

# EDITORIAL

NEWS-SUMMARY  
& ANALYSIS

2024 | series 1





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# PREFACE

This document is a creation of editorial analysis of various newspaper editorials covering to important topics such as:

- The need for the use of labour statistics (The Hindu).
- Reading caste in inequality debate (Hindustan Times).
- Climate finance needs overhaul, funds influx (Hindustan Times).
- Onion exports: The poll factor (Hindustan Times).
- Getting to a new level in India's online gaming sector (The Hindu).
- Plastic Solution (The Hindu).
- Israel has lost the plot on Gaza (Hindustan Times).
- The era of the politics of performance (The Hindu).
- Key to staying healthy is diet (Hindustan Times).
- Saving Trees to beat the heat (Hindustan Times).
- Mission Purvodaya.
- Mission Sagar.
- World Development Information Day.
- Karbi Anglong Agreement.

To enhance the utility of the document. Key words/phrases have been marked & a lexicon of the same has been created.



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# 1. The need for the use of labour statistics (The Hindu)

The reform of **labour institutions** is always in the air as objective (variables) and subjective (orientation of agencies involved) factors keep changing. In the case of the **industrial relations system and labour market (IRS – LM)**, variables such as product market, technology, trade and investment, and **labour institutions** such as **trade unions, collective bargaining** and strikes keep challenging. There are two aspects of reforms – substantive issues and procedural aspects

**Social dialogue** is an important procedural institutional process to debate and arrive at consensual conclusions which could be used for legal and other policy oriented actions. In the post reform period, the government uses social dialogue agency viz. the **Indian Labour Conference**, to push the reforms agenda. Evidence based reform arguments enrich social dialogue – something which has not happened thus far. Social partners have been advocating their class based opinions unbacked by credible data or experience. The ILC has degenerated into a “talking shop”.

Labour statistics, unlike economic and industrial data, are not rigorous. For example, the Annual Survey of Industries (ASI) and the National Sample Survey Office produce excellent statistics but have limited information relating to the IRS – LM. The Labour Bureau provides statistics on a range of industrial relations (strikes and trade unions) and labour statistics (contract labour, absenteeism, labour turnover, labour inspections). It mostly provides administrative data, viz. those generated as a part of implementing labour laws. The statistics on work composition and the scope of data published by the Labour Bureau has remained virtually the same over the decades.

## Reform arguments

Let us look at three reform arguments put forth relentlessly by employers and neo liberal academics. Employers have criticized the **labour inspection system** as a case of “**Inspector Raj**” and called for its reforms. This criticism stems probably from their “limited experience”. They have complained that state governments hardly sanction applications for retrenchment or the closure of establishments. They also demand a curb on the right to strike and prefer non - union workplaces. Some academics and global agencies such as the the World Bank/ International Money Fund which have priors similar to the reform opinions of employers have published studies “consistently” supporting the benevolent impact of reforms and refuting their observe. For example, **a study by Besley and Burgess (B and B) on the impact of labour regulation in 2004** has been widely used by employers and others to push hire and fire reforms, among others. This is despite glaring weaknesses in the studies using B and B methodology, original and revised. The government has fallen for these “**strong prior based evidence**” hook, line and sinker and sought to introduce labour law reforms.

To counter the reform arguments mentioned above, trade unions should have collected the relevant information/statistics on inspection (such as the number of sanctioned and actually employed inspectors,

the universe of inspection and actual inspection, the frequency of inspections) and studied them to make informed arguments to support labour inspection – even strengthening them. It is then that social partners and the government would have realized the poor quality of data on inspections. They would realise that labour inspectors are much fewer in number than the inspection universe. Research has shown that there is no all India data on labour inspections.

### Closure Reform

Again, on firing/ closure reform, trade unions have not collected data on the retrenchment/closure applications under Chapter V – B submitted to the labour department. These are not published in most states except in Maharashtra in for a limited period. The denial of permissions was surely prevalent during the command economy, but is this prevalent in the post reform period? My study on retrenchments/closures under Chapter V – B in 2001 – 05 showed that Maharashtra was more liberal in granting permissions for retrenchments/closures (Impact of Labour Regulations... in Maharashtra, Book well, 2008).

### On Strikes

The Industrial Relations Code 2020 Code on Industrial Relations (CIR) has made legal strikes well – nigh impossible. Illegal strikes carry a heavy penalty. Trade Unions could have used the data on the strikes and lockouts published by the Labour Bureau which would show that lockouts are more frequent and account for more workdays lost than strikes during the post reform period. This evidence would have challenged the need for introducing harsher clauses on strikes in the CIR. Trade Unions are well placed to produce statistics on several aspects of the IRS – LM at the establishment level. Employers' organisations such as NASSCOM generate statistics on the IT industry which is used indiscriminately.

India has ratified the Labour Statistics Convention (No. 160), 1985 and Labour Inspection Convention (081), 1947. India must generate statistics that are valid, comprehensive and reliable on IRS – LM. Trade unions must know by now that reforms happen not just by street struggle but also primarily in the realm of ideas where objective and rich empirical studies are used.

In essence, trade unions should produce labour statistics, do research on IRS – LM, build an active and productive interface with academics and use academic studies to make evidence-based arguments in the ILC. Imagine a massive strike demanding good labour statistics. The larger society and the government are bound to stand up and seek reform labour statistics. For once, strikes would enjoy public legitimacy. This **May Day**, in 2024, trade unions must resolve to carry out these measures. If nothing, statistical agencies such as the Labour Bureau will be reformed as a result of these pursuits.

## 2. Competition, Conflict (The Hindu)

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken's marathon talks with top officials in China which includes President Xi Jinping, have underscored the desire of the two countries to stabilize their relationship and the resultant challenges. Mr. Blinken stressed that the US would make sure that the competition between the world's two largest economies "doesn't veer into conflict". Mr Xi said that they should seek common ground, "rather than engage in vicious competition". But the Blinken visit also exposed the **structural fault lines** in the Sino American competition. He raised America's concerns about what he called China's support for Russia's defence industry and threatened actions if Beijing doesn't address this problem. China slammed the "hypocrisy and irresponsibility" of the US, which just decided to send military aid worth \$61 billion to Ukraine and then made "groundless accusations" against normal economic and trade exchanges between China and Russia. China also attacked the US policy towards Taiwan and the South China Sea and urged Washington to look at China's development "in a positive light".

Both the US and China have mutual deep misgivings. US National Defence Strategy documents name China as a **revisionist power** and a pacing technological and military challenger. The US has imposed **export controls** to limit China's growth in strategic sectors, particularly semiconductors, and imposed high tariffs on Chinese goods. It has also doubled down on its support for Taiwan and bolstered defence cooperation with the Philippines, which has disputes with China in the South China Sea. Beijing has blamed the US for South China Sea tensions and called Washington's support for Taiwan as an intervention in its internal affairs. While it is practically impossible to reset ties given these structural challenges, there are areas of cooperation as well. In November 2023, when Presidents Xi and Biden met in California, both sides decided to resume bilateral military to military communication, cooperate in addressing the risks of artificial intelligence and **launch efforts to control the production of fentanyl**. Tackling climate and **global food security** are also areas of cooperation. A key lesson from the Cold War is that if competition between superpowers turn ugly, it could affect the world through proxy conflicts, economic wars and diplomatic crises. As the two most powerful countries, they should stay away from repeating history. Even if they are not able to resolve their ideological and geopolitical differences, they should build the **guardrails** that could prevent the competition from turning ugly and stay focused on the areas of cooperation, addressing the common challenges of the world.

### 3. Sea also rises (The Hindu)

India may be rolling in heat waves but the possibility of a munificent monsoon, as envisaged by the [India Meteorological Department](#), may be contributing to some psychological relief. In the long run, however, there is much to be worried about. A recent study led by scientists at [the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology, Pune](#), and other international institutions has forecast – based on expected global carbon emission trends – the likely impact on the Indian Ocean. They report that the Indian Ocean warmed 1.2 Degree Celcius and will likely heat up 1.7 Degree Celcius – 3.8 Degree Celcius from 2020 to 2100. [While heat waves are a lived experience, the study warns of marine heat waves, their counterparts in the sea and linked to the rapid formation of cyclones, as likely to increase tenfold from the current average of 20 days per year to 220 – 250 days per year.](#) This will push the tropical Indian Ocean into a near permanent heat wave state, accelerate coral bleaching and harm the fisheries sector. The heating of the ocean would not be merely confined to the surface but actually increase the heat content of the ocean. When measured from the surface of 2,000 meters below, the [thermal capacity](#) of this ocean is now rising at the rate of 4.5 zetta joules per decade, and is predicted to increase at a rate of 16 – 22 zetta joules per decade in the future.

[Joule is a unit of energy](#) and 1 zetta joule is a billion – trillion joules (0 – 21). The consequences of a warming Indian Ocean extend very much into mainland India with the frequency of severe cyclones rising and the monsoon becoming erratic and uneven with long spells of drought followed by intense rain and concomitant flooding. These are linked to [global warming](#) with [anthropogenic](#) sources such as fossil fuel burning plays a significant role in nudging the planet closer to cataclysmic tipping points. Current global commitments to stem [greenhouse gas emissions](#) are unlikely to make a significant dent in the state of the oceans capacity as unlike on land, the seas respond slower to changes in external inputs. Therefore, a realistic way out is to fine tune the understanding of the Indian Ocean's local impact. India needs to form a collaborative association with countries bordering the Indian Ocean to invest in data gathering – currently this pales in comparison to what is in the Pacific, for instance – and projections to guide the development and protection of infrastructure and people.

## 4. Reading caste in inequality debate (Hindustan Times)

By making a caste census the central pitch of its election campaign, the Congress has made this among the most important questions of 2024 general elections. Is this a wise strategy in terms of potential rewards for the Congress? The answer depends on the relationship between caste and economic inequalities in present day India and the possible political manifestation or lack of it in the elections.

The lack of comprehensive and recent data is a big constraint in answering this question objectively. India does not have any official statistics on income data. Survey based data asset from the [National Sample Survey Office's \(NSSO\), All India Debt and Investment Survey \(AIDS\)](#) is from before the pandemic and only gives us data at the broad social group level, namely, Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), Other Backward Classes (OBC) and those who do not belong to any of these groups. This data shows that it is SCs and STs who face the worst form of relative discrimination when it comes to [asset poverty](#).

As far as OBCs are concerned, they are almost equally represented within the ranks of the rich and poor. This, in a way, reaffirms the need for caution in treating OBCs as a monolithic socio – economic block in India.

To be sure, the AIDIS data also offers other and perhaps, more important insights about the roots of inequality in India. Urban populations have a much larger share in assets than their rural counterparts and the ability to get out of agriculture is an important determinant in overcoming asset poverty. This is in keeping with the well accepted economic transformation challenge in India which requires shifting labour from low income farming to high income non-farm activities. The ability of a caste census that will primarily increase the representation of OBCs within the ambit of reservation and other affirmative action programmes to deal with this transformation challenge will be at best be limited.

So, will the Congress's pitch of caste census to reduce economically inequality resonate politically? Historical data shows that the Congress's long term decline was a result of the party losing support across communities rather than among a particular social group. Can the congress make a political comeback by aggressively wooing just one section of the society this time? Or should it have focused on a more broad based catch all political approach in keeping with its historical trajectory? The answer will be known on June 4.

## 5. GST's new peak should spur tweak (Hindustan Times)

When the Goods and Services Tax (GST) was launched in July 2017, a monthly collection of Rs 1 lakh crore was the aspirational target. GST collection for the month of April 2024 have crossed Rs 2 lakh crore for the first time. This makes it an important milestone in GST's journey. What are the key takeaways from the monthly GST collection crossing the threshold?

First, the obvious caveat: Any economy which has positive inflation and growth is bound to see a rise in GDP and tax numbers. This makes it necessary to go beyond the nominal tax numbers. On that front, the trends are anything but insignificant. The share of GST collections in India's GDP was 6.9% in 2023 - 24. This is the highest this number has ever been since 2018 - 19, the first full fiscal year of GST roll-out. 2023 - 24 is also the third consecutive year when the share of GST in nominal GDP has increased. This shows that a significant part of the increase in GST collections has been driven by better compliance, perhaps even formalization of the Indian economy.

As far as the monthly collection numbers are concerned, one can argue with some degree of certainty that they do reflect a healthy momentum in the economy. This conclusion is supported by other high frequency indicators about the economy such as Purchasing Managers' Indices, which continue to be in the expansion zone. To be sure, April GST numbers are always higher because of the year end factor and one will have to see whether the Rs 2 lakh crore level becomes a norm next month onwards.

The first and second point, when read together, raise a more interesting and important question. If GST collections and architecture have indeed stabilized at a level where the government does not have to worry about GST's contribution to the fiscal kitty, isn't it time for a more holistic appraisal of India's biggest indirect tax reform?

Many independent and credible voices have long argued that an ideal GST regime should have fewer tax rates and ideally even a lower peak rate. A move towards these goals could generate possible tailwinds for both ease of doing business and consumer demand. In India's case, there is also an added complication of production heavy states losing out in the GST regime because it is a consumption based tax. None of these questions can or should be decided in a hurry. Ideally, the GST council and the 16<sup>th</sup> finance commission should discuss them thoroughly once a new government takes office.

## 6. Climate finance needs overhaul, funds influx (Hindustan Times)

**Climate finance** is the focus of the spring meeting of central bankers, experts and ministers of finance as they seek to set the tone for this year's **Conference of Parties (COP)**. Low – income countries have long complained of the failed climate finance promises, with the developed world not meeting the \$100 billion annual target until recently. This year presents an opportunity to be more ambitious while setting the **new collective qualified goal (NCQG)**. As negotiators set their eyes on the revised commitment, it is also time to reflect and learn from past experiences.

The foremost concern for negotiators and experts is that the term climate finance remains ill defined. This is particularly important since climate finance flows are largely composed of debts, and barely 15% of it is concessional. Nearly half of these flows are from the private sector. There is also significant overlap between development and climate finance flows. The line between the two remains blurry, and is essential to identify new and additional resources. Also, the contributions to climate adaptation that require public finance have been less than satisfactory.

Given these shortcomings, it is important to turn attention to the sources of the \$3-6 trillion required to reach the **net zero goal**. While there is sufficient attention on international public finance flows, there is a need for clear prioritization – what kind of capital will be available for adaptation and what will be available for mitigation. Evidence bears that private capital can be channelled to **commercial mitigation projects**, but public finance will remain critical for adaptation. This means that the ease of access to funds from the multilateral bodies would be will be important. The independent expert group of the Indian G20 presidency explored ways through which **multilateral development banks (MDBs)** can optimize their balance sheet by accounting for callable capital, removing lending limits, and preferred creditor treatment. These changes are possible with the shift in shareholder expectations. More importantly, the approach to **credit ratings**, which treat comparable low – income country projects as low quality, needs to reassessed.

Another critical aspect is the determination of the manner of contribution and distribution of international capital. There are formulaic possibilities of basing contribution on per capita income and level of development, along with historical contributions to emissions. In terms of distribution, capital maybe provided as per the share in mitigation and adaptation costs read along with income levels. The setting of NCQG on an economic basis that can be revised over time is a seminal issue. For example, India, in its submission to the NCQG ad hoc group, recommended a 2% of Gross Domestic Product contribution for developed countries.

Conscious of the demands of developing countries, international capital will indeed play a role. There are, however, barriers to the scaling up such capital. First, exchange rate shocks from a massive inflow can be significant. Second, if the flow continues to be in the form of debt, heavily indebted countries stare at a dire fiscal future. Therefore, developed countries must be urged to be more considerate towards the macroeconomic constraints of the developing countries, with which include providing an option of moratorium, if not a write off on debt.

**Domestic resource mobilization** will also contribute to climate finance. Domestic taxes can be an instrument, but the task force on international tax expects that this would be met through carbon levy on maritime transport, **financial transaction tax (FTT)**, global minimum tax, and carbon taxes. But are these revenue streams sustainable in the long term? For example, studies estimate that the global minimum tax will generate \$150 billion annually, across the globe. Carbon taxes need to be capped to be less distortionary. Similarly, FTT rates cannot be coordinated without global coordination among large financial markets. The distribution of global levies also needs to be thought through. On top of this, the use of taxes for support needs deeper domestic reforms. Such reforms would, in turn, depend on economic structures.

As NCQG takes shape, developing countries need to assess the extent which international capital will be sustainable and necessary. The propositions concerning national contributions need to be based on economic rationale and revised periodically. Lastly, while levies are an attractive proposition, they should not be implemented without considering the growth and investment concerns of developing economies. A more fundamental shift is to think of a package reforms consisting of domestic resource mobilization and a shift in the way international financial institutions assess developing country risks.

## 7. What workplace leaders can do for mental health (Part I) Hindustan Times

Terming poor **mental health** a national **epidemic** may sound pretty alarmist, but according to 2022 Deloitte study, this costs the nation \$14 billion annually. One study shows the 93% of the mental health issues among corporate employees were related to workplace stress. Mental health at work is, thus, a matter of concern. Positive mental health includes the ability and possibility to thrive, flourish, take charge, cope with negative events, and be in control of feelings, thoughts, and actions. Negative mental health is characterized by anxiety, predominance of anger, sadness, fear, unproductive stress, frustration and depression. It has been linked to poor performance, evidenced in increased mistakes, greater incivility at work and lower professional satisfaction.

Leaders can impact mental health at work, through what they do and what they don't. Research shows that destructive leadership, which includes aggression, abuse and direct or indirect support to actions that go against organizational interests, is linked to poor mental health among subordinates. Research also shows that mental health is positively impacted by leader behaviour. Leaders, by assigning tasks fairly and in a clear manner, giving timely and helpful feedback, helping set appropriate goals, providing resources to help meet those goals, can contribute to improving the mental health of the individuals working with them. Helping subordinates understand the purpose of the work being done and linking the work to a larger purpose helps foster subjective wellbeing.

To illustrate, working on the shop floor of a drug manufacturing company, a daily wage worker could think of his/her work either as repetitive pressing of a lever or as contributing to the health of millions across the world.

Communication that rings true and is consistent with the actions of the leader fosters trust that is directly linked to the experience of mental health. The leader can also help lessen boredom and a sense of meaninglessness, both precursors to frustration and anxiety, by focusing on ways to add challenge to the work of subordinate.

Leaders can contribute to mental health of their teams by stressing norms of civility, making it safe to ask difficult questions to each other, reinforcing a culture of sharing and caring, and insisting on levelling with authority as a norm. Paying attention to relationship building and fostering emotional maturity in team members is how leaders can impact the mental health of the latter. Leaders' **emotional intelligence** can shape emotion regulation, empathy and acceptance of the messiness of social relationships among team members. Such teams are better at coping with stress and have lower unplanned absences on account of health related issues.

At the organizational level, leaders must normalize conversations on poor mental health, add seeking mental health interventions to benefits and health packages, and encourage people to take breaks to tend to emotional needs. Rather than valourising people who came back to work after a bereavement, or other such stoicism, or people who show no response to anything thrown at them, leaders should celebrate people who are emotionally mature and prioritise their own and others' wellbeing.

## 8. It is time to operationalize the indian defence University (The Hindu)

The Greek thinker [Thucydides](#) is said to have remarked that a nation which makes a distinction between its scholars and its warriors will have its thinking done by cowards and its fighting done by fools. It is no surprise that several nations have established "defence universities" to promote academic rigour and enhance strategic thinking in their armed forces. In India's own neighbourhood, it is reported that Pakistan has created two universities for its armed forces, while China has three, although a report of the Australian Strategic Policy Institute lists more than 60 Chinese universities with military and security links. In this context, the absence of the long overdue Indian Defence University (IDU) is concerning.

