgent need to dissociate caste from labour.

GS II

Realism versus liberalism in international relations

(Source: [The Hindu](#))

Context: *Proponents of liberalism emphasise on the internal characteristics of states which they argue impact a state's external policies. Within the liberal framework, there are three different but interconnected theoretical approaches — economic interdependence, democratic peace and international institutions. Realists consider nation states as the primary actors in a world which is basically an anarchic place with no supreme authority to maintain order. There are three main streams of realist theory — human nature realism, defensive realism and offensive realism. Both theories try to understand the behaviour of states, especially great powers, from different perspectives.*

Details:

- Russia's invasion of Ukraine has rekindled the realism versus liberalism debate in international relations.
- While liberals in general call the war an attack by “authoritarian Russia” on “democratic Ukraine”, realists argue the war was the culmination of the post-Cold War power games in Europe. While this debate can go on with no consensus, it's important to understand the basic tenets of the two theories that are fuelling it.
- Basically, both theories try to understand the behaviour of states, especially great powers, from different perspectives.
- Liberalism broadly has three core beliefs: states are the main actors in the international system; the internal characteristics of each state vary from the other and these differences shape the state's behaviour; and some governance models are good and some are bad (for example, democracies versus dictatorships).
- After the end of the Cold War, in which the liberal West defeated the communist Soviet Union, Francis Fukuyama, in *The End of History and the Last Man*, called the western liberal democracy the final form of human government.
- So, liberals emphasise on the internal characteristics of states which, they argue, impact states' external policies.
- According to them, good states are supposed to make peace while bad states could seek to expand their power at the expense of others. Within the liberal framework, there are three different but interconnected theoretical approaches — economic interdependence, democratic peace and international institutions.

Theories of liberalism

- The proponents of economic interdependence argue that a liberal economic order is essential for a stable international order.
- Economic globalisation is intrinsically linked to this argument. Democratic peace theorists claim that democracies do not go to war with each other. So, to create a world without war, according to this theory, a world of democracies should be built. And the role of institutions, according to them, is critical to maintain peace and order in the global system.
- The League of Nations was formed after the First World War. The League collapsed and the Second World War broke out. But the post-War world order was rebuilt with new international institutions starting with the United Nations. Therefore, the ideal world order that liberals want is the one where democratic states are connected through economic globalisation and function in a system that is regulated by international organisations.
- While liberalism offers an optimistic view of the global order, it's more about what the world ought to be. Realism is more about what the world is.



- For realists, a peaceful global order is desirable, but that's far from reality. Hence, they are pessimists. Realists, like liberals, also consider nation states as the primary actors in the international system. For them, the world is basically an anarchic place with no supreme authority to maintain order. Therefore, this makes the world a dangerous place.
- As historian E.H. Carr notes, realism "tends to emphasise the irresistible strength of existing forces and the inevitable character of existing tendencies, and to insist that the highest wisdom lies in accepting, and adapting oneself to these forces and these tendencies".

Premises of realism

- There are three main streams of realist theory in international relations — human nature realism, defensive realism and offensive realism. And all streams seek to explain why states seek more power.
- Human nature realism (also called classical realism), laid out by Hans Morgenthau in *Politics Among Nations*, is based on the argument that humans' lust for power can have a profound impact on the nature of states as states are led by human beings.
- According to human nature realists, states, by default, have this 'will to power' wired into them like human beings, and in an anarchic order, they continue to seek expansion of power. This could create conflicts.
- Defensive realists, on the other hand, don't believe that states are inherently aggressive. Kenneth Waltz argues in *Theory of International Politics* that the fundamental aim of states is survival. But Waltz also agrees that the global order is anarchic and this structural factor forces states to compete with each other.
- Offensive realism is also a structural theory like defensive realism that bases its arguments on the structural factors rather than human behaviour. John Mearsheimer, the Chicago University professor who conceptualised offensive realism, argues that great powers always seek to maximise their power at the expense of rivals.
- While defensive realists argue that great powers seek to maintain the existing balance of power, offensive realists argue that status quo powers are rarely seen in international politics. "A state's ultimate goal is to be the hegemon in the system," writes Mearsheimer in *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*.

India-Nepal relationship

(Source: [The Hindu](#))

Context: *The Nepal Prime Minister, Sher Bahadur Deuba, paid a long-awaited visit to India last week (April 1-3). Sworn in in July 2021, this was his first bilateral visit abroad, in keeping with tradition. The outcome might appear modest but what is significant is that India and Nepal effectively managed to steer clear of divisive issues. At 75, Mr. Deuba is a political veteran and first became Prime Minister in 1995. Now in his fifth stint, he is no stranger to the complex relationship between the two countries.*

Positive outcomes

- Among the highlights was the operationalisation of the 35 kilometre cross-border rail link from Jayanagar (Bihar) to Kurtha (Nepal). Two further phases will extend it to Bijalpura and Bardibas.
- The ₹787 crore project had been ready for over a year but operationalisation was held up because of the necessary administrative requirements in Nepal to set up a company that could recruit staff. The Konkan Railway Corporation will provide the necessary technical support initially.
- The second project that was inaugurated was the 90 km long 132 kV double circuit transmission line connecting Tila (Solukhumbu) to Mirchaiya (Siraha) close to the Indian border.
- Constructed with an Exim Bank concessional loan of ₹200 crore, there are a dozen hydroelectric projects planned in the Solu corridor for which the Nepal Electricity Authority has concluded PPAs of 325 MW.