### Professional Military Education

While the nature of war remains constant, its changing character imposes a premium on military education and the academic preparation required to cope with current and future security challenges. The dynamic and chaotic character of warfare currently and display in Europe and West Asia means that military officers are expected to produce results in the face of nebulous initial information and rapidly changing circumstances. To meet complex challenges, officers are empowered through a well-constructed Professional Military Education (PME) continuum that augments their abilities to correspond with changing assignments and increasing responsibilities over long career spans.

The evolution of PME in the US is of interest to us, since it has parallels with Indian theaterisation aims. While the [Goldwater – Nichols Defense Reorganization Act, 1986](#) brought wide ranging structural reforms, the US military's professionalism is perhaps owed in large measures to [like Skelton](#), whose report to the US Congress significantly reformed military education in the US armed forces. This report advised the Department of Defense to focus educational institutions on specified learning objectives, enhance the quality of both civilian and military faculty, establish a two phased system for the education of joint officers, and form an institute for national strategic studies at [National Defense University](#), among other things.

### Slow Progress

The Indian armed forces, like others, need a broad based education system, founded upon academic rigour. This realization came soon after independence when, in 1967, the Chiefs of Staff Committee mooted the setting up of a Defence Services University. In 1982, a Study Group constituted by the COSC emphasized the need to set up an apex educational body for the armed forces in the form of an IDU.

Two decades later, in the wake of the Kargil conflict, a committee was established under the chairmanship of Dr. K Subramanyam to examine this issue. Based on this recommendations, in May 2010, "in principle" approval was accorded for setting up of the IDU in Gurgaon. Despite some optimistic reportage in 2017 – 18, the progress on setting up of the IDU has been rather slow.

The several world class training and education institutions run by India's armed forces constitute a rich and vast ecosystem of professional training. However, they lack on an overarching integrated PME framework and multi – disciplinary approach to strategic thinking. Although the armed forces have affiliations with universities for degree courses, this is not the optimal solution. The IDU would remedy such shortcomings in India's PME system by providing a central institution of higher military learning through a well – qualified faculty with a mix of academicians along with serving and retired officers from the military and civil services. In effect, this would unite theory with practice.

The university's curriculum would vary among the various colleges and other institutions that would be governed by it. However, it would need to offer a variety of additional subjects relevant to national and security and defence – both in sciences and humanities.

### **An idea whose time has come**

The realisation of the IDU is long overdue. Some experts have suggested that after the establishment of the [Rashtriya Raksha University \(RRU\)](#) in Gujarat, there may be a need for IDU. This argument is flawed, because comparing the IDU and RRU is like comparing apples and oranges. Neither does the RRU Act specify education related to "defence" in its objectives, nor is its curriculum focused solely on military requirements for management of war and execution of plans.

The IDU as an idea has come and delays attached in its commissioning come at the cost of defence preparedness, strategic culture and inter service integration. The need of the hour is to operationalise the IDU at the earliest, so that the first building blocks of joint war fighting can be put in place through a well thought out and futuristic military education curriculum.

## 9. Onion exports: The poll factor (Hindustan Times)

The Union government has removed the six month long ban on onion exports, albeit with the qualification of a minimum export price. That the decision has come just before polling in the onion producing regions of Maharashtra is reason enough to read it with an added layer of political rather than just economic intent.

The pattern in the ban and its removal is not limited to onions. **Food items account for 39% of India's consumer inflation basket and have been the biggest factor for inflation not meeting the RBI's target of 4% in problem in the recent past.** Given most of India's food inflation problem is related to climate inflicted supply shocks rather than demand driven rallies, the government has been intervening in food markets to manage inflation pressures. These interventions have often taken the form of banning exports, thereby diverting export – driven production for domestic markets.

Is this a prudent strategy to follow in food markets? **Free market** dogmatists often criticize it on the ideological ground of the government undermining free trade. But no pragmatic government will allow measures that can trigger an inflation problem in the domestic economy. The majority of Indians are net buyers rather than sellers of food. However, farmers, as a class, draw the short end of the straw in both extremes in the market. When prices crash, the government does not come to their rescue. But when they rise, government interventions do not allow them to make any supernormal profits. The worsening climate crisis will make these extreme events the norm rather than the exception for farmers. Clearly, it's not a fair world for the farmers.

### **What can be done to remove this in – built policy bias?**

Unless farmers as a class, across crops and regions, accept reforms and also demand a fair deal from the government, things won't change. Farmers' organisations and the Opposition should introspect why this has not happened. Have they been open to change? Are they making the right demands of governments? And are political parties and governments willing to tolerate some food inflation in the interest of the farmers? These are uncomfortable but pertinent questions that need to be asked – not those about utopian free trade or guaranteed minimum support prices.

## 10. Time to talk (The Hindu)

Tamil Nadu's latest application in the Supreme Court of India on the **Mullaperiyar dam road** shows that even 10 years after the Court's decisive judgment allowing water to be stored till 142 ft. from the previously reduced 136 ft. several issues with Kerala still remain unresolved. In a rejoinder to Kerala's reply in a case filed by an activist, Tamil Nadu, the beneficiary owner state, has accused Kerala of crying foul about the safety of the 129-year-old dam structure, while at the same time "willfully obstructing" work essential for its maintenance. Despite the constitution of 3 panels, i.e. a Supervisory Committee (which was reconstituted by having a technical member from each state in June 2022) and two sub – committee (one of which is under the National Executive Committee of the **National Disaster Management Authority**) to ensure a high level of preparedness to face any disaster related to the dam, no one is any closer to finding a solution to the pending issues. Tamil Nadu's grievance is that the reconstituted Supervisory Committee, despite having powers under the **Dam Safety Act, 2021** had "miserably failed" to ensure that Kerala and its instrumentalities permit and facilitate dam strengthening and other related works. Tamil Nadu has also been pressing for the early completion of a comprehensive dam safety evaluation of a comprehensive dam safety evaluation with five years, by December 30, 2026, as stipulated under the 2021 law.

But despite unresolved issues, judicial intervention has seen the adoption of rule curve, a tool in decision making for smooth operation of the dam's shutters, especially during floods, and the gate operation schedule, notwithstanding Kerala's reservations. Apart from the dam related issues, the proposal of a mega car parking project of the Kerala government is a matter of litigation. The conclusion of the Survey of India that the project site is outside the leased area has been disputed by Tamil Nadu. As for Kerala, dam safety has been its primary concern and it wants to proceed cautiously. It is time that the two State governments, which enjoy good relations, resumed bilateral negotiations to find a solution to pending problems while retaining their liberty to adopt legal resources. Courts take their own time to arrive at their conclusion, even though Tamil Nadu has a more favourable track record with the Supreme Court than the other State on Mullaperiyar, going by the 2006 and 2014 judgements. As water and dam safety can be used by some elements to arouse emotions, the political leadership in both states should be proactive in trashing out the differences. The proposed talks, even in the event of not leading to any major breakthrough, may at least provide states an opportunity to appreciate each other's position better and leave no room for vested interests to vitiate the atmosphere.

## 11. Getting to a new level in India's online gaming sector (The Hindu)

The Prime Minister's vision to establish India as a prominent global gaming hub has received renewed attention as he engaged with seven of the top gamers in the country. Spending a day with them, in April 2024, he discussed the trajectory of gaming industry and sought to understand the challenges they encounter, particularly on the **nuanced distinction between skill gaming and gambling (game of chance)** – it could pave the way for a more conducive and forward looking regulatory environment. The **online gaming industry** forms a critical part of the **Digital India vision** and initiative. Some of the key takeaways from the discussion included the opportunity offered by the increasing number of games based on Indian mythology and the scope to encourage the participation of women, besides fostering innovation. The players also highlighted the issue around the perception of gaming as a career in India.

### Rapid growth

The online gaming industry in India has seen a rapid expansion of 28% CAGR between FY20 and FY23. Projections indicate further growth to Rs 33, 243 crore by FY28, with a sustained 15% CAGR. This sector not only attracts significant foreign and domestic investments but also generates substantial direct and indirect employment. Gaming Industry leverages India's IT prowess, the industry holds natural potential for India. Notably, while the size of the global gaming industry crossed \$300 billion in 2021 – more than the combined markets for the movie and music industry – the online gaming segment in India constitutes 1.1% of the global online gaming revenue. Thus, the potential for growth is enormous.

Not only is online gaming a multi – billion opportunity for Indian startups but it can also form an important part of "**India Techade**" and the goal of a \$1 trillion **digital economy**. The sector has witnessed an array of positive developments, including the establishment of the **Animation, Visual Effects, Gaming, Comic, and Extended Reality taskforce** by Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, the identification of the **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology as the nodal ministry**, the introduction of a series of regulations through the **IT [Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code] Rules, 2021**, and clarification around the ambiguity concerning tax deduction at source at winnings.

All these measures have provided a sense of clarity and certainty in terms of a policy framework for all online gaming startups. This will go a long way in fostering innovation that is being powered by young Indians.

### Issues that need scrutiny

Nevertheless, there are unresolved issues that require the attention of the government to enhance regulatory clarity. Primarily, despite the provision of self-regulatory bodies within the IT Rules of 2021 intended to regulate the industry, the effective implementation of these rules is pending, thus nullifying their intended impact. In an industry driven by innovation and fast evolving technology, the role of self-regulation is crucial. NITI Aayog's

discussion paper with draft guiding principles for the online fantasy gaming sector also proposed a self-regulatory model of governance with a self-regulatory organisation at its helm.

Further, recent revisions in taxation have placed the industry, particularly startups, in a precarious position. During the goods and Services Tax Council meeting in July 2023, the Council decided to enforce a tax rate of 28% on the total face value of bets (effective October 1%, 2023) regardless of whether the activity is classified as a game of skill or chance. Before this, online gaming firms in India were subjected to an 18% GST rate since the introduction of the indirect tax system in July 2017. While this measure has resulted in an initial uptick in tax revenue for the government, it raises concerns about the industry's sustainability in the long term and its consequential impact on jobs on being created in this sector.

### **Soft power**

By remedying these deficiencies, India stands at a distinctive juncture to emerge as a prominent global gaming hub. Another advantage lies in tapping India's rich cultural heritage (stories, legends and folklore). With an increasing number of games inspired by Indian mythology, there is a unique opportunity to cater to domestic and international audiences.

Furthermore, there is a concerted effort to encourage the participation of women in the gaming industry, fostering both diversity and inclusivity. As perceptions about gaming as a viable career option evolve, India stands to benefit from a growing pool of talented individuals driving innovation and pushing boundaries in the gaming landscape.

India stands at the threshold of a transformative era in the gaming industry. By fostering an enabling environment for skill gaming, promoting diversity and inclusion, and capitalizing on its rich cultural narratives, India cannot not only realise its vision of a \$1 – trillion digital economy but also shape the future of gaming on a global scale.

## 12. Plastic Solution (The Hindu)

The **Global Plastics Treaty**, an ambitious initiative involving at least 175 United Nations member nations to eliminate the use of plastics, concluded its fourth round of negotiations recently. The goal is to finalise a legal document by the end of 2024 with timelines by when countries must agree to curb plastic production, eliminate its uses that create wastage, ban certain chemicals used in its production and set targets for recycling. Unfortunately, an agreement is not in sight. There is yet another round of negotiations scheduled in Busan, South Korea this November. **The primary hurdles are economic. Oil producing and refining countries such as Saudi Arabia, the United States, Russia, India and Iran are reluctant about hard deadlines to eliminate plastic production.** A coalition of African countries, supported by several European nations, is in favour of a year, around 2040, to ensure that a timeline for reduction is in effect. There is also disagreement on whether contentious elements in the treaty should be decided on by a vote or consensus – the latter implying that every country has a vote. **India's opinion, other than being uncomfortable with binding targets, is that a legally binding instrument to end the plastic pollution must also address... availability, accessibility, affordability of alternatives including cost implications and specifying arrangements... for capacity building and technical assistance, technology transfer and financial assistance".**

This language – and India is not the only proponent – is reminiscent of the principle of **common but differentiated responsibility** enshrined in climate talks. Under this, countries must have a common target but those most privileged must support others and take on stricter targets themselves.

**In the year that the plastics treaty was mooted, in 2022, India brought into effect the Plastic Waste Management Amendment Rules (2021) that banned 19 categories of single – use plastics. It, however does not include plastic bottles – even those less than 200 ml – and multi layered packaging boxes (as in milk cartons).** Moreover, even the ban on single use plastic items is not uniformly enforced nationally, with several outlets continuing to retail these goods. **The global distribution of the plastic pollution is unequal with Brazil, China, India and the US responsible for 60% of plastic waste, according to a report by the non -profit EA Earth Action.** Much like how transitioning away from fossil fuel invites its own challenges, plastic pollution cannot be ended by merely signing treaties. There needs to be much greater investment in alternative products and making them affordable before realistic targets are decided upon.

## 13. Israel has lost the plot on Gaza (Hindustan Times) Part III

Israel has opted out to launch a fresh incursion in the Gaza strip even after Hamas accepted a ceasefire proposal put forward by Egypt and Qatar and the United States and the European Union (EU) warned against going ahead with such an assault, reflecting how Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has spurned mounting international concerns about the conflict. While Israel's anger after the brazen October 7 terror attacks was understandable, its war has now reached a stage where it is being waged for the sake of waging one. Netanyahu's goal of ridding Gaza of Hamas now has genocidal implications, since Israeli forces are showing no signs of distinguishing between terrorist fighters and helpless citizens and even international aid workers. In vast swathes of the Gaza strip, ground to dust by the advanced weaponry provided to the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) by the US and other western partners, such distinctions have disappeared.

With Israeli forces taking control of the crucial **Rafah crossing** on the frontier with Egypt and Israeli jets continuing to bombard other parts of one of the world's most densely populated enclaves, western officials have warned that there is no longer any safe zone in all of Gaza and that up to 6,00,000 children could now be in danger.

Already, the unfettered Israeli onslaught on Gaza has resulted in nearly 35,000 deaths, many of them women and children. It would appear the Netanyahu government's real aim is to both prolong its grip on power and obliterate any possibility of a two state solution. The US and other European allies of Israel have lost all moral claims to a rules based order by letting Israel continue this war, which is no more about its right to self defence.

The war may suit Netanyahu's domestic political needs, but the liberal world is the loser for it. The unrest on American campuses, public protests in European countries and growing unease on the streets of Arab nations are an indication of which way public opinion is turning. Some say Israel's behaviour may even cost US President Joe Biden his re – election. India too will find it difficult to defend Israel's actions, given its need to balance relations with the Arab world. Peace needs to be pursued at all costs in Gaza since this has long ceased to be a localized conflict. It is only luck, and a lot of diplomacy, that have thus far ensured it has not turned into a regional war.

## 14. The era of the politics of performance (The Hindu)

India's vibrant democracy thrives on the idea that elected representatives embody the people's mandate. So, 795 MPs, approximately 4,123 members of the legislative assemblies and 31.8 lakh elected representatives in the local government, together formulate policies and ensure their implementation at the levels of the central and state government, raise the issue of the people in Parliament, Assembly, and Councils, and work on issues of importance as part of committees.

At least 75% of Lok Sabha members and nearly 64% of MLAs are graduates. And, considering their central role in policy making and delivering public services, we often forget to ask a key question: what makes an elected representative competent? While educational qualifications provide critical skills, effective governance requires a spectrum of qualities in the form of behavioural, functional and domain based competencies.

### The competencies that are needed

Behavioural skills are at the heart of political competency, enabling politicians to engage effectively with various stakeholders. Representatives must excel in communication, verbal and writing, and public engagement. Effective leadership and negotiation skills are vital in uniting diverse teams behind a shared vision and managing different stakeholders. For example, the success of the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan was influenced by the involvement of women panchayati raj leaders, who promoted behavioural change at the grassroots.

Second, functional competencies. Beyond being people – oriented, representatives must deeply understand the rules and processes underpinning legislation and policy implementation. This includes understanding their interventions in Parliament and State Assemblies, such as asking questions, initiating discussions, raising important policy matters, monitoring and evaluating policy implementation, providing suggestions and ensuring efficient allocation of Union and State Budgets, Representatives must also be competent in translating citizen grievances and communicating those policy gaps to decision makers. This will ensure that the voices of citizens are plugged into policy making processes.

In 2022, a Member of Parliament raised a matter in Zero Hour about unregulated advertising and promotion of tobacco use on OTT platforms, which prompted the Ministry of Health to mandate anti – tobacco warnings on such content. Similarly, a private member's bill introduced in 2014 advocating for transgender rights led to the formation of the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019. So, legislative advocacy can influence policy changes.

Domain based competencies are crucial for elected officials, and tailored to meet the specific needs of their constituencies and manage their unique portfolios effectively. For example, a deep understanding of health care policy would encompass public health management, health – care laws, insurance systems, and global health trends

Insights into infrastructure and urban planning are also fundamental, where understanding effective urban planning, transportations systems, public works, and sustainable infrastructure development are critical. Apart from these domains, awareness of the latest technological advancements and their implications on public services and economic growth are essential ensuring that policy decisions are forward thinking and inclusive of technological progress.

Further, the [Digital Personal Data Protection Act](#), the [National Health Policy](#), the [Mental Healthcare Act](#), and [Prevention of Cruelty to Animal Rules](#) are recent examples of individuals shaping policies through expertise and commitment.

As we advocate a competency based approach, we must be careful about the competency trap, where an excessive focus on specific skills might suppress the innovation and creativity needed to solve complex problems. Instead, we should foster an environment that promotes critical thinking and problem solving skills alongside technical expertise.

Promoting collaboration between representatives with diverse backgrounds and expertise will ensure a multi-disciplinary approach to tackling complex challenges. Imagine a team with expertise in rural development, economics, engineering, public health and social justice working to design and implement better policies.

### **Institutionalising the vision**

To effectively institutionalising the vision, it is crucial to align these competencies with their specific roles, incorporating the Karmayogi Competency Model from [Mission Karmayogi](#). This process involves identifying existing skill gaps and evolving training needs through consultation with elected officials, citizens and domain experts. The resulting needs analysis should inform a comprehensive capacity building plan that includes orientation and induction programmes, online resources, workshops, peer learning opportunities, and mentorship programmes. Regular impact assessments, conducted annually, are essential.

To facilitate this continuous learning, we can leverage existing resources from central and state training institutions such as parliamentary research and training institute for democracies, national and state institutes of rural development and panchayati raj, as well as the integrated government online training platform and civil society organisations such as PRS legislative research, participatory research in asia, rambhau mhlagi prabodhini. It is also essential to ensure that every elected representative from the local level onwards has access to necessary information and research support through dedicated research wings.

Ultimately, the success of competency based politics also relies on a shift in public perception. Citizens needs to demand more from their elected representatives, holding them accountable not just for their promises but also for their ability to deliver on those promises. We are reminded that the measure of a politician's success is not just in the victories they achieve but in the vision they embody, the integrity they uphold, and the impact they have on society. As we move towards a Viksit Bharat, let us make competency a central pillar of political discourse, where effective leadership is not an exception but an expectation.

## 15. A sob story (The Hindu)

Nearly six months after the Centre prohibited onions exports citing runaway prices and supply concerns, it put them back in in the free category last Saturday, with the caveat of a minimum export price of \$550 a tonne, and a 40% levy on top. This marked the second significant policy change on onion exports over a span of 10 days. On April 25, 2,000 tonnes of white onion exports were permitted, if certified by the Gujarat Horticulture Commissioner. Coming days before Gujarat's Lok Sabha vote this Tuesday, the move triggered an outcry about preferential treatment from the neighbouring state's farmers. In a press release, the centre explained that "purely export oriented", white onions entail higher production costs, and nearly one lakh tonne of onion exports had also been allowed that would help Maharashtra, the country's largest onion producer. This did not cut much ice – only a few thousand tonnes of onions had actually been shipped under that export window.

It is no surprise that this conditional freeing up of exports come just before Maharashtra's onion farming hubs vote on May 20. Justifying the move, the Centre pointed to mandi prices stabilizing at Rs 15 lakh a kilo since April, a fresh assessment that supplies are, in fact, adequate, and an assertion that the politically charged vegetable is perishable. State BJP leaders proclaimed this will ensure farmers get better prices and income. It is unclear that if that will fructify – the **floor price** plus export duty formulation means exports are viable only at or over an estimated Rs 64 a kilo. International onion prices have been easing after Egypt and Pakistan recently lifted their export curbs much before India. With the latest norms expected to last at least till the next government takes charge, onion farmers will effectively face export curbs for almost a year, starting from last August when a 40% export duty was levied. Straddling the consumer versus farmer dilemma is tricky, but some longer term context can guide policy making towards a nuanced rather than a knee jerk approach. Before food inflation, spiked in the second half of 2023, onion prices had been falling for as many as 21 months till May. They rose about 30% through 2023 – 24, but from a 21% decline in the previous year. A centre for Civil Society study reckoned that the average farmer lost 21% of annual income due to onion export bans between January 2015 and March 2020. If anything, the current streak of curbs after nearly two years of falling prices, does not send out a positive sowing signal for farmers. And that is neither good for curbing inflation nor meeting India's aspirations to be the world's food supplier.

## 16. Turmoil and Test (The Hindu)

Haryana is in political turmoil after three independent MLAs withdrew their support to the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), and its former coalition partner, the Janyak Janata Party offered support to the Congress to form an alternative government. In the 90 member state assembly, which currently has an effective strength of 88, the BJP government led by Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini appears to be in a minority with 43 MLAs by its side – it needs 45 for a majority. But BJP leaders assert that their government is under “no threat” and if there be any need, other MLAs will support them – an indicator of support from disgruntled MLAs of the JJP. The Congress and the JJP have come out all guns blazing at the BJP, but appear to be moving with a guarded approach by putting the onus to initiate the process of bringing down the incumbent government on each other. Both parties have asked Governor Bandaru Dattatreya to intervene. While the Congress has demanded immediate Assembly polls under President’s immediate “**floor test**” to determine the majority of the incumbent government in the legislative assembly.

The Congress and the JJP are trying to consolidate their base in the midst of the general election and in the run – up to the Assembly election, which is due to be held in normal course in October. At least two of the 10 JJP MLAs have declared their support to BJP candidates in the Lok Sabha polls, and it is getting hard for the JJP to keep its flock together. After parting ways with the BJP, the JJP, which draws its support largely from the agrarian class, primarily the Jat Community, has upped the ante against its former partner. In March this year, when the BJP replaced Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar with Nayab Singh Saini, it indicated the party’s strategy to sharpen its caste based politics pivoting towards the non – Jat constituency. Haryana witnessed a violent pro- Jat quota stir in the year 2016 and the agitation left Jats and non Jats pitted against each other, straining inter community relations. The Congress appears to be channelizing its energy to form the next generation for a full term of five years, instead of focusing on any possibility of a short term gain. The political turmoil has cast a long shadow of doubt on the Saini government’s legislative majority. The Governor should take appropriate measures to clear the doubts regarding the numbers.

## 17. Key to staying healthy is diet (Hindustan Times)

India's apex medical research body, the [Indian Council of Medical Research \(ICMR\)](#), released new dietary recommendations for Indians this week, pointing out that food and lifestyle choices alone maybe to blame for over half the disease burden in the country. A balanced must have no more than 45% of the calories from cereals, and pulses, beans and meat should be limited to 15% of the meat's calories. The rest should come from nuts, vegetables, fruits and milk, the recommendation stated. Consumption of salt, sugar and ultra-processed foods must be limited and oils and fats should be used in moderation. The 17 dietary guidelines, in a nutshell, seek to nudge people into consuming foods with essential nutrients and limiting those that contribute to what has been an explosion of lifestyle diseases, such as obesity and diabetes.

This surge in preventable disease has been well documented. The ICMR guideline notes healthy diets and adequate physical activity could prevent up to 80% of type II diabetes and a substantial proportion of coronary heart disease. Most Indians today consume meals containing an excess of carbohydrates, snack mostly on [ultra-processed foods](#), and finish it off with [saccharine](#) desserts. Meals are often cooked in excess or unhealthy oils, clarified butter or fat. Together, they create an unhealthy cocktail that leads to excess calorie intake, triggering fat build – up, driving up blood vessel choking cholesterol, and creating or exacerbating deficiencies in micro – nutrients. It is easy to imagine this through a short story – what proportion of your plate is made up of carbs such as rice or rotis? How sweet is your tea? And how often do you reach for a bag of chips?

The challenge of fixing a diet of any population is not easy by any measure. India is one of the grain bowls of the world, making [carbohydrate](#) – heavy cereals and starchy vegetables cheap. Then there is the march of modernity with its quick service, gig worker delivered, discounted fast food and ready to eat meals. Adding to this is a population that is increasingly sedentary. It is about time India's policymakers and health authorities double down on advisories such as the new dietary recommendations to stem this slide in public health. Nutrition labels and classification of unhealthy foods will be crucial, as will public infrastructure that makes walking, exercising or cycling easy. But the biggest change needs to come from within – it must start with educating oneself on what to eat and how much to eat.

## 18. Folds and Faults (The Hindu)

Proteins are king of chains of amino acid residues that fold into specific shapes. Properly folded proteins function normally whereas misfolded one can lead to debilitating diseases. Since these chains are quite long, a given protein can actually fold into one of a very large number of shapes – yet it makes a beeline for a specific shape while avoiding all the others. How and why this happens constitute an important mystery in structural biology called the protein folding problem. In 2018, five decades after it was mooted, a google subsidiary named Deep Mind developed a AI tool which could predict which tool to predict the shapes into which different proteins could fold, called AlphaFold. The upgraded AlphaFold 2 followed two years later. Many scientists and technologists acknowledge that these two deep learning systems have transformed human awareness of protein structures, a feat the machines demonstrated machines in the biennial Critical Assessment of Protein Structure Prediction contest. Recently, DeepMind launched AlphaFold 3, which can reportedly predict the shapes with nearly 80% accuracy as well as model DNA, RNA, ligands, and modifications to them. As with the first two AlphaFolds, no. 3 is great for being able to elucidate the folded proteins structures in seconds rather than the years humans have required with advanced microscopic techniques.

Not surprisingly, the excitement that followed the release of AlphaFold 3 has been unable to escape the hype and overblown expectations that dogged the launched of its predecessors. These machines can predict protein structures with relatively high accuracy but they cannot say why they are folded that way; this is till the task of human scientists. How the AlphaFolds will catalyse drug discovery is also unclear. Many drugs fail to make it to the market from the laboratory because medical researchers are unable to anticipate all the interactions between the drugs various components and various parts of the body. The protein folding problem is important to crack but it will not magically improve drugs chances in human clinical trials. It is a step in that direction. Finally, the free use of AlphaFold 3 is limited while its inner mechanisms are unavailable for public exploration or scrutiny, so far. While the motivation to innovate of DeepMind is laudable, the cutting edge value AlphaFold 3 presents to health care means the company should explore alternative revenue models in which the system is not trapped behind paywalls or exorbitant prices – a fate that has already befallen scientific papers and medicines born of publicly funded research. Recall that the AlphaFolds training data itself includes proteins structures first elucidated by such research.

## 19. Modest Rebound (The Hindu) Part I

India's factory output growth slowed to 4.9% in March from a downgraded 5.6% uptick in February, despite benevolent base effects from the previous when the [index of Industrial Production \(IIP\)](#) had shrunk 1.9%. Output from mines slid to a 19 month low growth of 1.2% while manufacturing growth picked up from 4.9% in February 5.2% still marketing a give month high. Electricity generation rose 8.6% but over a contraction in March 2023. The National Statistical Office, which will release fresh GDP growth estimates for 2023 – 24, moderately higher than the 5.2% rise recorded in the previous year. Most of this annual increase came from mining, up 7.5% while manufacturing saw a milder pick up to 5.5% from 4.7% in 2022 – 23 and electricity generation growth eased to 7.1%. Production growth was strongest for capital goods as well as infrastructure and construction goods for the second straight year – not surprising given the ramp up in government infrastructure spends to pump prime the economy till private [capex](#) recovers.

However, for private investments to take over the economy's growth engine, household consumption signals are critical and there is little comfort here for the second year in a row. Production of [consumer durables](#) and [non-durables](#) rose just 3.6% and 4% respectively, on top of a meagre 0.6% and 0.7% uptick in 2022 – 23. This matches with the 3% growth estimated in private consumption spends over last year, and their production this March was still below pre COVID levels. Hopes of an above normal monsoon may prop up rural demand dented by last year's erratic rainfall, although tight credit conditions could impair urban consumption. As some economists have stressed, consumption, recovery since the pandemic has been uneven, driven by demand for higher end goods and services from upper income households, while lower income homes have turned reluctant spenders even for fast moving consumer goods. Job creation and real wage growth for those already employed are imperative for a broad based demand recovery that triggers private capex. The concern here is that employment intensive manufacturing segments such as apparel, computers and electronics, furniture and leather products, have contracted in 2023 -24, with weaker exports only explaining part of this downturn. The latest IIP data also reflect flagging momentum – growth slid to a three quarter low of 4.9% between January and March. The next government must prioritise addressing the broader challenge, haunting hesitant consumers and reviving platforms for recent investors to voice their concerns freely.

## 20. Clickbait paper (The Hindu)

A recent working paper titled the Share of Religious Minorities: a Cross Country Analysis (1950 – 2015), by Shamika Ravi a credentialed economist and member of the Economic Advisory Council (EAC) to the Prime Minister, and two co – authors, has sparked a political firestorm, dredging familiar anxieties of a decline in the proportion of Hindu in India’s population. Freely accessible, the paper draw on a dataset, Religious Characteristics of States Datset, 2017 (RCS – Dem), where two US affiliated researchers have compiled an extensive dataset of religio – demographic changes in 167 countries. By defining majority and minority religions based on countries official census data, the RCS Dem Quantifies Changes in the population of those professing a country’s major religion. There is no discussion on the causes or factors driving these changes. The current paper does little other than reproduce this data set, explain it, and highlight – what has been known since 2011 in India and discussed threadbare since – that the share of Hindus as a proportion of India’s population declined from 84.68% to 78% (1950 – 2015). Muslim 14%. They underline how most countries have seen their majority religion adherents decline. They note that the Indian experience, vis – a – vis the proportional decline of Hindus, is unexceptional in the light of broad trends globally. They reiterate that they make no ... causal links between a specific state action and demographic shifts.” They note however that in the immediate South Asian neighbourhood”, this 7% relative decline was second only to Myanmar’s 10% decline of the majority **Theravada Buddhists**.

From here the authors make, without analysis or data, a deduction. That there in Muslims numbers proved media reports and UN human rights reports (which they cite) of discrimination and violence against Muslims in India were false. They single out Pakistan and Bangladesh to underline that “**demographic shocks**” reduced the proportion of the largest minorities, Hindus, there. The authors thus break their own rule of not having a causative explanation of demographic change by ascribing rising Muslim numbers in India to “progressive policies and inclusive institutions.” The authors would then have to explain if India’s Parsi and Jain populations (whose numbers they reference) are declining due to hostile state policies. Given that **Prosaic explanations** of declining fertility rates across religions and economic migration explain some of these known India trends, it is perplexing why the EAC would lend its sanction to a work that is at best incomplete, and at worst **disingenuous**.

## 21. An Indian success story in science and technology (Hindustan Times)

India's achievements in science and technology under Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi is no exception to criticism from the Left – Liberal Circle. However, there has been significant progress in the Science and Technology (S and T) sector in the last 10 years. Long term and sustainable financial commitment to S and T is essential as most projects are long term. Gross R and D expenditure has doubled from Rs 60,000 crore in 2010 – 11 to Rs 1.2 lakh crore last year. The total expenditure of **Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR)** has gone up from around Rs 3,200 crore in 2013 – 2014 to Rs.6,700 crore in 2021 – 22.

Several forward looking policy decisions were taken by the Modi government to foster this sector. For instance, the 2015 startup policy has become a key driver of the rapid growth of start – ups in India. Similarly, the recently announced **National Research Foundation** will be an integrated funding agency (broadly based on the National Science Foundation, United States) with a sanctioned financial outlay of Rs 14,000 crore over the next five years, or 2.5 times of the amount approved to its previous avatar, Science and Engineering Research Board. Last year, 14 autonomous biotechnology institutes under the department of biotechnology were brought under one apex body (Biotechnology Research and Innovation Council) bringing about significant synergies.

Investment in S and T has resulted in significant enhancement both in quality and quantity of outcomes. In terms of the number of scientific publications, India's ranking went from 7<sup>th</sup> in 2010 to 5<sup>th</sup> in 2015 and now 3<sup>rd</sup> in 2023, behind China and the US. In scientific research, the quality of publications has more value than their quantity. Even on this parameter, India's rank in the **Global Innovation Index (based on 80 parameters by the World Intellectual Property Organisations)** jumped from 81 in 2013 – 14 to 40 in 2023.

There have been significant advancement in protecting indigenous technologies in terms of filling patents. India's **patent** filling has grown significantly in recent years – in 2022, it registered the largest increase of 22%. India is now ranked seventh in terms of resident **patent filing**. In 2022, 82,000 patent applications were filed in the Indian Patent Office and 34,000 patents were granted. The Indian Patent Office granted over 1,00,000 patents between March 15, 2023 and March 14, 2024. The centre has also announced significant concessions on capital gains tax if the intellectual property (IP) generated by Indian entities is monetized, further encouraging commercialization of IP. The launch of the **Quantum Computing Mission, Semiconductor Mission, India AI Mission**, and National Biopharma Mission, further proves India's long term commitment to cutting edge technologies.

India now figures in the global telecom standards map with indigenous IP incorporated into **"5G and beyond"** technologies. The pan IIT project on 5G has indigenously developed **5G systems** and technology that has been transferred to the Tata Group. Similarly, India's success in developing indigenous vaccines against Covid 19 would not have been possible without the active support of **DBT**.

As of April 2024, over 1,27,000 startups had been officially recognized – close to 30% more than the number last year. The startup ecosystem received a boost from a sector specific funding programme. For example, the

number of **bio incubators** (funded by **Biotech Research Assistance Council, DBT**) has gone up from 6 months in 2014 to 95 in 2024. Technologies developed with the support of BIRAC have resulted in the launch of over 800 products in the market. **Atal Innovation Mission (AIM)** is another unique initiative of the Modi government. From inculcating the spirit of innovation in school students (**Atal Tinkering Labs**) to funding startups, it has created and supported an entire innovation ecosystem. Since its inception, more than 10,000 tinkering labs have been established in schools. As of now, 86 incubators and more than 4,000 startups are supported by AIM. The participation of women in R and D is also growing. There were 67,441 women scientists in 2020 – 21 as compared to 42,000 in 2014 -15.

These are some examples of how the Modi government inculcated a culture of scientific innovation and entrepreneurship in India. Of course, the demands and aspirations of the society are going to grow significantly. The average R and D spend (as a percentage of turnover) by Indian Industry is still lower than in developed countries and there is a significant gap in the participation of Indian women in **science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM)**. Specific schemes have been launched by the government to address both issues.

In the last 10 years, the Indian mindset has become more entrepreneurial, India is not only among the largest consumers of the latest technologies but also an inventor of world class, safe, secure and affordable technologies.

## 22. Preparing for La Nina Days (Hindustan Times)

Conditions have turned favourable for the **La Nina phenomenon** in the next few months, according to the Climate Prediction Centre of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration of the US. This holds both promise and warning for India. **La Nina, historically, is associated with heavy rainfall during the southwest monsoon, which arrives in early June.** The rains – the India Meteorological Department has already predicted an above normal monsoon with estimated rainfall of 106% of the long period average – would be a welcome relief for the parched land in the Deccan, especially parts of Marathwada, which have face drought like conditions this year. Southern India and Uttarakhand have already started to receive premonsoon showers.

A good monsoon would also mean better crop yields, and, hopefully, relief from high food inflation. **Last year's El Nino saw a below par monsoon** (94.4% of long period average), which resulted in food grain production falling by 6% in the 2023 – 24 crop year over the preceding year, and caused retail food inflation to spike to 8.25% in February. The room for the central bank to ease rates narrowed significantly despite overall inflation remaining within its tolerance band, and the Union government opted for export bans and restrictions, which it relaxed a few days ago.

Clearly, an abundant monsoon is likely to bring much relief to both farmers and consumers.

That said, the La Nina prediction is also a warning to be prepared for disruptive rains, which have become frequent and potent with the advent of the climate crisis. Warming, many experts hold, has caused monsoon patterns to turn erratic, with large volumes of precipitation being concentrates over a short period and weeks of unseasonal dary weather. Landslides and floods in Himachal Pradesh last year, and the 2018 floods in Kerala are evidence of the devastating consequences of changing monsoon behaviour. States need to be prepared with drills and contingency plans. From assessing disaster management readiness to audit dams, flood signalling and early warning systems, they must contend with long task lists.

A different challenge awaits urban centres, which have faced the brunt of downpours in recent years. Cities including Delhi, Bengaluru, Chennai, and Mumbai, have all had their inadequate physical infrastructure exposed. Unplanned and illegal developments have resulted in encroachments on tanks, lakes and wetlands and destroyed natural drainage systems. Municipal governments need to recognize this and prepare now.

## 23. Anchoring ties in Chabahar waters (Hindustan Times)

The agreement signed by India and Iran for long term operations by an Indian State run firm at the strategic **Chahabar port** is a significant development, given the disruptions affecting global trade due to the instability in West Asia. The Chahbar project began in 2016 as an initiative by Afghanistan, India and Iran to create a trade and transit hub, with the tacit blessings of the US, which provided a carve out for the port in its sanctions regime for Iran, given its interest in Afghanistan then. The situation has now changed, and the Indian side will have to be wary entities engaging in business deals with Iran. A US State Department deputy spokesperson, when asked about Chahbar, said: "Any entity anyone considering business deals with Iran – they need to be aware of the potential risks that they are opening themselves up to and the potential risk of sanctions."

Still, for India and Iran, the project offers a chance to build a trade route that could access Afghanistan and the landlocked Central Asian States. The deal is also in continuation with New Delhi's long – standing relations with Tehran, which are showcased as a civilizational legacy, and hence, shielded from the compulsions of geopolitics. Nonetheless, India – Iran relations have been impacted by the ebb and flow of the West ties with Tehran. The 10 year agreement assuages Iranian concerns about India's long term commitment to the project, especially against the backdrop of New Delhi's burgeoning strategic relations with Washington. While India has maintained a steady commitment for the development of a terminal at Chahbar, it faced challenges in its efforts to acquire modern equipment for the port because of concerns among Western suppliers over US sanctions. Despite these obstacles, the Indian State run firm has handled more than 84 million tonnes of cargo since it began operations at Chahbar in late 2018. Exports believe this figure is only a reflection of the true potential of the deep water port, and India's plans to invest \$120 million in new equipment will give a major boost to Chahbahar's capacity.

In the current context, the obvious gains for India are economic, as Chahbar will open up opportunities to further its interests in Iran, especially at a time when China is eyeing the country's ports and coastal China is eyeing the country's ports and coastal infrastructure, and facilitate trade with Afghanistan and Central Asia. Clearly, the port agreement is premised on long – term economic and strategic interests, and perhaps, suggests how New Delhi and Tehran, despite their current diplomatic stance and friends, are careful to exercise strategic strategic autonomy to further their respective national interests. That will require some balancing, though.