- In addition, agreements providing technical cooperation in the railway sector, Nepal's induction into the International Solar Alliance, and between Indian Oil Corporation and Nepal Oil Corporation on ensuring regular supplies of petroleum products were also signed.
- The Mahakali Treaty, signed in 1996 during Mr. Deuba's first visit as Prime Minister, covers the Sarada and Tanakpur barrages as well as the 6,700 MW (approximately) Pancheshwar Multipurpose project. Both sides have agreed to push for an early finalisation of the detailed project report. The ambitious \$7 billion project needs political will to move it forward.
- The joint vision statement on power sector cooperation recognises the opportunities for joint development power generation projects together with cross border transmission linkages and coordination between the national grids; it can provide the momentum.
- On February 27, Mr. Deuba pushed through the ratification of the agreement with the U.S. Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), despite the reservations of his coalition partners, the Maoists and the UML (Unified-Socialist).
- The agreement provides a grant of \$500 million for building 318 km of high voltage transmission lines along with sub-stations and the maintenance of 300 km of the East-West highway. The Chinese Embassy in Kathmandu had actively sought to sabotage the agreement by planting stories that it was part of the U.S.'s Indo-Pacific strategy aimed at containing China.
- The agreement had been signed in 2017, during Mr. Deuba's fourth stint as Prime Minister, and was awaiting ratification. Together with the Pancheshwar project, it provides welcome synergy.

China's growing role

- During the monarchy, China maintained a link with the Palace and its concerns were primarily related to keeping tabs on the Tibetan refugee community. With the abolition of the monarchy, China has shifted attention to the political parties and to institutions such as the Army and Armed Police Force and considers Nepal an important element in its growing South Asian footprint.
- In recent years, India's relations with Nepal have had both 'highs' and 'lows'. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has often spoken of the "neighbourhood first" policy.
- He started with a highly successful visit in August 2014 but then saw the relationship take a nosedive in 2015, with India first getting blamed for interfering in the Constitution drafting process and then for an "unofficial blockade" that generated widespread resentment against India. It reinforced the notion that Nepali nationalism and anti-Indianism were two sides of the same coin that Mr. Deuba's predecessor, Mr. K.P. Sharma Oli, exploited successfully.
- In 2016, Mr. Oli visited Beijing to negotiate an Agreement on Transit Transportation. Three years later, a Protocol was concluded with China providing access to four sea ports and three land ports. The first ever visit of the Chinese Defence Minister took place in March 2017, followed by joint military exercises a month later. A military grant of \$32 million was also announced.
- China has overtaken India as the largest source of foreign direct investment. In 2019, China's President Xi Jinping visited Kathmandu. Annual development assistance has been hiked to \$120 million. Today, China is also engaged with airport expansion projects at Pokhara and Lumbini. Rather than compete with China, India needs to up its own game.
- The growing Chinese presence means that India cannot afford to let issues linger but reach out actively to find resolution.

Managing differences

- Over the years, a number of differences have emerged between India and Nepal that need attention. The political narrative has changed in both countries and these issues can no longer be swept under the carpet or subsumed by invoking a 'special relationship' based on ties of a shared culture, language and religion.
- Part of the success of Mr. Deuba's visit was that none of the differences was allowed to dominate the visit. Yet, to build upon the positive mood, it is necessary these issues be discussed, behind closed doors and at Track 2 and Track 1.5 channels.



- As one of the oldest bonds, the 1950 Treaty of Peace and Friendship was originally sought by the Nepali authorities in 1949 to continue the special links they had with British India. It provides for an open border and for Nepali nationals to have the right to work in India.
- But today, it is viewed as a sign of an unequal relationship, and an Indian imposition. The idea of revising and updating it has found mention in Joint Statements since the mid-1990s. It has been discussed sporadically, but in a desultory manner, by the Foreign Secretaries in 1997, and even at the ministerial level at the 2014 Joint Commission.
- In 2016, an eight-member Eminent Persons Group was set up to discuss it. The report is available with both governments but the perception in Kathmandu is that it should be formally presented to the two governments.
- As long as it is clearly understood that this is only a report by well-intentioned experts in their individual capacity and not binding on governments, it should be possible for the two Foreign Ministers to acknowledge it publicly. It could even be made public to kickstart Track 2 conversations.
- Demonetisation is another irritant. In November 2016, India withdrew ₹15.44 trillion of high value (₹1,000 and ₹500) currency notes. Today, over ₹15.3 trillion has been returned in the form of fresh currency. Yet, many Nepali nationals who were legally entitled to hold ₹25,000 of Indian currency (given that the Nepali rupee is pegged to the Indian rupee) were left high and dry.
- The Nepal Rashtra Bank, which is the central bank, holds ₹7 crore and estimates of public holdings are ₹500 crore. After more than five years, it should certainly be possible to resolve this to mutual satisfaction.