## 24. Little respite (The Hindu)

April's retail inflation data flattered to deceive. The **Consumer Price Index (CPI)** based provisional headline print shows year on year retail price gains, across the broad spectrum of goods and services that combine to constitute the CPI, slowed fractionally to a 11 month low of 4.83% from March's 4.85%. This slowing however did little to mask the more disconcerting acceleration in food prices gains. Inflation based on the **Consumer Food Price Index (CPFI)** quickened by 18 basis points from the preceding month's year on year pace to a four month high of 8.7%, with the month on month rate accelerating to 0.74% from 0.16% on March. Rural consumers fared worse than their urban counterparts with both food and broader headline inflation reflection faster price gains. The CPI based reading for the **hinterland** was still well above the 5% mark at 5.43%, while inflation in urban areas was a sharply lower 4.11%, reflecting the widening divergence in the impact that price gains are having on those already struggling from the hit to the rural economy from a weak monsoon last year and sizzling temperatures this summer. Food price gains at 8.57% for rural consumers, a good 19 basis points faster than the 8.56% faced by urban consumers, is all the more disconcerting as food is an essential expenditure that every household must try and find to meet.

The pressure on food prices remains wide ranging, with cereals – the heaviest weight in the food category – witnessing a 26 basis points quickening in inflation to 8.63%. Data from the Department of Consumer Affairs Price Monitoring Division shows the average price of rice was 14.3% steeper as on May 14 than on May 14, 2023. And the price of wheat was 6.4% higher from a year earlier, signalling that respite on the cereals front is unlikely in the near term. April's soaring temperatures also kept inflation in vegetables, particularly vulnerable as perishable produce, in double digits for a sixth straight month at 27.8%. Price gains in pulses too offered little succour as they extended their stay in double digits to an eleventh month. And the Consumer Affairs department's data shows prices of all. The five key dals – gram, tur, urad, moong, masoor – continued to rise appreciably as on May 14. With **live water** storage at the **country's 150 reservoirs** dwindling to 27% of capacity as on May 9 and trailing both the year earlier and 10-year average levels significantly/majorly, the outlook for price stability rides almost entirely on the forecast "normal monsoon" delivering spatially and temporally well disturbed rains in the coming months.

## 25. Decisive govt. enabled J and K turnaround story Hindustan Times

The abrogation of Article 370 in August 2019 marked a historic moment in the history of India, particularly for Jammu and Kashmir (J and K). This move integrated Jammu and Kashmir with the rest of the country and brought noticeable changes and positive developments in various aspects of life in the Kashmir Valley. From a decline in violence to an upsurge in investments, tourism, and job creating, the impact of this decision has been transformative.

The abrogation of Article 370 has also paved the way for greater democratic empowerment and political participation in J and K. In the 4<sup>th</sup> phase of Lok Sabha elections 2024, Srinagar Lok Sabha constituency had broken all records as the polling percentage went up to 38%, the highest since 1996. The figures for 2019, 2014, 2009, 2004, and 1999 are 14.43%, 25.86%, 25.5%, 18.57% and 11.93% respectively. It is a vote for the hope of a better future. This significant increase in voter turnout reflects the people's faith and enthusiasm in the democratic process. The peaceful conclusion of the voting process underscores the region's transition towards a more inclusive and participatory political landscape. This increased representation and political engagement for the region's wellbeing.

The abrogation of Article 370 has also catalysed an economic revival in J and K, attracting substantial investments and fostering job creation.

**Nominal GSDP** at current prices of J and K was Rs 1.64 lakh crore in FY 2019 – 20, which increased to Rs. 2.25 lakh crore for FY 2022 – 23. In other words, GSDP of J and K had grown with CAGR of 11.11% in three years (2020 – 23). The pandemic caused the loss of two out of the three years. Notably, the per capita income in J and K has risen from Rs 1.2 lakh in 2019 – 20 to Rs 1.7 lakh in 2022 – 23.

In the past three years, since a new industrial policy was announced in January 2021, J and K has received proposals worth Rs. 84,544 crore in 42 industrial sectors, and is expected to create over one lakh new jobs. The region has also seen 44,542 projects assisted under the **Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP)**, leading to an estimated 3,56,336 employment opportunities.

There has been a notable revival of tourism in the region and a focus on preserving cultural heritage. The contribution of agriculture to J and K's GDP decreased from 18.4% in FY21 to 16.9% in FY 23, while the share of industry also slightly reduced from 20% to 19.5%. However, the services sector, including tourism, compensated for these declines by increasing from 61.6% to 63.6%. The highest ever arrival of tourists to Kashmir during 2022 was about 27 lakhs as compared to the previous highest of 13 lakhs in 2016. The government's effort to promote cultural festivals have helped revive the cultural fabric of J and K, fostering a sense of pride and identity among its residents.

There has been a substantial decrease in violence and unrest in the J and K. Union home minister Amit Shah revealed staggering statistics, indicating a 70% decline in total terrorism related cases, an 81% reduction

in civilian deaths, and a 48% decrease in the death of security forces since August 2019. This significant improvement in the security situation has instilled a sense of safety and stability among the residents of the region.

A government with a strong mandate is better equipped to take decisive actions of critical issues that impact the nation's integrity, security and socio – economic development. In the case of Article 370, the decision was guided by the vision of fostering unity, inclusivity and equality across all regions of the country. A strong majority in Parliament enhances the government's credibility and legitimacy, both domestically and internationally.

The success of the abrogation of Article 370 underscores the importance of having a stable and decisive government at the helm. It demonstrates how bold and visionary leadership, backed by strong mandate can bring about meaningful change and usher in a new era of progress and prosperity for the nation.

## 26. New Term, Old Issues (The Hindu)

One of the key decisions Vladimir Putin took after being sworn in as Russia's President for the fifth time was to remove the long time Minister of Defence, Sergei Shoigu. The Andrei Belousov, a civilian economist, has been brought in to run the Defence Ministry shows that how the war in Ukraine has become an economic battle for Russia as it struggles to stabilize its war time economy and keep its energy ties and defence production going despite biting western sanctions. There have been criticisms about the way Mr. Shoigu planned and executed the war, which Russia, according to western intelligence, expected to be a quick affair. But, Mr. Shoigu, who successfully executed the **annexation of Crimea** in 2014, and Russia's defence industrial complex. Even when Russia faced setbacks initially and a rare rebellion led by the late **Wagner chief Yevgeny Prigozhin** challenged the defence leadership, Mr. Putin threw his weight behind Mr. Shoigu. But now, as Mr. Putin begins a new a term with the promise of Russia to gain victory over Ukraine he has decided to shake up the Defence Ministry and bring in a technocrat whose quick and primary responsibility would be to meet military objectives.

The change comes at a time when Russia has gained battlefield momentum. Last week, it launched a new offensive in the northeast, in an apparent bid to attack Kharkiv, Ukraine's second largest city. Ukraine is expecting new weapons from the US, but it's not clear whether that would be enough for its war fatigued army to withstand the Russian onslaught. Mr. Putin's immediate goal is to win the war, but he does not have a clear path to victory either. The war has caused lasting damage to Russia's ties with the West, especially with Europe with which Mr. Putin had sought to build strong economic and energy ties, and driven Russia deeper into China's hands. At home, he has tightened his grip on state and society and is intolerant of dissent. For now, the state has managed to prevent the effects of sanctions reaching ordinary citizens, but it remains to be seen how long the Kremlin can do so if the war continues endlessly. Ukraine has also taken the war to Russia, by attacking its black sea fleet and border towns, raising the costs of the war, Mr. Putin seems to be thinking that the momentum is on his side, irrespective of the challenges. But even if his troops make further gains in Ukraine, he would be ruling over an internally more repressive Russia, economically weaker and isolated in the West and in a war of attrition with a permanently hostile neighbour.

## 27. Trade Imbalance (The Hindu)

India's **merchandise exports**, which shrank over 3% in 2023 – 24, a year marred by multiple geopolitical and logistical disruptions to global trade – are off to a positive start this year, but only just. This April recorded outbound shipments worth \$34.99 billion, reflecting a meagre uptick of 1.07% or \$370 million from a year ago. As many as 17 of India's top 30 export items reported year – on – year contractions, compared with 13 in the previous month. Significantly, these declines are over a weak base – in April 2023, goods exports had tanked 12.7% and 20 of the top 30 items had reported a fall in export values. The minor growth last month was largely driven by just four items, pharma, chemicals, electronics and, most importantly, petroleum products, which recovered from a 35% contraction in March, aided by the rise in global oil prices through April lifted the country's goods import bill by 10.25% to over \$54 billion. As a result, last month's trade deficit was the highest in four months at \$19.1, and nearly 22.5% over March's gap. If the **OPEC+ club**, which meets in early June, decides to extend outputs cuts, oil prices could well hit, \$100 a barrel. Moreover, a persistent global savings rush to gold as a safe haven, could keep pushing India's favourite yellow metal's prices higher. Apart from the **deleterious effects** of such a scenario on the domestic front (through higher fuel prices, for one), the trade balance and the rupee would be under pressure.

Global trade volumes, after tanking 1.2% in 2023, are expected to rise 2.6% this year, as per the **World Trade Organisation**. The government is hopeful that India's key markets in the western world clock lower inflation and improved growth rates, spurring a demand bounce. However, India needs to sharpen its approach to capitalize on such a bounce and ensure that any gains that may accrue will create wealth across the domestic economy. This requires addressing the challenges facing labour intensive sectors such as garments and footwear, where the country has been losing out to rivals, including Bangladesh and Vietnam, in recent years. The downward trend for these sectors, as well as gems and jewellery, continued in April. Tackling concerns about product quality (in spices or drugs, for example) or allegations about labour or environmental concerns (aimed at booming shrimp exports) with greater vigour, is also critical. Moreover, agricultural exports, curbed in the battle against inflation, must be reinvigorated soon, given the healthy monsoon prospects. The next government must roll up its sleeves quickly to rev up the export growth engine and ensure trade balances do not turn unwieldy.

## 28. Politics served with concise social media content (The Hindu) Part III

The nature of information dissemination is changing rapidly and India is not immune to these sweeping changes. Traditional analyses of information consumption, which focus on the medium, often overlook the profound shifts to human psychology, driven by the rise of social media. This shift has led to **instant gratification** becoming the norm, impacting political narratives, with the potential to alter election outcomes. In India, growing social media use in the vernacular languages, combined with a largely unregulated digital space and a highly competitive, polarized political environment, necessitates vigilance to manage disruptive information.

### “Going viral” as objective

Recent studies such as “Accelerating Dynamics of Collective Attention” which was published in Nature, highlight a dramatic decline in human attention spans – from 2.5 minutes two decades ago to just 45 second today. This decline is mirrored in the popularity of concise social media, i.e. short videos of less than a minute and articles that span less than 200 characters. Short and snappy content is easier to produce. The focus is on the potential of the content to go viral rather than the content itself. Such content, which is much easier to produce and designed for “viral spread” rather than depth, enables previously obscure figures to become influential by catering to short attention spans.

Social media algorithms exacerbate this by promoting viral content, which often drowns out more substantial, factual narratives. Thus, it is entirely possible that factually unsound content travels around the world faster before rebuttals can even be thought of.

This new reality is not lost on political parties. The potential for this new paradigm to significantly reduce the asymmetry in social media power among political outfits is immense.

In India, it is assumed that the Bhartiya Janata Party has a much higher and more effective social media presence than the Congress. In fact, many analysts on both sides of the political spectrum attribute the BJP’s political dominance 2014 to a significant first mover advantage. While the Congress relied on rallies and long winding speeches, the BJP switched to new age media, dominating Facebook, Twitter (now X) and Whatsapp. It is only since the 2019 general election that the Congress has invested significantly in social media. Analysis of follower count and engagement statistics across platforms prove that the BJP still has the edge. But there is significant churn underway.

### An inversion of roles

Viral political is a strong indicator of how quickly political narratives can be set and propagated. As an example, a recent video by vlogger Dhruv Rathee, titled “Is India Becoming a Dictatorship”, went viral, becoming a topic of debate and discussion on various forums and platforms. This is significantly larger than any video posted

by the political Opposition. An analysis of the video reveals that the information presented is not new – these are commonly traded political accusations often treated as par for the course in political debates. But the content was designed to go viral – different parts of 30 minute top video can be easily edited into simple one minute sections and tailored to appeal to shortening attention spans.

Such context free splicing of content did happen – arguments were shortened, facts were pushed aside and context was ignored. Hundreds of shorts spawned from the main video resulting in a narrative firestorm that BJP sympathisers struggled to keep up with. This article is an illustration of how **algorithms** and low attention spans allow specific types of content to organically propagate at an astounding rate. The political opposition was quick to latch on and the video remained in popular consciousness for well over two weeks. For the first time in many months the BJP seemed to be on the back foot. What is unique about this case is that the narrative was set by an apparently independent content creator and then amplified by political parties. This is a marked inversion from earlier when politicians delivered the talking points and other agents took on the role of amplification. This “inversion” of roles is becoming more apparent in the social media strategies of the opposition – a marked reliance on supposedly independent social media influencers to generate “viral” content followed by an amplification powered by political leaders.

### **Analysis is more difficult now**

This “inversion” of roles is bound to have a significant impact. The checks and balances in the media, which have already eroded significantly, will continue on their path to irrelevance. Democratisation of content creation and algorithms that seek to capitalize on shrinking attention spans has resulted in a truly level playing field, where large pockets for social media spends matter less than having content that is tailored to gratify instantly. This makes analysis of the political **headwinds** more difficult. Merely analysing election time utterances is no longer sufficient. Conventional messaging is now under – girded by social medias where narratives are generated on a whim, influencing millions in their wake. The party that can bring a semblance of control over this tumult will reap the benefits and it is not clear who is winning this battle for attention

## 29. Stay invested (the hindu)

By signing a 10 year agreement with Iran to develop and operate the Chahbahar port, India has taken its infrastructure and trade partnership with the Islamic Republic to the next level despite tensions in West Asia. India will invest \$120 million and offer a credit facility of \$250 million to further develop the terminal it operates in **Chahbahar's Shahid Beheshti port** and related projects. However, after the deal was signed, the US State Department said entities considering business deals with Iran "need to be aware that they are opening themselves up to and the potential risk of sanctions". In the past, American sanctions on Iran had delayed the project. Conceived in 2003, the project did not take off for years after the US and the UN imposed sanctions on Tehran over its nuclear programme. India signed a memorandum of understanding in 2015 after Washington eased sanctions on Iran following that year's nuclear agreement, and in 2016, the contract was executed during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Iran visit. The US's unilateral withdrawal from the nuclear deal in 2018 and reimposition of sanctions on Iran raised questions on India's continued cooperation with Tehran. But India managed to win a carve out from US sanctions that allowed it to operate the port through ad hoc.

The Chabahar port is critical for India's connectivity plans. First, it offers an alternative route to Afghanistan and Central Asia by bypassing Pakistan, allowing better trade with Central Asia. And, Chahbahar is expected to be connected to the International **North – South Transport Corridor (NSTC)**, bringing India closer to **Europe through Iran, Azerbaijan and Russia**. An alternative to the Suez route, a fully operational NSTC would reduce the time and money spent on intercontinental trade. The port, roughly 200km from Pakistan's Gwadar, where China is developing a part as part of its BRI, would also help India expand its geopolitical influence in Central Asia.

But the US seems to have taken a narrow view of the project over its hostility with Iran. America's interest have also changed. In 2018, when US forces were backing the Islamic Republic government in Afghanistan, it gave a sanction waiver to India as Kabul also stood to benefit from the port project. Today, the US troops are out of Afghanistan, the Taliban has replaced the Islamic Republic, and the US's focus is on containing Iran. India, in the past, had taken U – turns in its Iran engagement depending on the change in policy in Washington DC. It should not do that anymore. It should stay invested in Chahbahar and seek to improve its trade and connectivity project with Central Asia, which is essential for India's continued rise.

## 30. As Moscow gets close to Beijing (Part I) Hindustan Times

Over the past four years, India has navigated multiple crisis, ranging from Covid 19 to the military standoff with China and the fallout of conflicts, nuancing the country's position without compromising on core interests. In his interview with Hindustan Times, external affairs minister S Jaishankar spoke of the country – and the world – continuing to grapple with more than one crisis. He mentioned Ukraine, where the war is in the third year, and the possibility of the Israel – Hamas conflict intensifying, India has thus far managed to significantly expand its ties with the US while protecting its longstanding strategic interests with Russia. And it is aware of the ever – lengthening shadow of China, not just at the border but across the neighbourhood, including in the Maldives, Myanmar, and Sri Lanka, where Beijing continues to buy influence to enable its pursuit of the pre – eminent position in the Indian Ocean.

It is in this context that New Delhi will be watching the burgeoning bonhomie between Moscow and Beijing. That Russian President Vladimir Putin chose China for his first trip after beginning another term reflects the strength of the ties between the two countries. This was Putin's 19<sup>th</sup> visit to Beijing as president, though he has opted not to travel to India for multilateral meetings or the annual summit. In a sense, this is understandable as China and Russia stand isolated and criticized by democratic societies for their actions against the rules – based order. For the US, China's growing economic and technology prowess is a challenge to its global supremacy. Washington has tried to contain Beijing through tariffs and sanctions, but it has also worked at engaging with it to ensure that a Russia – China axis, which may include powers such as Iran, does not cut into its influence. In this context, the Xi – Putin joint statement is interesting for the point it makes about a multipolar world of open alliances, driven by interests rather than ideological themes such as democracy or open markets. What must put India on guard is the veiled reference to groupings such as the **Quad** in not so positive terms.

The proximity between Moscow and Beijing is of particular interests to New Delhi because of its dependence on Russia for defence needs, a legacy issue it has tried to overcome by looking at new partners and by self – reliance in armaments. The West is wary of the bond between two aspiring **hegemons** in the East, but India should equally be on its toes.

## 31. Talking peace (The Hindu)

Two years after the Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Switzerland has stepped in to organize a peace conference, making an effort to broaden global consensus on the war by enlisting those who have not joined the western coalition thus far. As a close partner of Russia, a member of the BRICS and SCO groupings a leader in the Global South, and an aspirant to world leadership, India is, no doubt, at the top of list. And the Swiss Foreign Secretary Alex Andre Fasel's visit to Delhi this week, following closely those of two Swiss Ministers, and the Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba over the past few months, is evidence that the invitation to India at the head of state/head of government level is a priority. Of the 160 or so countries that invitations for the conference have gone to – it is to be held in the resort town of Burgenstock on June 15 – 16, about 50 have confirmed their attendance, mostly from the European Union, NATO alliance, G – 7 countries and US allies such as Japan, South Korea and Australia. Russia has not been invited and Mr. Fasel made it clear that their diplomacy was hoping to bring over "BRICS" leaders (BRICS minus Russia) so they could convey the outcomes to Moscow, with a view to inviting Russia to future round of talks. With Brazilian President Lula indicating that he would not attend, and South Africa's citing its general elections on May 29 to formally decline the invitation, all eyes are on whether Chinese President Xi Jinping and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, if he is re – elected, or official nominees would attend.