On the boundaries

- In 2019, Mr. Oli, facing domestic opposition within his party, needed a distraction and found one in the form of the Kalapani boundary issue. These boundaries had been fixed in 1816 by the British, and India inherited the areas over which the British had exercised territorial control in 1947.
- While 98% of the India-Nepal boundary was demarcated, two areas, Susta and Kalapani remained in limbo. In November 2019, India issued new maps following the division of the State of Jammu and Kashmir as Union Territories, Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh.
- Though the new Indian map did not affect the India-Nepal boundary in any material way, Mr. Oli expanded the Kalapani area dispute. By whipping up nationalist sentiment, he got a new map of Nepal endorsed by the legislature through a constitutional amendment.
- While it did not alter the situation on the ground, it soured relations with India and added a new and emotive irritant.
- The need today is to avoid rhetoric on territorial nationalism and lay the groundwork for quiet dialogue where both sides display sensitivity as they explore what is feasible. India needs to be a sensitive and generous partner for the “neighbourhood first” policy to take root.

Karnataka High Court’s verdict on Marital Rape

(Source: [The Hindu](#))

Context: Over the last several months, arguments challenging the constitutionality of the marital rape exception in Section 375 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) had gripped the Delhi High Court. While the judgment in those petitions is still awaited, in one clean swoop Justice M. Nagaprasanna of the Karnataka High Court on March 23, 2022, in the case of *Hrishikesh Sahoo vs State of Karnataka*, pronounced the end of the marital rape exception.

The background



- Outcomes in judicial proceedings are almost always shaped by the cases which come before the courts. This judgment was a result of a unique case where a woman had filed a criminal complaint of rape against her husband due to the repeated acts of sexual assault she had to face.
- The police registered her complaint under Section 376 notwithstanding the marital rape exception, a charge sheet was filed and the Sessions Judge took cognisance and framed charges under Section 376. The husband filed an application to drop the charge of Section 376 but the Sessions Judge rejected it. This led to the husband approaching the High Court seeking to quash the criminal proceedings.
- In a nuanced and far-reaching judgment, Justice Nagaprasanna refused to quash the charge of rape against the husband. He held that if a man, being a husband is exempted for his acts of sexual assault, it would destroy women's right to equality, which is the very soul of the Constitution. He held that the Constitution recognises and grants equal status to women, but the exception to marital rape in the IPC amounts to discrimination because a wife is treated as subordinate to the husband.
- The Constitution considers marriage as an association of equals and does not in any sense depict women to be subordinate to men and guarantees women the fundamental rights under Articles 14, 15, 19 and 21 the right to live with dignity, personal liberty, bodily integrity, sexual autonomy, right to reproductive choices, right to privacy, right to freedom of speech and expression.
- He held that the exemption of the husband on committal of such assault/rape cannot be so absolute that it becomes a licence for commission of a crime; in provocative words he stated, "a man is a man; an act is an act; rape is a rape, be it performed by a man the "husband" on the woman "wife", and refused to quash the case.

Earlier judgments

- There have been other judgments which have already been a precursor to doing away with this exception. In *Independent Thought vs Union of India* (2017), the Supreme Court of India diluted it and removed the exception to marital rape to a wife not below 15 years and made it 18 years.
- The Court stated that this would not amount to removing the exception to marital rape for women above 18 years as that was not the case before it, but Justice Madan B. Lokur in similar words held, "... a rape is a rape... A rape that actually occurs cannot legislatively be simply wished away or legislatively denied as non-existent...."
- The Court held that a girl cannot be treated as a commodity having no say over her body or someone who has no right to deny sexual intercourse to her husband and that the human rights of a girl child are very much alive and kicking whether she is married or not.

Roots of the principle

- The exception to marital rape in common law was due to the dictum by Chief Justice Matthew Hale of Britain in 1736 where he stated: "But the husband cannot be guilty of a rape committed by himself upon his lawful wife, for by their mutual matrimonial consent and contract the wife hath given up herself in this kind unto her husband which she cannot retract." The concept that by marriage, a woman gave up her body to the husband was accepted as an enduring principle of common law, due to which a husband could not be guilty of raping his wife. This was therefore translated into criminal codes, including the Indian Penal Code which India adopted.
- This principle has now been completely abolished. In the United Kingdom, in 1991, the exception to marital rape was done away with in the case of *R. vs R.* The House of Lords held that where the common law rule no longer even remotely represents what is the true position of a wife in present-day society, the duty of the court is to take steps to alter the rule.
- The court held that a husband's immunity as expounded by Chief Justice Matthew Hale no longer exists and took the view that the time had arrived when the law should declare that a rapist remains a rapist subject to the criminal law, irrespective of his relationship with his victim. It held that it was the duty of the court to remove a common law fiction which had become anachronistic and offensive and that there was no justification for the marital exemption in rape.

- That was in 1991, more than 30 years ago in the U.K. The Karnataka High Court took a similar view of its duties as a constitutional court in the present case and held that the exception to marital rape in Section 375 is regressive, wherein a woman is treated as a subordinate to the husband and against the constitutional guarantee of equality. Our courts have now truly pronounced the death knell of the marital rape exception.