Convincing the rest of the world to attend a platform that appears stilted towards Ukraine remains a tall order for the organisers. While Switzerland prides itself on its neutrality, it has already chosen sides in the current conflict by imposing sanctions on Russia. Another venue may have appeared more partial. The agenda for the conference is to build a framework for or road map to peace, and to discuss issues such as ensuring food security and freedom of navigation, nuclear safety and humanitarian issues. It seems unlikely that much headway can be made on any of these issues without both parties to the conflict at the table. It is also hard to foresee what else can be achieved as long as Russia and Ukraine believe they can make or consolidate more gains on battlefield – a real negotiation begins when either one or both sides believe they have exhausted military options. If the aim of the conference then is, as Russian President Vladimir Putin says, to pressure Russia into announcing a ceasefire or ceding territory it has won, then it's hardly likely to succeed, given the UN General Assembly's failure to bring such pressure through multiple resolutions. New Delhi, that has thus far refused to join any statement that is overtly critical of Russia, and has not diluted ties with Moscow, may thus find it easier to hedge its bets, and only show its hand once a truly balanced and more inclusive peace effort gets underway.

## 32. Saving Trees to beat the heat (Hindustan Times)

The exceptionally high summer temperatures hold a lesson. India badly needs affordable, easy – access adaptation measures to protect people from extreme heat, and impact of the climate crisis that manifests regularly every summer. Access to shade from the scorching sun can help save people, especially in rural areas. However, evidence suggests a trend in the reverse.

New research that mapped 0.6 billion farmland trees in India, excluding block plantations, and tracked them over the past decade, found that around 11+2% of the large trees (about 96m<sup>2</sup> crown size) from 2010/2011 had disappeared by 2018. Then, during 2018 – 2022, more than five million large farmland trees (about 67 m<sup>2</sup> crown size) vanished, partly due to altered cultivation practices, where trees within fields are perceived as detrimental to crop yields. **India's farmland trees include multipurpose ones such as khejri (Prosopis Cineraria), neem (Azadirachta Indica), mahua (madhuca longifolia), gum (acacia nilotica), and Indian rosewood (Dalbergia sissoo), which provide a variety of ecosystem services from conservation (for example, soil fertilization, and shade) to consumption (fruits, fuelwood, fibre, mulch, medicine, fodder).**

This is possibly the first time that the status of individual large trees is being mapped using **microsatellites providing spatial resolution of 3 – 5m**. The results are a cause for worry, suggesting that India is gradually losing a major, low – hanging climate adaptation solution. This also reinforces why India's rural heartland is becoming dustier and drier and living conditions even more difficult. This trend needs to be reversed, which may necessitate policy tweaks. For example, this newspaper reported in February that **a new notification by the Union Environment Ministry said corporations and other private entities could sponsor plantations on degraded land, including open forest and scrubland, wasteland and catchment areas and avail green credits, which could be traded**. The fear that this could result in a change in land use and impact biodiversity is genuine: India's experience with plantations, especially raised through social forestry schemes, is that they encourage monoculture and rarely enrich biodiversity or contribute to livelihoods. **It is time the conservation ecosystem recognizes the role of farmland trees, especially their heat – mitigation potential and formulate policies in consonance with the needs of citizens and communities. A Supreme Court appointed committee recently identified older/larger trees as having a higher ecological value**. That's a good first step: now policy has to follow.

### 33. A closer contest (The Hindu) Part III

The fifth phase of the general election, held on Monday, features contests in the fewest number of seats – 49. But, it included heavyweight seats such as Rae Bareilly, Amethi and Faizabad in Uttar Pradesh, the urban areas of Mumbai, Thane and Nashik in Maharashtra, the southern parts of West Bengal, which saw strong contests between the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Trinamool Congress (TMC) in 2019, besides simultaneous Assembly and Parliamentary polls in the south – western seats of Odisha. In Maharashtra, the splintering of the main regional parties has made it battleground state along with Bihar, Karnataka and West Bengal. Voter turnout in Maharashtra was relatively low when compared to the rest of the country, with Mumbai retaining its unfavourable reputation of voter apathy. The Uddhav Thackeray led Shiv Sena faction counts these seats as some of its strongholds and its alliance performance here might well decide the course of the battle now as well as in the Assembly elections later this year. The Maha Vikas Aghadi Mahayuti contest of coalitions has upended the traditional patterns of support bases for the extant parties in the State and this election could herald a new correlation of forces.

In UP, the Opposition has managed to keep the contest going on issues related to livelihoods and has prevented it being a cakewalk for the BJP which has sought to use the Ram Mandir consecration issue to register another near sweep. The filip in Bihar, where Rashtriya Janata Dal leader Tejaswi Yadav's relentless campaigning on employment issues has made the elections even more competitive. The BJP now seeks to bank on its record in welfare delivery, expecting the support of poorer voters and women. Voter turnout in the fifth phase is in line with the trends seen in the fourth phase in UP, which registered better numbers than phases two and three, while preliminary trends in Bihar indicate a slight reduction compared to the previous phase. The turnout has in general been marginally lower than what it was in 2019 across the country. In Odisha and West Bengal too, women voters could be crucial in deciding the fortunes of the ruling Biju Janata Dal and the TMC. While turnout was relatively low in Odisha, West Bengal registered close to 73%, according to early numbers. Women out voted men in West Bengal significantly till phase four and the TMC would be encouraged as it banks on its women – centric welfare measures to overcome the BJP's formidable challenge. The BJD would hope that its work in mobilizing women through self – help groups will continue to yield it strong, support, especially in rural areas.

## 34. The leadership crisis in Tehran (Hindustan Times)

The death of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi in a helicopter is not expected to result in any drastic change in the country's domestic or foreign policies as true power lies in the hands of Supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and the security establishment led by the **Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC)**. However, the death of Raisi and foreign minister Hossein Amiri Abdollahian comes at a time when tensions between Iran and Israel are at an unprecedented level, with the shadow warfare waged by the two sides coming out into the open following Tehran's recent firing of hundreds of drones and missiles at Israeli targets in retaliation for an air strike on an Iranian diplomatic compound in Syria. Amir Abdollahian was the face of Iran's diplomatic efforts to address these tensions, and Tehran has done well to speedily replace with him Ali Bahegri Kani, who has been involved in negotiations with the West on sensitive issues, including the now defunct Iranian nuclear deal.

While Iran's state-run media has attributed the helicopter crash to technical problems, this hasn't prevented theories being circulated about the possible involvement of Israel. Israeli officials have dismissed such reports, but it would be in Iran's own interest to speedily conduct an investigation into the crash. This would remove any lingering uncertainty about the incident and prevent the risk of miscalculation by both sides, as also the possibility that some actors may wish to capitalize on the situation by Raisi's death. The world community, including India, does not want the situation in West Asia to spiral out of control and efforts should continue to involve Iran in finding a solution to the Israel – Hamas conflict. Iran's involvement with armed groups in Gaza, Lebanon and Yemen underlines the urgency of such efforts.

Raisi's death will have a significant impact on the succession plan within Iran, especially as he was seen as a possible successor to the ageing Khamenei. First vice president Mohammad Mokhber has been made acting president and will have the task of conducting a presidential election within 50 days against a backdrop of growing voter apathy. With reformists and moderates completely sidelined, there are already concerns about different hardline factions jockeying for position with a resultant increase in repressive measures on the Iranian people.

## 35. Vote for a change (The Hindu)

The voter turnout in the Srinagar and Baramulla constituencies in the Kashmir valley – Anantanag Rajouri is to vote on May 25 after the Election Commission of India postponed the election – is well below national average. While Srinagar registered only 38.5%, preliminary figures from Baramulla indicate a turnout of 59.1%. The national average for the first four phases was 66.95% and 61.61% in the numbers in the valley are salubrious compared to the past – 13% in Srinagar and 34.6% in Baramulla in 2019. Baramulla registered its highest turnout since 1984 (61.1% participation). In the last six years, the elected Assembly was dissolved, the erstwhile State of Jammu and Kashmir bifurcates into two Union Territories, the special status of the province abrogated by the BJP – led Union government, and the valley subjected to months of internet shutdowns. Scores of politicians were also arrested. Kashmir still remains India's most securitized region with recurring militant violence. While local body elections have been held since then, the general election is the first major poll with significant contestation involving the Valley's mainstream polity.

Should the increase in turnout be read as a significant reduction in the alienation of the Kashmiri people? The answer is not unambiguous. A substantive section of the voters who turned out have sought a change in the status quo. The limitations on political activity in the Valley since 2018 have constrained citizens who have had little recourse to airing their grievances due to the absence of legislative representations in the Assembly. Thus, livelihood concerns have not been sufficiently addressed, and the greater electoral participation now reflects the need for representation of the electorate's voices. Union Home Minister Amit Shah has stated that the higher polling in two constituencies is the greatest testament to rightness" of abrogating the special status that was enshrined in Article 370 – a statement devoid of reason. A truer reflection of the support for the abrogation would have been a favourable mandate for parties endorsing the move, but the BJP did not even field candidate in the valley. It is clear that it saw the writing on the wall in terms of how it was perceived in the region. Mr. Shah and the BJP should not misinterpret the reason for the increase in voter participation. The voices in the Valley have given way to some using the ballot box as a medium to get the region out of its political morass. The Indian state must listen and make amends.

## 36. Enforcing the red lines (Hindustan Times)

Letters from the Election Commission of India (ECI) to the presents of the BJP and the Congress, asking them to instruct their “star campaigners” against undertaking provocative canvassing, may be motivated by good intentions, but are too mild, too generic and come too late in the campaign cycle. Five phases of polling are over and the campaign for the sixth phase ended Thursday (a day after the letters were sent). Hopefully, the parties will advise their leaders to heed the ECI’s message and change the words, tone, and tenor of their speeches henceforth, but the very delay in sending the letters may have taken out whatever little sting they have.

What is spoken in the heat of the campaign with the intent to polarize people for immediate and temporary gains – be it by targeting the faith of people or making doomsday predictions about the Constitution and the election process – may hang in the air much after the polling and create long – lasting fault lines that could scar society, destroy the credibility of institutions, and lead to mistrust in the electoral process. It is to avoid such outcomes that the **model code of conduct (MCC)** is enforced once the election process gets underway. All stakeholders must adhere to it, and the ECI must protect it aggressively.

The ECI has in the past censured many campaigners for provocative speech, of course. Most recently, it barred former Calcutta high court judge and BJP candidate Abhijit Gangopadhyay from campaigning for 24 hours for his misogynist comments against the West Bengal CM. However, the ECI’s action has to be prompt, nonpartisan and even handed: The stature or office of the person violating the Code should not influence the institution’s response, which it may well have in this case. The ECI’s directives to party chiefs were triggered by a complaint filed by the Congress on April 21, prompted by Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s controversial comments at a rally in Banswada, Rajasthan, and the BJP on April 19, prompted by Rahul Gandhi’s comments at a rally in Kottayam, Kerala. The ECI sent notices to both party residents on April 21, but the fact that the ECI’s censure (in the form of the notices) had a limited impact on the campaign – it states as much in its letters to the two party chiefs, campaigners for both side have continued in the same vein since – raises concerns about both the institution’s willingness to ensure that the campaign is insulated from divisive politics, and its capacity to do so.

This is why, after the din subsides on June 1, there needs to be a conversation among various stakeholders about the need for course correction in election campaigns, so that the dignity of the democratic process is not compromised.

## 37. Powerful, symbolic (The Hindu) Part III

The announcement by Ireland, Norway and Spain, of their intent to formally recognize the state of Palestine, next week, is one more important sign of the changing tide of international opinion that Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu cannot afford to ignore. In just the past month, in the UN General Assembly, 143 countries, including India, passed a resolution calling for the recognition of the Palestinian state by the UN Security Council, where the US has vetoed such a move. Earlier this week, the [International Criminal Court](#) Prosecutor moved applications for arrest warrants for Mr. Netanyahu and Defence Minister Yoav Gallant for operations after October 7 in Gaza as well as the Hamas leadership for the terror attack that killed 1,200 in Israel, terming these as “war crimes”. On Friday, the [International Court of Justice](#) will pronounce another verdict in the petition by South Africa calling for additional measures in the prosecution of Israel for “genocide”. The latest decision by 3 countries, they have been vocal in their criticism of Israel – they join eight EU members that have already recognized Palestinian statehood – may not materially change the situation on the ground.

But, it is meant to be what the Irish [Taoiseach](#) Simon Harris referred to as an “act of powerful political and symbolic value” to Israel, especially as it essays what could be the final assault on Rafah. While practically every country has condemned Hamas terror attacks, Mr. Harris said it would be a mistake to ignore the legitimate Palestinian government in the West Bank, saying that “Hamas is not the Palestinian people”. Norway’s Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Store said that the move aimed to support “moderate forces that are on a retreating front in a protracted and cruel conflict. Spain’s action followed its denial of port facilities to a Danish flagged ship with explosive material from India meant for Israel, which it said was a firm policy now. Israel’s response, however, has been to recall its envoys and summon the envoys of all three countries for a dressing down.

In the immediate future, the multiple messages of near global consensus are meant to push Israel’s government to rethink its plans for Rafah, to stop more civilian losses, and to allow humanitarian aid free access into Gaza. But in the longer term, they are meant to remind Mr. Netanyahu that even if he dissociates himself from the two state solution, this is something the world believes is the road map to peace. By turning deaf to these messages, Mr. Netanyahu is only furthering his isolation, especially from an international community that came out in full sympathy on October 7, but has grown increasingly horrified by the military campaign since then.

## 38. Welcome Bounty (The Hindu) Part I

The decision by the Reserve Bank of India's board to transfer a record surplus of almost Rs 2.11 lakh crore to the Union Government for 2023 – 24 will serve as a welcome shot in the arm for the new government when it presents its budget in July. More than double the previous year's Rs 87,416 crore payout as well as the Rs 1.02 lakh crore dividend cum surplus receipts from the banking and financial system and RBI that was pencilled into the interim Union Budget for 2024 – 25, the transfer should give the next Finance Minister a fair bit of elbow room when computing the spending and fiscal math. The surge in transferable surplus reflects the prudent asset management approach adopted by the Indian central bank, at a time of lingering global uncertainty and widespread policy tightening by central banks worldwide seeking to restore price stability. While the specifics of the RBI's 2023 – 24 balance sheet will be known in the coming days, clearly a combination of substantial gains from higher interest income earned on its holdings of overseas securities and the gains from interventions in the foreign exchange market to smoothen volatility in the rupee's moves must have contributed in swelling the surplus. The weekly statistical supplement shows that as on March 29, total foreign exchange reserves had increased by \$67.1 billion over the course of 12 months to \$64.58 billion.

The RBI's prudence has also extended to the crucial provisioning under the Contingent Risk Buffer (CRB), where it has raised the level of fund set aside to cover for any unforeseen contingencies and risks to the economy. By raising the level of provisioning by 50 basis points to 6.5% in its balance sheet size for 2023 – 24, the central bank has clearly signalled its increased confidence in the health of the domestic economy even as it strengthens the buffer against any sudden threats to stability from unexpected developments in the global financial system. For the new government that will assume office after the results of the ongoing general election are declared on June 4, the bountiful surplus transfer from the RBI will give it an opportunity to raise capital spending, especially at a time when the key engine of private consumption expenditure is still in search of sustained tailwinds. The opportunity to use some of the additional bonanza to bridge the fiscal gap can also help strengthen the government's finances and reassure investors of its commitment to the fiscal consolidation road map. The RBI has in its own quiet way paved the path for the next government to start with confidence in the resilience of the economy.

## 39. Mission Purvodaya

Mission Purvodaya was unveiled by Union Steel Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on 12<sup>th</sup> January 2020 in Kolkata.

The Mission Purvodaya is aimed at the accelerated development of eastern India through the establishment of an integrated steel hub.

The focus will be on eastern states of India (Odisha, Jharkhand, Chattisgarh, West Bengal) and the northern part of Andhra Pradesh which collectively holds 80% of the country's iron ore, ~ 100% of coaking coal, and a significant portion of chromite, bauxite and dolomite reserves.

The objective of this hub would be to enable swift capacity addition and improve the overall competitiveness of steel producers both in terms of cost and quality.

The integrated steel hub would focus on capacity addition through easing the setup of Greenfield steel plants.

Transformation of logistics and utility infrastructure would change the socio – economic landscape in the east.

Development of steel clusters near integrated steel plants as well as demand carriers.

### Latest Context on Mission Purvodaya.

50,000 crore Mega Steel Plant in Odisha – Arcelor Mittal – Nippon Steel India and the Odisha government signed a pact for setting up 12 million tonnes integrated steel plant in Kendrapada district of the Odisha state. This mega steel plant in Kendrapada will bring a new wave of economic development and employment generation in Odisha.

The mission is in line with the Prime Minister's vision of driving growth of eastern India and will contribute to achieving National Steel Policy's envisioned capacity of 300 million tonnes per annum (MTPA) by 2030.

### Mission Purvodaya Key Facts

Japan is the partner country that will guide India in making the Indian Steel ecosystem bigger both in qualitative and quantitative terms.

The Ministry of Steel in partnership with the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) Government of Japan and Confederation of Indian Industries (CII) organized a workshop on "Enabling Procedures for Increase of Steel Usage for the Growth of Economy".

Japan and India have also launched the India Japan Steel Dialogue to ensure the sustainable growth of the steel sector. Iron ore exports from India, particularly Odisha, helped Japan in becoming a leading economic power.

Odisha is the highest steel producing state in the country, hence, Odisha is going to be the centre of Mission Purvodaya in steel and Kalingnagar will be the hub of the clusterization program involve entire eastern India.

### Reason for eastern India for Purvodaya Mission?

India is currently the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest producer of crude steel in the world.

About half of **aspirational districts** are in this region which is becoming hotspots of socio economic development.

As per the government's data, the eastern belt has the potential to add over 75% of the country's incremental steel capacity envisioned by the **National Steel Policy**.

It is expected that out of the 300 million tonne capacity by 2030 – 31, over 200 million tonne can come from this region alone.

Odisha is the highest steel producing state in the country. **The ores of Odisha are rich in haematites**. Growth of steel industry would lead to – employment opportunities. socio – economic growth of eastern india.

reduced disparity between the eastern region and other parts of the country.

### Aim of Mission Purvodaya

The government of india aims to generate employment opportunities and also increase the growth of the steel sector through Purvodaya.

The government with Purvodaya Mission initiative aims to transform logistics and utility infrastructure which would change the socio – economic landscape in eastern India.

It will drive India's march towards a five trillion dollar economy set by the government.

It will also help the target of the National Steel Policy, which is producing 300 MT of steel by 2030.

## 40. National Saffron Mission

**Crocus Sativus**, is the plant through which saffron is produced, and this species is commonly grown in regions of Jammu and Kashmir in India. It is one of the most expensive spices and an important export commodity for the country.

**National Saffron Mission** comes under the governance of the Ministry of Science and Technology.

It was a four year mission (2010 – 14) which was introduced to increase the cultivation of saffron in Kashmir. However, due to heavy loss in 2014, the mission of given extension by government of India.

**The Saffron Mission was launched as a part of the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY)**

It was initiated with an aim to improve the socio economic status of the people living in Kashmir. As over 30,000 people in this union territory are engaged in the cultivation of saffron.

In 2020, the revised objective of the mission was to start the cultivation of saffron in the northeast of India.

**North East Centre for Technology Application and Reach (NECTAR)** has been given the charge to manage the pilot project that will be started in the northeast for saffron cultivation.

As per the mission, saffron flowers will be transported from Kashmir to Sikkim, and then their plantation and cultivation be done.

If the pilot project in the northeast is successful, then India will have a larger area for the cultivation of saffron. Making the north east part the second region in India where the cultivation can be done.

### **Objectives of National Saffron Mission**

National Saffron Mission, the Government intended to increase the productivity of saffron in Jammu and Kashmir, because India is the second largest producer of saffron in the world.

### **Several Objectives of National Saffron Mission**

The first objective is to improve the soil quality, since the cultivation is a slightly length process and area of cultivation is limited, having the best quality is the biggest motive.

To increase the quantity of production per year, orthodox methods had to be revived and scientific methods were required.

Potential Irrigation System – Since a lot of water is required, improving the irrigation system of the region was of utmost importance.

Getting familiar with Technology – Since the farmers working on the production are not familiar with the developing farming technologies, NSM representation had to provide them the machinery and teach them their usage and necessity.

Testing the Quality of produced saffron – Under NSM, people were appointed to monitor and test the quality of saffron which was being produced.

Coping up With Weather Changes – Kashmir faces extreme cold weather and the conditions are very unpredictable. Thus, all measures had to be taken considering the climatic conditions of the region.

#### Causes for failure of NSM in 2014

- 1) People of Kashmir followed orthodox methods to cultivate saffron.
- 2) Due to orthodox method, there was less productivity, it took 2 years to harvest and cultivate saffron and then sow new seeds for the growth of saffron flowers, this led to less productivity.
- 3) A lot of water is required for cultivation purposes and the producing region had only three barewells. Thus, even after the construction of over 80 barewells through NSM, the water wasn't enough.
- 4) Floods in the region had ruined a major part of the product and the solid quality had also been disrupted.
- 5) Only specific regions of Kashmir, especially the Pampore region of India, allows the growth of saffron flowers. Thus, the area of cultivation had also reduced.

#### Why the National saffron Mission in North East India

The government of India chose the north east part of the country for the cultivation of saffron. The two main reasons being the same are given below:

As per research done in the Botany and Horticulture department of Sikkim Central University, the soil condition of Yangyang in Sikkim is almost similar to the quality found in growing regions of Kashmir.

The similarity in the climatic conditions of Pampore in Kashmir and Yangyang in Sikkim is another reason for the successful cultivation of saffron seed/corm.

The regions in which saffron is grown together forms the saffron bowl. These regions are – Pampore (main region), Budgam, Srinagar, Kishtwar.

Saffron Park – Once the *Crocus Sativus* flower is grown, it has to undergo many scientific practices which ultimately result in the final product i.e. saffron. These post harvest practices of drying it, separation of stamen, etc. are all conducted in saffron parks.

#### National Saffron Mission (NSM)

Since saffron is one of the most expensive spices in the world, India looks forward to increasing its production through the Saffron Mission as it will economically back the nation.

## 41. New Education Policy 2020

The committee chaired by Dr K Kasturirangan formulated the National Education Policy. The Kasturirangan committee was formed by Ministry of Human Resources Development. The committee was constituted in June 2017. The Committee submitted its report on May 31, 2019.

The National Policy on Education covers elementary and university education in urban as well as rural India.

The very first policy for education was promulgated in 1968 with second one following in 1986.

The first NPE was based on the recommendations of the Education Commission (1964 – 66). This policy sought to have a radical restructuring of India's educational system and equalizing opportunities for education for all, to accomplish national integration and better economic and cultural development.

The NPE also called for realizing compulsory education for every child until age of 14, as mentioned in the Indian Constitution.

It also aimed at providing enhanced training and improving teachers' qualifications. Some important points related to National Education Policy 2020.

National Education Policy 2020 is the 21<sup>st</sup> century's first education policy in India.

The development of the creative potential of each student is emphasized in the National Education Policy 2020.

The National Education Policy 2020 mentioned the ancient scholars like Charaka and Susruta, Aryabhata, Bhaskaracharya, Chanakya, Madhava, Patanjali, Panini and Thriuvalluvar.

The principles of National Education Policy 2020 as mentioned by the government are:

- Flexibility
- No hard separations between subjects, circular and extra curricular activities.
- Multi disciplinary education.
- Conceptual Understanding.
- Critical Thinking.
- Ethical Values.
- Teachers as the heart of the learning process.
- The strong public education system.

### Features of National Education Policy 2020

The National Education Policy as submitted by the Kasturirangan Committee submitted an education policy that seeks to address the following challenges facing the existing education system:

1. Quality

2. Affordability
3. Access
4. Accountability

The policy provides for reform at all levels of education from school to higher education.

National Education Policy aims to increase the focus on strengthening teacher training, reforming the existing exam system, early childhood care and restructuring the regulatory framework of education.

Other intentions of the NEP include:

- Increasing public investment in education
- Setting up NEC (National Education Commission)
- Increasing focus on vocational and adult education
- Strengthening the use of technology

Key Recommendations of National Education Policy 2020

The National Education Policy 2020 has recommendations and reforms with respect to the following items:

### **Early Childhood Care and Education**

The NEP recommended that early childhood care and education be developed in a two part curriculum consisting of:

Guidelines for parents and teachers of students up to 3 years of age

An educational framework for students between the ages of 3 – 8 years

The NEP talks about the implementation of these recommendations by expanding and improving the quality of Anganwadi system and co – locating them with primary schools.

### **Right to Education Act, 2009**

The NEP recommended extending the range of the right to education act, 2009 to include the following education levels:

Early Childhood

Secondary School

This will allow coverage of RTE to all children between the ages of 3 – 18 years. In addition, it suggested the elimination of detention of children until class eight.

### **Curriculum Framework**

Foundational – 3 years of preprimary followed by class 1 and 2

Preparatory – Classes 3 to 5

Middle – Classes 6 to 8

Secondary – Classes 9 – 12

### **School Exam Reforms**

It includes State Census Exams in class 3, 5 and 8

Another important recommendation was the restructuring of the 10<sup>th</sup> board exam that would mainly focus and test only the skills, core concepts and higher order thinking and capacities.

Regulatory Structure and Accreditation of Higher Educational Institutions. Setting up National Higher Education Regulatory Authority.

Separating NAAC from UGC into an autonomous and independent body.

### **National Research Foundation**

Establishment of a National Research Foundation.

It will be an autonomous body that would administer the mentoring, funding and capacity building for quality research in India.

### **Education Governance**

It also suggested changing the name of the Ministry of Human Resources and Development to the Ministry of Education.

### **Financing Education**

NEP 2020 insisted on the expenditure of 6% of the GDP on education.

Doubling the current 10% of total public to 20% in the next decade was recommended.

### **National Mission on Education Through Information and Communication Technology**

Establishment of National Education Technology Forum.

The recommended autonomous body would be administered under this mission.

### **It will also include virtual laboratories in various disciplines providing remote access. Vocational Courses**

Students in classes 9 to 12 must receive vocational educational on at least one vocation.

Schools should build expert curriculum delivery methods that are aligned with **National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF)** competency levels.

Higher education Institutes must also provide vocational courses that are integrated into undergraduate education programme.

### Three Language Formula

The three language formula states that state governments should adopt and implement the study of a modern Indian languages, apart from Hindi and English in the Hindi speaking states, and of Hindi along with the regional language and English in the non – Hindi speaking states.

### National Education Policy 2020 Concerns

Reports fails to incorporate global thinking with emphasis on creativity and critical thinking.

Delivering the changes proposed related to Anganwadis may be difficult despite focus on early childhood care.

The propositions of volunteer teachers, peer tutoring, rationalization of the system of schools and sharing of resources do not seem like long term solutions.

Lack of clarity in government strategies regarding the Public Sector like municipal schools, state run institutions, Kendra Vidyalaya etc.

The creation of a National Testing Agency (NTA) has generated scepticism. The NTA though envisaged to serve as a premier, expert, autonomous testing organisation to conduct entrance examinations for admissions and fellowships in higher educational institutions may, in reality, lead to loss of autonomy among the universities and departments over admissions.

### Merits of New Education Policy 2020

Comprehensive NEP seeks to address the entire gamut of education from preschool to doctoral studies, and from professional degrees to vocational training.

Early Childhood Education In adopting a 5+3+3+4 model for school education starting at age 3, the New Education Policy recognizes the primacy of the formative years from ages 3 to 8 in shaping the child's future.

Easy on Regulations: NEP 2020 makes a bold prescription to free our schools, colleges and universities from periodic "inspections" and place them on the path of self – assessment and voluntary declaration.

Holistic: The policy, inter alia, aims to eliminate problems of pedagogy, structural inequities, access asymmetries and rampant commercialization.

Promote Inclusion: The Policy proposes the creation of "inclusion funds" to help socially and educationally disadvantages children pursue education.

## 42. Mission Sagar

Launched in May 2020, **Mission Sagar** was India's initiative to deliver Covid 19 related assistance to the countries in the Indian Ocean Littoral states. The countries included were Maldives, Mauritius, Madagascar, Comoros, and Seychelles.

Under Mission Sagar, the Indian Navy has been deploying its ships to send medical and humanitarian aid to the countries in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) and beyond.

Under the mission, the Indian Navy has delivered assistance of more than 3,000 metric tons of food aid, over 300 metric tons of liquid medical oxygen, 900 oxygen concentrators and 20 ISO containers to 15 friendly foreign countries.

In November 2020, as part of Mission Sagar II, INS Airavat delivered food aid to Sudan, South Sudan and Djibouti and Eritrea.

Mission Sagar III is part of India's Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) assistance to friendly countries during the ongoing covid 19 pandemic.

### Significance

India's extended Maritime Neighbourhood:

These deployments were conducted in solidarity with India's extended Maritime Neighbourhood and highlights the importance accorded by India to these special relationships.

This is in continuance with India's role as the first responder at a time of an exigency to the friendly nations.

### Useful in Tackling Terrorism

The equipment will be useful as Mozambique is hit by terrorism in its North

Terrorist group Islamic State, also known as Da'esh, and its affiliates have rapidly spread in Central Africa.

### Tackling Common Maritime Challenges

This also helps in tackling common maritime challenges (traditional maritime conflicts between nation states, environmental threats, threats by non – state actors (maritime terrorism and piracy), illicit maritime trades and trafficking) in the region.

This was a major theme of discussion at the second edition of the Goa Maritime Conclave in November 2021 which brings together countries in the Indian Ocean Region.

### Vision "SAGAR"

**Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR)** was launched in 2015. It is India's strategic vision for the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

Through SAGAR, India seeks to deepen economic and security cooperation with its maritime neighbours and assist in building their maritime security capabilities.

Further, India seeks to safeguard its national interests and ensure the Indian Ocean region to become inclusive, collaborative and respect international law.

The key relevance of SAGAR emerges when seen in conjunction with India's other policies impacting the maritime domain like [Act East Policy](#), [Project Sagarmala](#), [Project Mausam](#), India as "net security provider", focus on blue economy etc.

## 43. Unnat Bharat Abhiyan

The vision of Unnat Bharat Abhiyan is to enable **Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs)** to work with the rural people and identify the challenges they face and come up with solutions for their sustainable development.

UBA was initially launched by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) in 2014 and later, Unnat Bharat Abhiyan 2.0 was launched on April 25, 2018.

### About Unnat Bharat Abhiyan (UBA)

Unnat Bharat Abhiyan is inspired by the vision of transformational change in rural development processes by leveraging knowledge.

The scheme intends to link Higher Educational Institutions with at least 5 villages to uplift their social and economic conditions.

The Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) aims to connect institutions like Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs), National Institutes of Technology (NITs), and Indian Institutes of Science Education and Research (IISERs), etc. with local communities to address the development challenges through appropriate technologies.

There are over 13000 villages which have been adopted by 2000+ institutes, till date

The technological interventions under the UBA cover different subjects broadly categorized as follows:

Sustainable Agriculture Water Resource Management

Artisans, Industries and Livelihood

Basic amenities (infrastructure and services) and rural energy systems Unnat Bharat Abhiyan (UBA) – A Brief Background

Over a period of time, ecological balance and the modern approach has led to equity in the society, and to overcome this, the government, came with the Unnat Bharat Abhiyan to uplift the rural parts of the country.

The main aim of UBA was to use eco – friendly technologies that could be easily accessed by the people of rural areas and helps them lead a decent livelihood and provide them with shelter, food and basic necessities.

UBA is a highly challenging scheme as it allows the students and faculty of various higher educational institutes to devise method and technologies for the betterment of rural populations. Especially in the agricultural field, as 71% of India's population is involved in agrarian activities.

### Objectives of Unnat Bharat Abhiyan

UBA was launched with multiple objectives:

To strategise a development agenda within Institutes of Higher Education, and training them to fulfill the

national needs, especially among the rural population.

It also aims at emphasizing on the need for fieldwork and stakeholder interactions to design the basis of higher education with societal benefits.

Coming up with new ideas and output based on research, to develop more professional opportunities.

With the help of higher educational institutions, the rural people can have access to the professional resources required for academic excellence.

To bring in brighter opportunities in the field of science, engineering and technology and the management of rural India.

It also aims to develop a sense of collective destiny between the urban and rural parts of the country.

### **Technological Interventions done under UBA**

The few interventions done under the Unnat Bharat Abhiyan include:

Environment Controlled Automated House for High Value Agro Produce (HVPM). Revamping of Govt. schools in Vrindavan Cluster (IIT Delhi).

Safe Drinking Water (NIT Manipur and IIT Jodhpur). Paper Bag Making (BITS Mesra).

Cloth Bag Making (Fatima College, Madurai).

Agriculture Drone System (Santhiram Engineering College, Nandyal, AP).

Thread winding machine for weavers (Dr BR Ambedkar University, Etcherla, AP).

## 44. Inner Permit Line

**Inner Permit Line or ILP** is an official travel document required for non – residents of a state to visit or stay there. In simple words, the inner permit line allows non – residents or non natives to enter a state. The four states in the north eastern belt have an inner line permit. They are Nagaland, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Lakshadweep. In addition Inner Permit Line is required to enter the islands of Lakshadweep also.

### An overview of the Inner Line Permit

The Inner Line Permit was implemented as part of the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation of 1873. It was enacted to protect the commercial interests of the British Empire by preventing its subjects (at the time, Indians) from trading in these regions

Upon Independence, the British Citizens was replaced with “Indian Citizens”. The ILP was applicable earlier to 3 northeastern states: Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh, and Nagaland.

On December 11, 2020 Manipur became the fourth northeastern state after an order to include the Inner Line Permit was signed by President Ram Nath Kovind.

An Inner Permit was required in some parts of Leh district in Ladakh. It was abolished on 1 May 2014, but foreign nationals were required to get a **protected Area Permit**. Yet, in 2017 it was implemented once more in 2017. Legislators and the general public in Meghalaya, Assam and Andaman and Nicobar Islands also have demands for the implementation of the ILP in their respective states.

### Applicability of the Inner Line Permit

The details of to whom the Inner Line Permit is applicable is given in the below:

Manipur: ILP is valid for domestic tourists. No permit is required for foreign tourists but they have to register themselves with the Superintendent of Police (CID/SB).

Mizoram: ILP needed for domestic tourists, but foreign tourists have to register themselves with the Superintendent of Police (CID/SB).

Nagaland: ILP needed for domestic tourists, but foreign tourists have to register themselves at the nearest police station.

Arunachal Pradesh: Tourists need a Protected Area Permit (PAP) or Restricted Area Permit (RAP) from the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India.

### Importance of Inner Line Permit

The Inner Line Permit is important due to the following reasons:

Indigenous culture and tradition can be better preserved

Illegal migrants and encroachment is checked due to the presence of an ILP

The ILP is an important safeguard to delicate demographic balance of the tribals in the Northeast Region.

Though Inner Permit Line is a necessary step towards preserving the demographics of the Northeastern states, better solutions are needed to strengthen further.

## 45. Zero Shadow Day

**Zero Shadow Day** is a fascinating celestial event that takes place twice a year. During this unique phenomenon, shadows of objects or living beings completely disappear when the sun reaches its peak in the sky.

On May 21<sup>st</sup>, 2021, Bhubaneswar, Odisha, experienced Zero Shadow Day for approximately 3 minutes.

### Understanding Zero Shadow Day

Zero Shadow Days (ZSD) are unique days when the sun rises exactly from the east and sets in the west.

It is a biannual event where the sun is directly overhead, causing the shadows of any object to disappear for a few moments.

A subsolar point is a point where the sun is at its apex in the sky, its rays hit a specific point perpendicular to the surface.

**Zero Shadow Day occurs twice a day at a certain location. It primarily occurs in regions between the Tropic of Cancer and the Tropic of Capricorn.**

When the sun is at the zenith (the highest point in the sky), its rays cause the shadow of any object to fall directly beneath it, making it appear as if there are no shadows.

Indian cities like Chennai, Mumbai, Pune, which fall between the Tropic of Cancer and the Tropic of Capricorn, are likely to observe the Zero Shadow Day. However, India's capital, New Delhi, which doesn't fall between these tropics, will not observe Zero Shadow Day.

### The Concept of Zero Shadow Day

The Earth's rotation axis is inclined at an angle of 23.5 degrees to its orbital plane around the Sun, which results in the occurrence of different seasons.

This means that the Sun, at its zenith, moves from 23.5 degrees south to 23.5 degrees north of the celestial equator (Uttarayan) and back (Dakshinayan), over a year.

Consequently, one Zero Shadow Day occurs during Uttarayan (when the Sun moves northwards), and the other during Dakshinayan (when the Sun moves southwards). For people residing between 23.5 degrees north and 23.5 degrees south latitudes, the Sun declination will coincide with their latitude twice.

Zero Shadow Day is observed twice a year, in May and July or August, in locations that fall between the tropic of cancer and tropic of Capricorn.

This phenomenon lasts for a fraction of a second, but the effect can be observed for a minute to a minute and a half.

## 46. World Development Information Day

**World Development Information Day (WDID)** is celebrated on the 24<sup>th</sup> October every year. The aim of the day is to draw the attention of the world to the development problems and the necessity of strengthening international cooperation for their solutions. The day is significant as UNGA believes that improving the dissemination of information and the mobilization of public opinion would lead to greater awareness of the problems of development, especially among young people.

### World Development Information Day

Observed on – 24 October

Theme of 2021 – Action for Sustainable Development Goal

Other day celebrated on the same date – United Nations Day About World Development Information Day

The United Nations General Assembly decided to observe World Development Information Day coinciding with United Nations Day on October 24, in 1972.

The aim of establishing this day was to draw attention of the public to the development problems and the requirements of strengthening international cooperation to solve them.

The aim of the day is to improve dissemination of information and mobilization of public opinion, particularly among young people. Which will further lead to greater awareness of problems of development, thus, promoting efforts in the sphere of international cooperation for development.

The theme for World Development Information Day 2021 was "Action for Sustainable Development of Goal".

Theme for 2020 was "Information and Communication Technologies" – New Solutions to Development Challenges.

### History of World Development Information Day

The measure proposed by the UN Conference on Trade and Development for information dissemination and mobilization of public opinion relative to trade and development problems, on May 17, 1972 came to be known as resolution 3038 (XXVII).

The resolution by United Nations General Assembly to institute World Development Information Day was passed on October 24.

The day also coincides with the date of the adoption of the International Development Strategy for the Second United Nations Development Decade in 1970.

### Significance of World Development Information Day

The aim of the World Development Information Day is to explain to the general people as to why its important to strengthen international cooperation to find ways to solve these problems.

The day was held on the same day to coincide with the United Nations Day to stress the central role of development in the UN's work.

With the development of digital era the meaning or the interpretation of the day has changed slightly. These have focussed on the role that modern information technologies, such as the internet and mobile telephones free from the digital divide, can play in altering people and finding solutions to problems of trade and development.

According to the UN, Information and Communications technologies have the potential to provide new solutions to the development challenges, in the context of globalization and can foster economic growth, competitiveness, access to information and knowledge, poverty reduction and social inclusion.

### **Celebration of World Development Information Day**

The celebration of the day is done by conduction various events with focus on work done by the UN, particularly with regard to the problems of trade and development.

Many of these events are aimed at journalists working for a range of media, including radio, television, newspapers, magazines and internet sites.