No quota without quantifiable data

(Source: [The Hindu](#))

Context: *No exhaustive study has been done to collect quantifiable data on the representation of different communities in education and employment. The State BC (Backward Caste) Commission, in its July 2011 report to the State government in justification of 69% reservation for BC, MBC/DNCs and SC/ST under the 1994 Act, did not give any community-wise break up of representation in government services.*

Details:

- On March 31, the Supreme Court upheld the judgment of the Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court which quashed the 10.5% special reservation provided to Vanniyars, a Most Backward Community (MBC) in Tamil Nadu, within the Reservation for the Most Backward Classes and Denotified Communities Act, 2021.
- The Madras High Court's recent verdict of quashing the 10.5% special reservation for Vanniyakula Kshatriyas within the overall 20% quota for Most Backward Classes (MBC) and Denotified Communities (DNC) has again highlighted the importance of quantifiable data as a prerequisite for reservation in education and employment.
- Adopted on the last day of the previous State Assembly in February when the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) was in power, the special quota law, which envisaged 10.5% special reservation for the Vanniyakula Kshatriyas comprising seven sub-castes; 7% for 25 MBCs and 68 DNCs; and 2.5% for 22 MBCs, triggered controversy from the word go.
- Expectedly, the legislation was challenged before the High Court, which held it unconstitutional for a host of reasons.
- Even though the Court described the submission that the law was enacted only on the basis of "adequate authenticated data on population" of the MBCs and DNCs enumerated by the second Backward Classes (BC) Commission as the "main thrust" of arguments of Tamil Nadu's Advocate General, it concluded that "there is no data, much less quantifiable data, available with the State government before the introduction" of the law.

No exhaustive study

- It is a fact that no exhaustive study has been done to collect quantifiable data on the representation of different communities in education and employment since the second BC Commission, popularly known after its chairman, J.A. Ambasankar, carried out one during its existence (1982-1985).
- Even the State BC Commission, in its report of July 2011 to the State government in justification of 69% reservation for BC, MBC/DNCs and Scheduled Castes (SC)/Scheduled Tribes (ST) under the 1994 Act, did not give any community-wise break up of representation in government services.
- It furnished only the numbers of candidates belonging to the BCs and MBC/DNCs, who were chosen for the State Services and Subordinate Services during 2005-09, quoting the data furnished by the Tamil Nadu Public Services Commission, apart from those from SC/ST and Other Backward Classes selected by the Railway Recruitment Board, Chennai.
- Even though the mandate given to the BC panel was to come out with its defence of the 69% quota, the Commission could have provided the community-wise break up of recruitments made by the State



government. At least, now, with the High Court pointing to the absence of data as a reason to annul the 10.5% quota law, the State government should commission a study to compile the data on the way the benefits of reservation got distributed among BCs, MBCs and the DNCs.

- The study can be carried out either by the present BC Commission or by an exclusive panel, as decided by the previous AIADMK government in December 2020. When the existing BC Commission was set up in July 2020, one of the terms of reference was to examine the demand for internal reservation within the reservation provided for MBCs and make a recommendation on the matter.
- As made clear by the Court, the quantifiable data are required for providing any form of quota in favour of any community because the Constitutional stipulation of adequate representation in the services has to be met along with that of social and educational backwardness for any community to become eligible for reservation in employment.

Internal reservation

- The need for internal reservation has been felt for more than one reason. Even in the 1970s and 1980s, two BC Commissions found certain sections of the communities more backward than others.
- The situation has got compounded in the absence of application of the creamy layer rule in reservation, a concept that is being opposed by political parties including the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam and the AIADMK. Ironically, the first BC Commission (1969-70), headed by A.N. Sattanathan, talked of having a device for “skimming off periodically” top layers of the communities.
- The Ambasankar Commission advocated compartmental reservation, by grouping the BCs on the basis of backwardness. It went to the extent of saying that the words, “any backward class of citizens” in Article 16(4) of the Constitution “contemplates [sic] a plurality of backward classes and consequent separate reservation for these classes.”
- The concept of quota within quota is nothing new to Tamil Nadu. In March 1989, a new category — Most Backward Classes and De-notified Communities — was carved out of the BCs and given 20% exclusively from the then quantum of 50%.
- In September 2007, Muslims in the BCs were provided with 3.5% and in January 2009, 3% for Arunthathiyars out of 18% quota for the SCs. Most likely, the present DMK government will appeal in the Supreme Court against the High Court’s judgement. At the same time, it should begin the exercise of collecting the quantifiable data, caste-wise and tribe-wise.
- As the 69% quota law came into force in 1994, the government can have the data compiled since then with regard to education and employment in government institutions, and make them available in the public domain, considering its emphasis on data centric governance and transparency.
- To begin with, the government can make public, for academic interest, the report sent by the BC Commission in June 2012 on the issue of internal quota which was not acted upon by the then AIADMK regime.
- Depending upon the findings of the proposed study, the government can frame its policies accordingly to ensure equitable distribution of the benefits of reservation and render social justice in the true sense of the term.

Closing the gaps in criminal justice

(Source: [The Hindu](#))

Context: Last year, the Supreme Court of India, while hearing a criminal appeal, took suo motu cognisance of certain deficiencies and inadequacies which occur during the course of criminal trials. As a result, it issued the necessary directions in *In Re: To issue certain Guidelines regarding Inadequacies and Deficiencies in Criminal Trials vs The State of Andhra Pradesh* (2021). These directions inter alia included

presentation of site plan, inquest report and body sketches (in a post-mortem report) in a uniform manner, photographs and videographs of a post-mortem in certain cases, and separation of prosecution from the investigation. The High Courts and the State governments were, accordingly, asked to notify the draft “Rules of Criminal Practice, 2021” which all the States and the High Courts had agreed upon with minor variations, and make consequential amendments in their police and other manuals. The Guwahati High Court issued the essential notification and incorporated the necessary changes in January 2022.

Preparing a site sketch

- The Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) mandates that the officer-in-charge of a police station shall, on receiving information about the commission of a cognisable offence, proceed to the spot (of the crime) in person to investigate the facts and circumstances of the case.
- The general practice (on reaching the spot) is to prepare a site sketch that shows details of the crime scene and collect evidence which could connect the presence of the criminal. The Court has previously held that a site plan drawn on scale is admissible if the witnesses corroborate these statements of the draftsman that they showed him the places.
- The contents of the site map would not become admissible as evidence merely by its exhibition by the investigating officer.
- The guidelines issued now say that the site sketch prepared by the investigating officer shall be followed by a scaled site plan prepared by a police draftsman, if available, or another authorised or nominated draftsman by the State government.
- Therefore, looking at the importance of a site plan (which captures the details of a crime scene and its surroundings) particularly in a case of suspicious death, the police need to develop its own cadre of draftsmen.
- The guidelines mandate that every medico-legal certificate and post-mortem report shall contain a printed format of the human body (with both a frontal and rear view) on its reverse and injuries, if any, shall be indicated on such a sketch.

Testing veracity

- The purpose of preparing an inquest report is to ‘ascertain whether a person has died under suspicious circumstances or died an unnatural death and if so, what the (nature of) injuries are and the apparent cause of death’.
- However, if the evidence and materials collected during an inquest ‘make it a prima facie case of any offence’, a criminal case is registered and regular investigation taken up even without any formal complaint from anyone.
- It is settled law that the contents of the inquest report cannot be treated as evidence, but they can be looked into to test the veracity of the witnesses of the inquest. However, if the investigating officer himself observes and records evidence, it is treated as ‘direct or primary evidence in the case and the best in the eyes of the law’.
- Similarly, the post-mortem report is a ‘document which by itself is not a piece of substantive evidence. It is the statement of the doctor in court, which has the credibility of substantive evidence’.
- The post-mortem report can only be used as ‘an aid to refresh the memory of the doctor while giving evidence’. The significance of the ‘evidence of the doctor lies vis-à-vis the injuries appearing on the body of the deceased person and the likely use of a weapon’.

For better scrutiny

- The National Human Rights Commission, India (NHRC) has already laid down similar guidelines for cases of deaths in police custody. The importance of body sketches (in a uniform format) in an inquest report and a post-mortem report cannot be overemphasised.
- Their standardisation will not only help the court to better appreciate these reports and scrutinise the evidence, but will also help the investigating officers and doctors to refresh their memory with more clarity.



- The Supreme Court has directed that ‘in case of death of a person in police action or death in police custody, the magistrate or the IO [investigating officer] shall inform the hospital to arrange for photography and videography for conducting post-mortem examination of the deceased’.
- Similar guidelines, first issued by the NHRC back in 1995 — and then revised from time to time — are being meticulously implemented by the enforcement agencies. The Supreme Court in *People’s Union for Civil Liberties vs State of Maharashtra* (2014) issued similar guidelines for deaths in exchange of fire with the police.
- The implementation of the scheme of having trained photographers at police stations (in accordance with Supreme Court’s ruling of 2018 in *Shafhi Mohammad vs the State of Himachal Pradesh*) is also under way in a phased manner so that scenes of heinous offences are videographed and photographed using digital cameras as a “desirable and acceptable practice”, and their hash values taken to make the evidence tamper-proof.
- The draft Code now provides that the investigating officer shall seize such photographs and videographs, preserve the original (separate memory card) and obtain certificate under Section 65B (regarding admissibility of electronic records) of the Indian Evidence Act, 1872.
- The purpose of these guidelines is to ensure that there is uniformity of procedure in dealing with cases of death in police action or police custody without any tampering of evidence. Therefore, it will be appropriate for the police forces across the States to speed up implementation of the above scheme and have their own cadre of photographers so that expertise is maintained at the police station level.

On investigation

- The Supreme Court has further directed that ‘the state governments shall appoint advocates, other than public prosecutors, to advise the investigating officer during investigation’.
- Currently, in many States, a public prosecutor advises the investigating officer to check and make up for any deficiency in investigation before submitting the charge sheet in the court.
- Previously, there have been conflicting judgments by the Supreme Court on this issue. The Court in *R. Sarala vs T.S. Velu* (2000) held that as per the scheme of the CrPC, the investigation ends with the formation of an opinion by the police as to whether, on the material collected, a case is made out to place the accused for trial.
- The formation of the said opinion by the police is the final step of investigation, and this final step is to be taken by the police and by no other authority. The public prosecutor is an officer of the court and his role essentially is inside the court.
- More recently, in *State of Gujarat vs Kishanbhai* (2014), the Court, while taking note of the many lapses in investigation, directed that ‘on completion of the investigation in a criminal case, the prosecuting agency should apply its independent mind, and require all shortcomings to be rectified, if necessary, by requiring further investigation’.
- Since, investigation and prosecution are two different facets in the administration of criminal justice, the three judge Bench of the Supreme Court has now rightly asked the States to separate the two wings. Chhattisgarh has sanctioned a cadre of law officers (who shall function independently of the public prosecutors and will have no role in the court) to assist the investigating officers in educating and improving investigation work.
- Other States should also follow suit. Similarly, while the creation of a cadre of draftsmen and photographers may take time, executive orders may be issued without further delay, followed by training of investigating officers and medical doctors, in order to implement the Supreme Court’s directives.