### **Conclusion**

The above article is on World Development Information Day.

## 47. World Coconut Day

Observed on 2 September

Theme of 2021 Building a safe, resilient and sustainable coconut community amid Covid 19 pandemic and beyond.

Conditions required for Coconut to Grow – Needs an equatorial climate with high humidity, Ideal mean annual temperatures is 27 Degree Celcius with 5 – 7 degrees diurnal variation.

Doesn't withstand prolonged spells of extreme variations

A well distributed rainfall of 1300 – 2300 mm per annum is preferred First celebration of World Coconut Day – 2 September 2009

Important Statistics – Indonesia is the world's largest coconut producer, followed by the Philippines.

India is the third largest coconut producer in the world

In India – Kerala is the largest coconut producing state, followed by Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.

### About World Coconut Day

The day is celebrated to create awareness across the globe about the importance of coconut and its myriad benefits.

The day is observed in countries under Asian and Pacific regions as they house most of the world's coconut growing.

The theme for the 23<sup>rd</sup> World Coconut Day 2021 celebrations was "Building a safe, inclusive, resilient and sustainable coconut community amid covid 19 pandemic and beyond.

### Importance of Coconut

Coconuts are referred to as the wonder fruit because of the multiple benefits provided by them. Coconuts contain various health benefits due to the presence of anti – oxidants, antibacterial, anti – fungal, and antiviral elements.

They contain protein, several important minerals, and small amounts of B vitamins They are high in carbs and provide mostly fat.

Water, oil and milk are widely used for cooking and non – cooking purposes

Coconut sap, coir, and copra are parts of the tree used to make coconut butter, coconut cream and doormats.

### Background of World Coconut Day

The first world coconut was celebrated in 2009

Thereafter, it became an annual ritual celebrated by the APCC (Asian and Pacific Coconut Community).

The day is observed to commemorate the foundation day of APCC, which operates under the flagship authority of the [United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific \(UN – ESCAP\)](#).

Asian and Pacific Coconut Community (APCC) – an intergovernmental organisation established in 1969 under the aegis of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN – ESCAP) for the sustained development of the coconut sector.

Headquarter – Jakarta, Indonesia

The National Coconut Board looks after the production and development of value added varieties from coconut like soft drinks, chips and jams.

## 48. World Rhino Day

World Rhino Day is celebrated on 22 September, every year, by the World Wildlife Fund and several other international organisations. The aim of the day is to celebrate five rhinoceros species and to create awareness about the threats faced by these five rhinoceros species living in Asia and Africa.

Some facts on Rhino Day

Observed on 22 September

Theme of 2021 Keep the five alive

Conservation Status five species of Rhino

Rhino IUCN States

White Rhino Near Threatened

Black Rhino Critically Endangered

Greater One – Horned Vulnerable

Javan Critically Endangered

Sumatran Rhino Critically Endangered

### About World Rhino Day

The very first Rhino Day was announced by World Wide Fund South Africa in 2010, but the first Rhino Day was observed in 2011 and since then it is celebrated every year on 22 September.

The day celebrates all the five species of the Rhino: Black, White, Greater One – Horned, Sumatran and Javan Rhinos.

Theme 2021: Keep the five alive

### Significance of World Rhino Day

The species of Rhinoceros are on the verge of extinction due to persistent poaching and habitat loss over several decades. So, the day is significant to raise awareness about the need to preserve and take care of the rhino population in the world.

The objectives and aims of the day include strengthening protection, expanding the distribution range, research and monitoring, adequate and sustained funding.

### About Greater One Horned Rhinoceros

These are also known as the Indian Rhino and are the largest Rhino Species They have a single black horn and a grey brown hide with skin folds.

Largest number of Greater One – Horned Rhinoceros are found in India

At present, there are about 2,600 Indian Rhinos in India, with more than 90% of the population concentrated in Assam's Kaziranga National Park.

These are protected under

- IUCN Red List: Vulnerable
- CITES: Appendix – I
- Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 – Schedule I

They are commonly found in Nepal, Bhutan, Pakistan and India (Assam)

Poaching for the horns, habitat loss, population density and decreasing genetic diversity are some of the threats faced by these Rhinos.

### **Conservation efforts by India**

The National Conservation Strategy for Indian One – Horned Rhino has been launched by the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF). This has also enriched grassland management which helps in reducing the negative impacts through the method of carbon sequestration.

New Delhi Declaration on Asian Rhinos 2019 is signed by India, Bhutan, Nepal, Indoneasia, and Malasiya to conserve and protect the rhinos.

Project to create DNA profiles of all rhinos by the Ministry of Environment Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC).

Indian Rhino Vision 2020 is a one of kind programme where the government has partnered, international, national and local organisations for the conservation of the rhinos. Under it, Manas has received a total of 22 rhinos from other protected areas.

## 49. World Homeopathy Day

Every year, in April 10<sup>th</sup>, World Homeopathy Day is commemorated to honour homeopathy and its contribution to medicine. The anniversary of the birth of German physician Dr Christian Friedrich Samuel Hahnemann, the pioneer of homeopathy, is commemorated on this day. Hahnemann was a renowned scientist, renowned scholar, and linguist who was born in Paris on 10<sup>th</sup> April 1755. By the use of homeopathy, he discovered a means to heal. On July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1843, he passed away.

### History of Homeopathy

Dr. Samuel Hahnemann, a famous scientist and physician, was the one who discovered homeopathic medicine. He used himself as a test subject. He began researching the effects of the cinchona medication. To learn more about the impacts, he undertook a self-application. After the study, he came to the conclusion that the cinchona medication can cause malaria – like signs in a healthy human body, and he recommended Homeopathy as an alternative method of medicine. Likes can heal likes, according to homeopathy's "*similia similibus curantur*".

### What is Homeopathy?

According to the Central Council of Homeopathic Studies, it is a method of treating patients with medicines when a healthy person imitates a natural illness and exhibits similar symptoms. Homeopathy is a style of supplementary medicine founded on the concept of symmetry. Patients are treated holistically in this method, but they are also treated individually, keeping in view their specific characteristics.

### Significance

The Homeopathy Central Council, 1973, makes the homeopathic medical system a recognized medical system in India. It is also acknowledged as one of the country's medical systems. In many locations today, such as India, where homeopathy is widely practiced, people still believe in the healing effects of homeopathic therapy. Many individuals prefer Homeopathy to Allopathic medicine, and it's no secret why. Samuel Hahnemann's PHD dissertation focused on the treatment of spasmodic disorders. He also worked part time as a medical text interpreter.

### Conclusion

The above article is on World Homeopathy Day.

## 50. International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction

The International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction is observed every year on October 13. The day celebrates how people and communities around the world are reducing their exposure to disasters and raising awareness about the importance of reining in the risks that they face.

Observed On – 13 October

Theme of 2020 – Disaster Risk Governance

Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction – Successor to the [Hyogo Framework](#)

Approved at the 3<sup>rd</sup> World Conference on Disaster Reduction 2015, in Sendai Japan

It outlines seven clear targets and four priorities for action to prevent new and reduce existing disaster risks:

- (i) Understanding disaster risk
- (ii) Strengthening disaster risk governance to manage
- (iii) Investing in disaster reduction for resilience
- (iv) Then last is, enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response, and to Build Back Better in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction

### About [International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction, 2020](#)

The day is celebrated on 13 October to educate people around the world on how they can lower the risk faced by natural disasters and hence reducing the monetary loss and the loss of human lives.

The theme of the day in 2020 was “Disaster Risk Governance”. This was in lieu of the high number of deaths caused due to the COVID 19 pandemic.

Good disaster risk governance is measured by the number of lives saved, reduction in the number of disaster affected people and the reduced economic losses.

With situations like COVID 19 and the changing climate conditions there is a dire need for a clear vision and plans for the betterment of the public.

It requires proper national and local strategies for disaster risk reduction

This was agreed by the UN Member States when they adopted the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction in 2015.

### **Good National and Local Strategies for disaster risk reduction**

It is imperative to work on strategies that are inclusive which means they address not just single hazards like floods and storms but also respond to systemic risk generated by zoonotic diseases, climate shocks as well as environmental breakdown.

These strategies include multi – sectoral, linking policies in areas such as land use, building codes, public health, education, agriculture, environmental protection, energy, water resources, poverty reduction and climate change adaptation.

### **Background of International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction**

The UN General Assembly through a resolution in 1989 designated the second Wednesday of October as International Day for Natural Disaster Reduction.

But on December 21, 2009, the Assembly adopted a new resolution in which it decided to commemorate the Day on 13 October. The day was renamed International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction.

## 51. YuWaah Youth Skilling Initiative

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) launched "YuWaah" Generation Unlimited in India November 1, 2019.

### Key Points

Generation Unlimited (GenU), called YuWaah in India, is a global multisector and multi stakeholders alliance created to meet the need of expanded education, skill development and employment opportunities for young people 10 – 24.

It brings together partners from government, multilateral organisations, civil society, the private sector and young people from the around the world.

The target age group of YuWaah includes adolescent girls and boys and its key mission is to promote access to foundational, transferable and 21<sup>st</sup> century skills for youth inside and outside formal education systems.

YuWaah intends to create platforms to guide youth to market opportunities (career guidance, mentorship, internships and apprenticeships) and facilitate the integration of career guidance in school education.

### GenU aims to:

Modernize secondary education and training to build the skills young people need for productive lives and work.

Increase and improve the number of quality work opportunities available to youth. Foster entrepreneurship as a mindset and a livelihood for young people.

Collaborate with youth as problem solvers and engage citizens to help create the world they want.

GenU is also an effective way to operationalize the vision and priorities of the UN Youth Strategy – in particularly, youth engagement, participation and advocacy; supporting young people's greater access to quality education and skills development; and economic empowerment through decent jobs.

Generation Unlimited initiated partnership in 2018 at global level. The main agenda was to raise a global call for the need to support education, skills, and empower young people.

### Generation Unlimited aims to:

Improve the quality of education and focusing on future and development of the youth.

Encouraging the youth opt for entrepreneurship and start new initiatives for the betterment of the country.

Collaborating with the youth of the country to analyse their mindset and gather their ideas for the youth initiatives.

Integrating skills and education, and training the youth for productive livelihood

The initiative will foster the youth of the country to forward with their innovations and ideas to improve, modernize and feel productive for the future of the country.

### **Conclusion**

The above article is on YuWaah – Youth Skilling Initiative.

## 52. Karbi Anglong Agreement

On 4<sup>th</sup> September 2021, the **Karbi Anglong Agreement** was signed between 5 insurgent groups in Assam and the Central and the State Government.

The signing of the agreement is in sync with the central government's vision of insurgency free from North East that envisages an all-round development of the North East, peace and prosperity.

### Background of the Karbi Anglong Agreement

Following the independent of India in 1947, several tribes of the Northeast like the Naga, Mizo Bodo etc began demanding separate states, as well as complete independence, on the basis of their cultural identity.

In Assam, when the state government declared Assamese language as the official language in 1960, it alienated other tribes and languages in the region. This led to agitation both by the common people and as well as insurgent groups. States of Nagaland and Meghalaya were formed in 1963 and 1971 respectively.

Following Meghalaya's formation, the Karbi Anglong district was invited to join the newly created state, but the district refused to do so following promises of greater independence from the state of Assam.

The promise for greater autonomy was more partly or wholly diluted by the Assam State Government. This led to a new round of agitations in the next few decades.

With the signing of the Karbi Anglong Agreement, which has promised a greater degree of autonomy to the district, it is hoped that peace and prosperity will further prevail in the region in the years to come.

### Highlights of the Karbi Anglong Agreement

The agreement was signed in the presence of:

1. Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma
2. Shipping and Waterways and Minister of AYUSH, Sarbananda Sonowal
3. Minister of State for Home Affairs, Nityanand Rai
4. Chief Executive Member of KAAC (Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council)
5. Representatives of Karbi Longri North Cachar Hills Liberation Front
6. People's Democratic Council of Karbi Longri
7. United People's Liberation Army
8. Karbi People's Liberation Tigers
9. Senior Officers from the Union Ministry of Home Affairs and Government of Assam

Further highlights of the Karbi Anglong Agreement are as follows:

Five insurgent outfits, KLNLF, PDCK, UPLA, KPLT and KLF, opted to lay down their arms and will join mainstream society as a result.

A special development package of Rs. 1000 crore will be allocated by the Central Government and the Assam Government in order to develop the Karbi areas through the setting up of special projects.

The Karbi **Anglong Autonomous Council** will have more autonomy than before. This autonomy will not affect the administrative integrity of Assam. The KAAC is an autonomous district council protected under the **Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India**.

The State Government of Assam will set up a Karbi Welfare Council to oversee the social development of the Karbi people living outside the KAAC jurisdiction.

The agreement will further guarantee the protection of the culture, identity, and language etc. of the Karbi people as well as the development of the region.

Under the agreement, 32 projects estimated at Rs 350 crore under the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council package announced under the previous agreement are in various stages of its completion.

## Key Terminologies:

### 1. **Labour institutions.**

Labour market institutions refer to laws, conventions, organisations which regulate the workplace, unions, collective bargaining, minimum wages, the type of employment arrangement, and working time regulations etc.

### 2. **Industrial relations system and labour market (IRS – LM).**

Some of the industrial relations law in India includes the Minimum Wages Act of 1948, the Factories Act of 1948, the Maternity Benefits Act of 1961, and the Payment of Bonus Act of 1965. These laws contain a number of provisions to protect the rights of employees in both organized and unorganized sectors.

### 3. **Trade Unions.**

A trade union is an organisation made up of members (a membership-based organisation) and its membership must be made up mainly of workers. One of a trade union's main aims is to protect and advance the interests of its members in the workplace. Most trade unions are independent of any employer. However, trade unions try to develop close working relationships with employers.

### 4. **Collective Bargaining.**

Collective bargaining is the process in which working people, through their unions, negotiate contracts with their employers to determine their terms of employment, including pay, benefits, hours, leave, job health and safety policies, ways to balance work and family, and more.

### 5. **Social Dialogue.**

Social dialogue can be defined as negotiations, consultations, joint actions, discussions and information- sharing involving employers and workers.

### 6. **Indian Labour Conference.**

The Indian Labour Conference (ILC) is the apex level tripartite consultative committee in the Ministry of Labour & Employment to advise the Government on the issues concerning working class of the country. As a matter of practice, and to maintain continuous dialogue with social partners, meetings of this apex body are convened once in a year to discuss the topical issues concerning labour. The first meeting of the Indian Labour Conference (then called Tripartite National Labour Conference) was held in 1942

### 7. **Labor Inspection System.**

Labour inspection is a public function and is at the core of effective labour law with wide powers and functions, including enforcement and sanctions that should be sufficiently dissuasive to deter

violations of labour legislation while also providing corrective, developmental and technical advice, guidance, prevention,

**8. Inspector Raj.**

Inspector Raj means over regulation/supervision by government in non-essential areas. As a result, it drops the productivity and make it difficult to do any business. By scraping it and replacing it with self- regulation, at least in non-essential areas, government is trying to improve its 'ease of doing business ranking' which is very essential for 'make in India' mission.

**9. Study by Besley and Burgess (B & B) on the impact of Labour Regulation.**

Timothy Besley and Robin Burgess, entitled "Can labor regulation hinder economic performance? Evidence from India", published in 2004 in the highly rated Quarterly Journal of Economics. By using national and state level evidence on organised industrial sector performance and examining its relationship with the level 2 of labour regulation, while ostensibly controlling for other influences, B&B claimed to have established "that much of reasoning behind labor regulation was wrongheaded and led to outcomes that were antithetical to their original objectives" and that "attempts to redress the balance of power between capital and labor can end up hurting the poor." Trying to attract attention to their results, the two economists went on to declare that "the "battle cry of labor market regulation is often that pro-worker labor market policies redress the unfavourable balance of power between capital and labor, leading to a progressive effect on income distribution. We find no evidence of this here—indeed the distributional effects appear to have worked against the poor." There have been many scholarly critiques of such arguments for dismantling worker protection. But in a recently released paper, Servaas Storm, an economist at the Delft University of Technology in the Netherlands, has provided a damaging critique<sup>1</sup> of this contribution from Besley and Burgess defending what Storm (following Albert Hirschman) calls the "perversity trope" that argues that labour laws meant to protect workers actually hurts them. Some conclusions in the Besley and Burgess (B&B) paper are startling, explaining in part its influence. Thus, according to their "estimates", Andhra Pradesh generated 199,000 more jobs by 1990 than would otherwise have been the case, because of pro-employer labour legislation. On the other hand, West Bengal is seen to have missed out on creating 180,000 more jobs by 1990 because of its adoption of pro-worker measures. Not surprisingly, the paper has even been referred to in official Indian assessments making a case for labour market "reform". The official Economic Survey 2006 referred to the paper to defend labour market deregulation on the grounds that it shows "that States, which have enacted more pro-worker regulations, have lost out on industrial production in general."

**10. The Industrial Relations Code 2020.**

The Industrial Relations Code, 2020 provides a broader framework to protect the rights of workers to make unions, reduce the friction between employers, and workers and provide regulations for the settlement of industrial disputes. It subsumes three fundamental labour laws— Trade Unions Act, 1926;

Industrial Employment (Standing Orders Act), 1946; and Industrial Disputes Act (IDA), 1947 (Nath, 2020). The four new labour codes – Code on Social Security 2020, Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code 2020, Industrial Relations Code 2020, and Code on Wages 2019, will subsume the existing 29 central labour and industrial laws and aim to avoid multiplicity of laws.

#### 11. **The labour statistics Convention (No. 160), 1985.**

Current statistics of average earnings and hours of work (hours actually worked or hours paid for) shall be compiled covering all important categories of employees and all-important branches of economic activity, and in such a way as to be representative of the country as a whole.

The ILO Conventions cover a wide area of social and labour issues including basic human rights, minimum wages, industrial relations, employment policy, social dialogue, social security and other issues.

The eight-core conventions of the ILO are:

- Forced Labour Convention (No. 29)
- Abolition of Forced Labour Convention (No.105)
- Equal Remuneration Convention (No.100)
- Discrimination (Employment Occupation) Convention (No.111)
- Minimum Age Convention (No.138)
- Worst forms of Child Labour Convention (No.182)

#### 12. **Labour Inspection Convention (081), 1947.**

The system of labour inspection in industrial workplaces shall apply to all workplaces in respect of which legal provisions relating to conditions of work and the protection of workers while engaged in their work are enforceable by labour inspectors.

#### 13. **May Day.**

International Workers' Day, also known as Labour Day in some countries and often referred to as May Day, is a celebration of labourers and the working classes that is promoted by the international labour movement and occurs every year on 1 May, or the first Monday in May.

#### 14. **US Secretary of State Antony Blinken.**

The United States Secretary of State is a member of the executive branch of the federal government and the head of the Department of State and senior official of the Cabinet, who is the president's chief foreign-policy advisor. the Secretary of State represents the United States to foreign countries, and is therefore considered analogous to a minister of foreign affairs in other countries.

**15. President Xi Jinping.**

Xi Jinping is a Chinese politician who has been the general secretary of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC), and thus the paramount leader of China, since 2012. Xi has also been the president of the People's Republic of China (PRC) since 2013.

**16. Structural fault lines.**

Faultline's in groups are potential areas of internal conflict that affect overall performance. The first Faultline according to some scholar is deepening religious division. A second major faultline of the Republic is that of persisting social inequality. A third faultline is that posed by growing environmental degradation. A fourth major faultline is the degradation of our public institutions.