GS III

The India-Australia trade agreement

(Source: [The Hindu](#))

Context: On April 2, India and Australia signed an Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (ECTA). The landmark bilateral trade pact is the second trade agreement India has signed this year after inking a similar deal with the United Arab Emirates in February. The ECTA is expected to increase trade between the two sides to \$45-50 billion over five years, from the current estimate of \$27 billion, and create over 10 lakh additional job opportunities. Under this agreement, India will give 85% of Australia's exports zero-duty access to its domestic market. India is expected to get zero-duty access to Australia for its goods over five years. The negotiations had begun over a decade ago in 2011, but were restarted in September 2021.

What are the main features?

- The ECTA is guided by a Preamble and is divided into multiple sections that will govern what is hoped to be the most expansive bilateral trade since the two countries established diplomatic ties before India attained independence.
- It has a section on goods exports, and lays out clearly “Rules of Origin” that are aimed at creating anti-dumping measures.
- There are also sections that are aimed at providing remedies and mechanisms for resolving trade disputes.
- The Commerce Ministry underlined that this is the first trade deal signed by India that has a compulsory review mechanism after 15 years of implementation.

Will Australia get access to India's agriculture market?

- Under this agreement, Australia will get the opportunity to export certain varieties of agricultural produce like potatoes, lentils, and meat products with some caveats. However, bovine meat is not part of the agreement.
- Australia may also send machineries that are required for food processing under this agreement. In a historic first, India may open up to a wide-range of alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks including Australian beer.
- Australian wines costing over \$5 may face lower import duties in the Indian market. A Joint Dialogue for Wine may be created with participation from industry players and government representatives to ensure cooperation and benefits for both countries.
- The Indian side said Australia will provide ‘preferential access’ to “all the labour-intensive sectors” of export items from India such as gems and jewellery, textiles, leather, footwear, furniture, food, engineering products, medical devices and automobiles. India will also allow Australia to export raw materials under preferential terms like coal and mineral ores.

What does it say about the services sector?

- The Government of India has said that Australia has “offered wide ranging commitments” in around 135 sub-sectors and Most Favoured Nation in 120 sub-sectors which cover key areas of the Indian services sector like IT, ITES, business services, health, education and audio-visual services.
- Indian chefs and yoga teachers will get specific entry quotas into Australia, while Indian students in Australia will be able to secure work visas for periods ranging from 18 months to four years on a ‘reciprocal’ basis.

- As per the rules framed under the pact, students completing a diploma Down Under will be considered for an 18-month work visa; and those completing their undergraduation may get two years and those with a Ph.D. may be considered for a four-year visa.

What about the pharmaceuticals sector?

- India and Australia have agreed to enable fast track approval for patented, generic and biosimilar medicines.
- Therapeutic Goods Regulators of both sides will have a role to play in monitoring and ensuring smooth trade in pharma products between the two sides. Both sides have agreed to audits of imports that require sanitary and phytosanitary inspection as per the law of the land.
- The importing side will ensure that plants and plant products, animal products and other goods, and their packaging are inspected through recognised methodologies. If either party finds examples of non-compliance, remedial measures will be taken by both sides.

What is the dispute settlement mechanism in place?

- Under Article 13.5, both parties have agreed to hold consultations — and make “every effort” to find a solution — in case of disputes that may emerge in the course of trade in goods or services.
- They have also recognised that in case they have to resort to international arbitration, they may opt for an organisation (i.e, World Trade Organization) where both are members.
- They may also use “good offices” and form panels with qualified members drawn from government and business to resolve the disputes.
- The dispute resolution may range from 45 days to 15 months.

What are the rules of origin included in the agreement?

- The rules of origin are based on the principle that they should be “wholly obtained or produced in the territory of one or both of the parties”.
- This section ensures that waste material will not be exported by either side unless they contribute to the production of any of the items listed in the ECTA.

Can govt increase farmers' income in light of wheat demand in international market?

(Source: [Indian Express](#))

Context: *The geopolitical tension in Russia and Ukraine presents a golden opportunity to substantially enhance the farmers' income in the country by exporting the “golden grain” — wheat. The big wheat exporters — Russia and Ukraine — are missing from the wheat export market due to war and wheat rates are also higher than MSP being offered by the government. With export the government can also fulfil the promise it made to the farming community five years ago almost a year before i.e. in 2017-18 the previous Lok Sabha elections, which led to the formation of BJP government at the centre second time in a row with a clear majority.*

At what price wheat is being exported from India?

- Experts said that at Mundra and Kandla Ports also the wheat was being exported at the rate of 2,4,000 to 25,000 per tonnes (2,400 to 2,500 per quintal) till a week ago.
- Both the rates are higher than the MSP of wheat being provided by the government which is Rs 2,015 per quintal.



- Experts said that in any case, the rates of wheat will not come down to the level of MSP being offered by the government because there is a huge demand for wheat in the International market currently and farmers can earn Rs 300 to 350 higher than the government MSP.

What is the demand for wheat in the international market?

- According to government reports, India's export has increased three times from 2020-21 to 2021-22 in one year and for the current fiscal year, the export target is almost double the last year.
- In 2020-21 India's total wheat export was over 2.1 million tonnes, which had already touched 6.6 million tonnes in February end of this year and touched 7.1 million tonnes in March this year (2021-22 fiscal year) as India exported wheat to Bangla Desh, UAE, Sri Lanka and others.
- And the government has projected wheat export of 12-13 million tonnes for the 2022-23 fiscal year.
- The experts said that it might even go up to 21 million tonnes because of the huge demand for wheat from the Middle East, African and several South Asian countries.
- As Ukraine and Russia were exporting around 48 million tonnes of wheat, which is 25% of the total wheat export market of the world, to the Middle East, African countries and others and now they are missing from this market which increases wheat demand manifold.

What is the estimated production of wheat in India this year and what is the government's wheat procurement target?

- India is expecting to produce around 111 million tonnes of wheat this season against 109 Million tonnes last year.
- The harvesting of wheat in this season has already begun in a few states. The government procurement target was 44 million tonnes on MSP including 13 million tonnes from Punjab state itself.
- But the government may not achieve even this target because the increasing prices of wheat in the international market also affect the rate in the local market, where they may sell the crop even at a little higher price Rs 50 to Rs 100 per quintal more than the MSP, leading to less procurement by the government.

How the Indian government can help farmers to increase their income as it promised five years ago?

- If the government links the price that it pays to the farmers with the price at which the wheat is exported then the farmers will gain much more, said a senior officer in the Food Corporation of India (FCI), adding that government can get a higher price to the farmers in the International market.
- Farmer Leader Jagmohan Singh, General Secretary BKU Dakuanda, said that government should enhance its procurement target by offering higher MSP to the farmers so that they should not go to the local private player, who will offer little above the MSP and sell or export the same at a higher price later. Competitive MSP by the government will increase farmers' income when the input cost is increasing manifold, said he.
- Farmer leader Sukhdev Singh Kokrikalan of BKU Ugrahan said that only a handful of farmers are having the capacity to export its crop on their own and here Government can play a big role by purchasing them at higher prices and exporting them to needy countries and earning huge foreign exchange thus enhancing the income of its farmers too which will lessen their debt burden too.
- "Had farmers got recommended MSP of their crop, there would have no debt on them today," stressed he, adding that government must utilise this opportunity by exporting farmers' wheat and getting them a good price.
- "The rate of any crop is dependent on both national and international markets. When prices of any crop are low in the international market these impact local markets negatively too and now when prices of wheat are higher in the international market it should benefit the farmers here too and in government has a big role to help farmers by procuring more and more at a competitive rate to export the same," said Prof. Sukhpal Singh, Principal Economist, (Marketing) Punjab Agriculture University (PAU, Ludhiana, adding that with this farmers' income will increase and rate of suicides will be decreased.



- He also added that even if one goes by the recommendations of MS Swaminathan and Ramesh Chand Committee on MSP the wheat MSP would have been between Rs. 25,00 to 27,00 per quintal by taking all the factors into account.
- Moreover, when there is a huge demand for it in the international market and rates are good, the government should procure maximum as it is an environment-friendly crop that can be stored with minimum expenses for a long time and can be exported gradually, said Prof. Sukhpal, adding that even government can export it directly by saving storage expenses because of its high demand currently.



Current Affairs Quiz

1) Consider the following statements:

1. Fournier's gangrene is a flesh eating disease that affects the genital organs of humans.
2. The disease affects those who are affected with type-2 diabetes.

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 : c

2) Consider the following statements with respect to the Indian Antarctic Bill:

1. The bill expands the jurisdiction of Indian courts to Antarctica, for crimes on the continent by Indian citizens only.
2. India is a signatory to the Antarctica Treaty and only the G20 countries have such a legislation in place.

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 : d

Twenty-seven countries already have domestic legislations on Antarctica.

The most significant part of the Bill is extending the jurisdiction of Indian courts to Antarctica, for crimes on the continent by Indian citizens, or foreign citizens who are a part of Indian expeditions.

3) The Bachan Singh framework is related to-

- a. Framework for life sentences and death penalty for the accused.
- b. Framework to be followed by religious minority institutions in providing admissions to the students.
- c. Framework for containing environmental pollution caused by plastics.
- d. Framework for prevention of ground water exhaustion.

Answer : a

4) Consider the following statements regarding the:

1. The Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change was set up by the Climate Action Network (CAN) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).
2. The fourth assessment report of IPCC stated that increase in greenhouse gas emissions lead to atmospheric concentrations of CO₂

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

The IPCC was set up in 1988 by the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) and the UN Environment Programme (UNEP).

Six Assessment Reports have been published so far, The fourth Assessment Report (2007) said greenhouse gas emissions increased by 70 per cent between 1970 and 2004, and atmospheric concentrations of CO₂.

5) Consider the following statements:

1. The Training in Emirates Job and Skills scheme is implemented by the Ministry of Human Resource Development in collaboration with the Ministry of Skill development.
2. The aim of the scheme is skilling, certification and overseas employment of Indians in the GCC countries only.

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

The scheme is implemented by the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship.

6) Consider the following statements with respect to the National Scheduled Tribes Finance and Development Corporation:

1. It functions under the aegis of the Ministry of Social Justice.
2. It is a statutory body created under the Non-profit company's act, 2001.

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 : c

It is an apex Organization under the Ministry of Tribal Affairs in 2001 was brought into existence with the sole aim of economic upliftment of the Scheduled Tribes in the country.

7) Consider the following statements:

1. Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana aims to correct the imbalance in the availability of affordable healthcare facilities in the country.
2. The scheme is implemented by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and is fully funded by the central government.

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

The project cost for upgradation of each medical college institution has been estimated at Rs. 150 crores per institution, out of which Central Government will contribute Rs. 125 crores and the remaining Rs. 25 crore will be borne by the respective State Governments.

8) Consider the following statements:

1. A dry port is a port that is not situated near the coastline and is an inland intermodal terminal directly connected to a seaport by road or rail.
2. In India there are only two dry ports located on the banks of river Ganges in the states of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.

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

There are close to 300 dry ports in India.

9) Riparian doctrine is related to which of the following statement?

- It emphasizes the recognition of equal rights to the use of water by all owners of land abutting a river.
- It is the US policy towards the Western Hemisphere.
- It is a set of principles to guide the conduct of foreign relations with India's immediate neighbors.
- None of the above.

Answer : a

10) Consider the following statements with respect to Ganoderma lucidum mushroom:

- Ganoderma lucidum is a medicinal mushroom used to heal diseases like diabetes, cancer, ulcer, etc.
- Unlike normal mushrooms, the peculiar character of this one is that it grows on wood or wood-based substrate only.

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

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

Answer : c

11) Which of the following statements is/are correct regarding National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR)?

- It works under the aegis of the Ministry of science and technology.
- It is responsible for managing India's Antarctic and Arctic bases.
- It monitors only six glaciers's melting rate in the Himalayan region.

Codes:

- 1 and 2 only
- 2 and 3 only
- 1 and 3 only
- 1, 2 and 3

Answer : b

It was established as an autonomous Research and Development Institution of the Ministry of Earth Sciences on the 25th May 1998.

12) Consider the following statements:

- The National Disaster Management Authority is a statutory body and is responsible for disaster management in India.
- The primary responsibility of disaster management vests with the state government.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- 1 only
- 2 only
- Both 1 and 2
- Neither 1 nor 2

Answer : c

13) Consider the following statements:

- The trade account details all the exports and imports of physical goods only.
- The invisible account details all non-physical transactions such as services, remittances, and income from investments.
- In India trade deficit is higher than the invisibles surplus leading to current account deficit.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

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

Answer : c

14) Consider the following statements with respect to weapons of mass destruction:

- 1. The UN charter defines Weapons of Mass destruction as those weapons that are nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons.
- 2. India has signed and ratified both the Biological Weapons Convention and Chemical Weapons Convention.

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

There is no single, authoritative definition of a WMD in international law, the expression is usually understood to cover nuclear, biological, and chemical (NBC) weapons.

15) Aposematism, sometimes seen in the news, is associated with:

- a. Imperfection in the curvature of the eye causing blurred vision.
- b. Disorder affecting the muscles, joints, and bones.
- c. Use of warning coloration to avoid predators.
- d. Recognition of the existence of many god and goddesses in one single religion.

Answer : c

16) Consider the following statements:

- 1. The Pradhan Mantri Jan Vikas Karyakram is implemented by the Ministry of human resource development.
- 2. It is a centrally sponsored scheme with the objective to develop socio-economic infrastructure assets in minority concentration areas.

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

Implemented by the Ministry of Minority Affairs.

17) The Agasthyavanam Biological Park is located in -

- a. Kerala
- b. Tamil Nadu
- c. Both Kerala and Tamil Nadu
- d. Karnataka

Answer : a

18) Consider the following statements:

- 1. India is one of the founding members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation.
- 2. Apex decision-making body of the SCO is the Heads of State Council (HSC) which meets biannually.

3. SCO has a adhoc body, the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) whose role is to protect the member countries from terrorism.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

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

Answer : d

- It is a permanent international intergovernmental organization.
- Founding Members: Republic of Kazakhstan, the People's Republic of China, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Uzbekistan, The Russian Federation, and the Republic of Tajikistan.
- India and Pakistan became members in the year 2017 at the Astana summit and there are nine members, Iran being the latest to join in 2020.
- The supreme decision-making body in the SCO is the Heads of State Council (HSC) and meets once in a year and adopts guidelines and decisions on all important matters of the SCO.
- The organization has two permanent bodies — First is the Executive Committee of the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) based in Tashkent and second is the SCO Secretariat based in Beijing.

19) Consider the following statements with respect to fortification of rice:

- 1. It is the process of deliberately increasing the content of micronutrients in the rice to improve the nutritional quality .
- 2. In India fortified rice is produced by cultivating a genetically modified crop variety .
- 3. The ministry of agriculture is the nodal agency in deciding the distribution of fortified rice.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

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

Answer : c

Various technologies are available to add micronutrients to regular rice, such as coating, dusting, and 'extrusion'.

As per guidelines issued by the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, the shape and size of the fortified rice kernel should resemble the normal milled rice as closely as possible.

20) Consider the following statements regarding Standing Deposit Facility (SDF):

- 1. The purpose of SDF is to reduce the excess liquidity in the system and control inflation.
- 2. SDF absorbs liquidity without any collateral and also acts as a financial stability tool.

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 : c