**17. Revisionist Power.**

Revisionist state is a term from power transition theory within the wider field of international relations. It describes states whose objective is to change or put an end to the current system. The term assumes a direct correlation between a state's hegemony, both political and economic, and its standing as either a status quo state or a revisionist state. Powerful and influential nations in international relations such as the United Kingdom, France and other nations like Japan that are better placed in the world order, are likely to fall under the category of status quo states while Russia, North Korea, Iran and other nations dissatisfied with their place in the international system are termed revisionist states.

**18. Export Controls.**

Export control is legislation that regulates the export of goods, software and technology. Some items could potentially be useful for purposes that are contrary to the interest of the exporting country. These items are considered to be controlled. The export of controlled item is regulated to restrict the harmful use of those items. Many governments implement export controls. Typically, legislation lists and classifies the controlled items, classifies the destinations, and requires exporters to apply for a licence to a local government department. A wide range of goods have been subject to export control in different jurisdictions, including arms, goods with a military potential, cryptography, currency, and precious stones or metals. Some countries prohibit the export of uranium, endangered animals, cultural artefacts, and goods in short supply in the country, such as medicines.

**19. Fentanyl.**

Fentanyl is a highly potent synthetic piperidine opioid primarily used as an analgesic. It is 20 to 40 times more potent than heroin and 100 times more potent than morphine;<sup>[8]</sup> its primary clinical utility is in pain management for cancer patients and those recovering from painful surgeries. Fentanyl is also used as a sedative. Fentanyl was first synthesized by Paul Janssen in 1959 and was approved for medical use in the United States in 1968. Fentanyl continues to fuel an epidemic of synthetic opioid drug overdose deaths in many countries especially the United States. Fentanyl is often mixed, cut,

or ingested alongside other drugs, including cocaine and heroin Fentanyl's ease of manufacture and high potency makes it easier to produce and smuggle, resulting in fentanyl replacing other abused narcotics and becoming more widely used.

## 20. **Global Food Security.**

Global food security is an assurance that any country has access to food through the efficient flow of food resources, especially during events such as natural disasters or emergencies that can cause a food shortage. India is ranked at 71st position in the Global Food Security (GFS) Index 2021 of 113 countries.

Threats to food stability include natural disasters, climate change, conflict, and economic factors such as volatile price fluctuations.

## 21. **Guardrails.**

Guardrail metrics keeps an organization on the right track and are used as a tool to ensure that what you're doing is aligned to the Organisations goals and objectives. They define boundaries and help guide the decision-making process.

## 22. **India Meteorological Department.**

The India Meteorological Department formed in 15 January 1875 is an agency of the Ministry of Earth Sciences of the Government of India. It is the principal agency responsible for meteorological observations, weather forecasting and seismology.

## 23. **Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology.**

The Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology is a scientific institution based in Pune, Maharashtra, India for expanding research in the tropical Indian Ocean with special reference to monsoon meteorology, and air-sea interaction of South Asian climate.

## 24. **Marine heat waves.**

A marine heatwave is a period of unusually high ocean temperatures and is defined by its duration and intensity. One of the most common ways that scientists measure the ocean's temperature is through sea surface temperature. Deviations from average sea surface temperature are referred to as temperature anomalies. Marine heatwaves can have significant impacts on marine ecosystems and the species that depend on them. Marine heatwaves can disrupt the food chain by altering the distribution and abundance of marine species, affecting plants, plankton, fish populations, marine mammals, seabirds, and other organisms 30 Jun 2023.

## 25. **Cyclones.**

Cyclones are caused by atmospheric disturbances around a low-pressure area distinguished by swift and often destructive air circulation. Cyclones are usually accompanied by violent storms and bad

weather. The air circulates inward in an anticlockwise direction in the Northern hemisphere and clockwise in the Southern hemisphere. Cyclones are classified as: (i) extra tropical cyclones (also called temperate cyclones); and (ii) tropical cyclones. The word Cyclone is derived from the Greek word Cyclos meaning the coils of a snake. It was coined by Henry Peddington because the tropical storms in the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea appear like coiled serpents of the sea. Cyclones are classified as extra tropical cyclones (also called temperate cyclones); and tropical cyclones. The World Meteorological Organisation (WMO, 1976) uses the term 'Tropical Cyclone' to cover weather systems in which winds exceed 'Gale Force' (minimum of 34 knots or 63 kph). Tropical cyclones are the progeny of ocean and atmosphere, powered by the heat from the sea; and driven by easterly trades and temperate westerlies, high planetary winds and their own fierce energy.

In India, cyclones are classified by:

- Strength of associated winds,
- Storm surges
- Exceptional rainfall occurrences.

Extra tropical cyclones occur in temperate zones and high latitude regions, though they are known to originate in the Polar Regions.

Cyclones that develop in the regions between the Tropics of Capricorn and Cancer are called tropical cyclones. Tropical cyclones are large-scale weather systems developing over tropical or subtropical waters, where they get organized into surface wind circulation.

Cyclones are given many names in different regions of the world – They are known as typhoons in the China Sea and Pacific Ocean; hurricanes in the West Indian islands in the Caribbean Sea and Atlantic Ocean; tornados in the Guinea lands of West Africa and southern USA.; willy-willies in north-western Australia and tropical cyclones in the Indian Ocean.

## 26. Coral bleaching.

Coral bleaching happens when corals lose their vibrant colors and turn white. But there's a lot more to it than that. Coral are bright and colorful because of microscopic algae called zooxanthellae. The zooxanthellae live within the coral in a mutually beneficial relationship, each helping the other survive. But when the ocean environment changes—if it gets too hot, for instance—the coral stresses out and expels the algae. As the algae leaves, the coral fades until it looks like it's been bleached. If the temperature stays high, the coral won't let the algae back, and the coral will die. The leading cause of coral bleaching is climate change. A warming planet means a warming ocean, and a change in water temperature—as little as 2 degrees Fahrenheit—can cause coral to drive out algae. Coral may bleach for other reasons, like extremely low tides, pollution, or too much sunlight. Coral bleaching matters because once these corals die, reefs rarely come back. With few corals surviving, they struggle to reproduce, and entire reef ecosystems, on which people and wildlife depend, deteriorate. Coral reefs support some of the most biodiverse ecosystems on the planet. Thousands of marine animals depend

on coral reefs for survival, including some species of sea turtles, fish, crabs, shrimp, jellyfish, sea birds, starfish, and more. Coral reefs provide shelter, spawning grounds, and protection from predators. They also support organisms at the base of ocean food chains. As reef ecosystems collapse, already at-risk species may face extinction. Coral bleaching impacts peoples' livelihoods, food security, and safety. Coral reefs are natural barriers that absorb the force of waves and storm surges, keeping coastal communities safe. Without them, we must rely on manmade seawalls that are expensive, less effective, and environmentally damaging to construct. Bleached coral also compounds the overfishing crisis by removing links in the food web and depriving some fish and crustacean species of a place to spawn and develop. Anyone relying on these animals as a primary source of income or protein will be in trouble. Finally, reef tourism brings in billions of dollars each year and supports thousands of jobs. Bleached coral reefs, devoid of magnificent marine species, jeopardize it all

### 27. **Thermal capacity.**

Heat capacity, also known as thermal capacity, is a physical property of matter defined as the amount of heat needed to cause a unit change in temperature in a given mass of material.

### 28. **Joules.**

The joule is the unit of energy in the International System of Units (SI). It is equal to the amount of work done when a force of one newton displaces a mass through a distance of one metre in the direction of that force. It is also the energy dissipated as heat when an electric current of one ampere passes through a resistance of one ohm for one second. It is named after the English physicist James Prescott Joule (1818–1889).

### 29. **Drought.**

Drought is a prolonged dry period in the natural climate cycle that can occur anywhere in the world. It is a slow-onset disaster characterized by the lack of precipitation, resulting in a water shortage. Drought can have a serious impact on health, agriculture, economies, energy and the environment.

### 30. **Global Warming.**

Global warming is the long-term warming of the planet's overall temperature. Though this warming trend has been going on for a long time, its pace has significantly increased in the last hundred years due to the burning of fossil fuels. As the human population has increased, so has the volume of fossil fuels burned. Fossil fuels include coal, oil, and natural gas, and burning them causes what is known as the "greenhouse effect" in Earth's atmosphere.

The greenhouse effect is when the sun's rays penetrate the atmosphere, but when that heat is reflected off the surface cannot escape back into space. Gases produced by the burning of fossil fuels prevent the heat from leaving the atmosphere. These greenhouse gasses are carbon dioxide, chlorofluorocarbons, water vapor, methane, and nitrous oxide. The excess heat in the atmosphere has caused the average global temperature to rise overtime, otherwise known as global warming.

Global warming has presented another issue called climate change. Sometimes these phrases are used interchangeably, however, they are different. Climate change refers to changes in weather patterns and growing seasons around the world. It also refers to sea level rise caused by the expansion of warmer seas and melting ice sheets and glaciers. Global warming causes climate change, which poses a serious threat to life on Earth in the forms of widespread flooding and extreme weather. Scientists continue to study global warming and its impact on Earth.

### 31. **Anthropogenic.**

Scientists use the word “anthropogenic” in referring to environmental change caused or influenced by people, either directly or indirectly.

### 32. **Tipping point.**

In brief, a Tipping Point is a threshold, critical mass, boiling point moment that leads to sudden, dramatic, radical change (e.g., a geometric progression). Here we define a tipping point as occurring when change in part of a system becomes self-perpetuating beyond a threshold, leading to substantial, widespread, frequently abrupt and often irreversible impact.

### 33. **Greenhouse Gas Emissions.**

Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from human activities intensify the greenhouse effect. This contributes to climate change. Carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), from burning fossil fuels such as coal, oil, and natural gas, is one of the most important factors in causing climate change. The largest emitters are China followed by the United States. The United States has higher emissions per capita. The main producers fuelling the emissions globally are large oil and gas companies. Emissions from human activities have increased atmospheric carbon dioxide by about 50% over pre-industrial levels. The growing levels of emissions have varied, but have been consistent among all greenhouse gases. Carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) is the main greenhouse gas resulting from human activities. It accounts for more than half of warming. Methane (CH<sub>4</sub>) emissions have almost the same short-term impact. Nitrous oxide (N<sub>2</sub>O) and fluorinated gases (F-gases) play a lesser role in comparison. Emissions of carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide in 2023 were all higher than ever before.

Electricity generation, heat and transport are major emitters; overall energy is responsible for around 73% of emissions. Deforestation and other changes in land use also emit carbon dioxide and methane. The largest source of anthropogenic methane emissions is agriculture, closely followed by gas venting and fugitive emissions from the fossil-fuel industry. The largest agricultural methane source is livestock. Agricultural soils emit nitrous oxide partly due to fertilizers. Similarly, fluorinated gases from refrigerants play an outsized role in total human emissions. The current CO<sub>2</sub>-equivalent emission rates averaging 6.6 tonnes per person per year, are well over twice the estimated rate 2.3 tons required to stay within the 2030 Paris Agreement increase of 1.5 °C (2.7 °F) over pre-industrial levels. Annual per capita emissions in the industrialized countries are typically as much as ten times the average in developing countries. The carbon footprint (or greenhouse gas footprint) serves as an

indicator to compare the amount of greenhouse gases emitted over the entire life cycle from the production of a good or service along the supply chain to its final consumption. Carbon accounting (or greenhouse gas accounting) is a framework of methods to measure and track how much greenhouse gas an organization emits. The greenhouse effect occurs when greenhouse gases in a planet's atmosphere insulate the planet from losing heat to space, raising its surface temperature. Surface heating can happen from an internal heat source as in the case of Jupiter, or from its host star as in the case of the Earth. In the case of Earth, the Sun emits shortwave radiation (sunlight) that passes through greenhouse gases to heat the Earth's surface. In response, the Earth's surface emits longwave radiation that is mostly absorbed by greenhouse gases. The absorption of longwave radiation prevents it from reaching space, reducing the rate at which the Earth can cool off.

**34. National Sample Survey Office (NSSO).**

The National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) headed by a Director General is responsible for conduct of large-scale sample surveys in diverse fields on All India basis. Primarily data are collected through nation-wide household surveys on various socio-economic subjects, Annual Survey of Industries (ASI), etc. Besides these surveys, NSSO collects data on rural and urban prices and plays a significant role in the improvement of crop statistics through supervision of the area enumeration and crop estimation surveys of the State agencies. It also maintains a frame of urban area units for use in sample surveys in urban areas.

**35. All India Debt and Investment Survey (AIDS).**

The National Statistical Office (NSO) conducts All India Debt & Investment (AIDIS) survey in the rural and urban areas of the country at periodic intervals. The National Statistical Office (NSO), Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation has conducted the latest survey on All India Debt & Investment Survey during the period January – December, 2019 as a part of 77th round of National Sample Survey (NSS). Prior to this the survey was carried out in NSS 26th round (1971-72), 37th round (1981-82), 48th round (1992), 59th round (2003) and 70th round (2013).

The main objective of the survey on Debt & Investment was to collect basic quantitative information on the assets and liabilities of the households as on 30.6.2018. Besides, the survey gathered information on the amount of capital expenditure incurred by the households during the Agricultural Year 2018-19 (July-June), under different heads, like residential buildings, farm business and non-farm business.

**36. Asset Poverty.**

Asset poverty is defined as having insufficient net worth – this includes savings and durable assets, such as a home or business – to cover three months of living expenses without income.

**37. Caveat.**

The term caveat refers to a notice, warning, or word of caution provided to an individual or entity before they take action. The term, which means "let him beware" in Latin, has a range of usages that are common in finance and law.

**38. Purchasing Managers Indices (PMI).**

Purchasing Managers Index: It is a survey-based measure that asks the respondents about changes in their perception about key business variables as compared with the previous month. The purpose of the PMI is to provide information about current and future business conditions to company decision makers, analysts, and investors. It is calculated separately for the manufacturing and services sectors and then a composite index is also constructed. The Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) is an indicator of the prevailing direction of economic trends in the manufacturing and service sectors. The PMI is an essential tool for benchmarking and forecasting sales, inventory and price trends, monitoring supply and demand, and tracking supplier performance

**39. Tailwinds.**

A tailwind is a wind that is blowing from behind an aeroplane, boat, or other vehicle, making it move faster. In business, tailwinds are decisions, reasons, and potential events that are considered useful to your business model and overall performance.

**40. GST Council.**

The GST Council is a constitutional body responsible for making recommendations on issues related to the implementation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) in India.

**41. Climate Finance.**

Climate finance is an umbrella term for loans, investments, and other forms of financial capital allocation in the area of climate change mitigation, adaptation and/or resiliency. There are two main sub- categories of climate finance: private and public, and the two can intersect. Private climate finance refers to capital emanating from institutional and retail investors with the aim of addressing climate change. This includes venture capital for climate, asset management for climate (such as fixed income and listed equity products), and bank lending for climate (including loans from credit unions). Public climate finance refers to capital emanating from taxpayer money managed by international, national, and sub- national governments with the aim of addressing climate change.

**42. COP.**

Conference of the Parties (COP; French: Conférence des Parties, CP) is the supreme governing body of an international convention (treaty, written agreement between actors in international law). It is composed of representatives of the member states of the convention and accredited observers. Scope of the COP is to review the "implementation of the Convention and any other legal instruments that the COP adopts and take decisions necessary to promote the effective implementation of the Convention".

#### 43. **New Collective Qualified Goal (NCQG).**

The New Collective Quantified Goal on Climate Finance (NCQG) is a new global climate finance goal that the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement (CMA) shall set from a floor of USD 100 billion per year, prior to 2025. This new goal will be set in the context of meaningful mitigation actions and transparency on implementation, taking into account the needs and priorities of developing countries. Deliberations on setting the new goal aim to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change in the context of sustainable development and efforts to eradicate poverty, including by making finance flows consistent with a pathway towards low greenhouse gas emissions and climate-resilient development.

#### 44. **Net Zero Goal.**

'Net zero' means that any emissions are balanced by absorbing an equivalent amount from the atmosphere. In order to meet the 1.5°C global warming target in the Paris Agreement, global carbon emissions should reach net zero around mid-century. India, at the 26th session of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 26) in November, 2021, announced its target to achieve net zero by 2070.

#### 45. **Commercial Mitigation.**

Common commercial risks are cost overruns, time delays, failed procurement or unavailability of financing. Contractual arrangements, insurance and guarantees.

#### 46. **Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs).**

Multilateral development banks, or MDBs, are supranational institutions set up by sovereign states, which are their shareholders. Their remits reflect the development aid and cooperation policies established by these states.

Examples of MDBs

- World Bank (WB)
- International Monetary Fund (IMF)
- International Finance Corporation (IFC)
- Inter-American Development Bank (IaDB)
- Asian Development Bank (ADB)
- European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD)
- Islamic Development Bank (IsDB)

#### 47. **Credit Ratings.**

A credit rating is an assessment of the ability of a corporation or government to repay the interest due to investors on a loan or other debt instrument.

**48. Domestic Resource Mobilization.**

Domestic Resource Mobilization (DRM) – the process through which countries raise and spend their own funds to provide for their people – is the long-term path to sustainable development finance.

**49. Financial Transaction Tax (FTT).**

A financial transaction tax (FTT) is levied on each unique instance of the buying and selling of financial assets such as stocks, bonds, or derivatives.

**50. Mental Health.**

Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make healthy choices

**51. Epidemic.**

An epidemic is a sudden disease outbreak that affects a large number of people in a particular region, community, or population. In an epidemic, the number of people affected by the disease is larger than what is normally expected.

**52. Emotional Intelligence.**

Emotional intelligence (also known as emotional quotient or EQ) is the ability to understand, use, and manage your own emotions in positive ways to relieve stress, communicate effectively, empathize with others, overcome challenges and defuse conflict.

**53. Thucydides.**

Thucydides (born 460 BC or earlier –died after 404 BC?) was the greatest of ancient Greek historians and author of the History of the Peloponnesian War, which recounts the struggle between Athens and Sparta in the 5th century BC. His work was the first recorded political and moral analysis of a nation's war policies.

**54. Goldwater–Nichols Act ;1986(USA).**

Under the Goldwater–Nichols Act, military advice was centralized in the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff as opposed to the service chiefs. The chairman was designated as the principal military adviser to the president of the United States, National Security Council and Secretary of Defense.

**55. National Defense University.**

Indian Defence University is a defence service university set up for the affiliation of training academies of union government defence servants working under the Government of India. These union government defence servants can collectively be termed as generalist branch and specialist branch of the Indian Military. It is not to be confused with the Rashtriya Raksha University (RRU) which

is focused on the police and para-military Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF), whereas IDU is focused on the military. It is located at Binola village in Gurugram district of Haryana state in India that is being built. It is proposed to be one of the Institutes of National Importance (INIs).

**56. Rashtriya Raksha University (RRU).**

Rashtriya Raksha University (RRU), formerly known as Raksha Shakti University, is a Central University located in Gandhinagar, Gujarat, India. Established in 2009 by the Government of India, the university aims to provide advanced knowledge in the field of police science and internal security.

**57. Free Market.**

The free market is an economic system based on supply and demand with little or no government control. One of the central principles of a free market is the concept of voluntary exchange, which is defined as any transaction in which two parties freely trade goods or services.

**58. Mullaperiyar Dam.**

Mullaperiyar Dam is a masonry gravity dam on the Periyar River of Idukki district of Indian state of Kerala. It is situated 150km south east of Kochi. It is located 881 m (2,890 ft) above the sea level, on the Cardamom Hills of the Western Ghats in Thekkady, Idukki District of Kerala, India. It was constructed between 1887 and 1895 by John Pennycuick and also reached in an agreement to divert water eastwards to the Madras Presidency area (present-day Tamil Nadu). It has a height of 53.6 m (176 ft) from the foundation, and a length of 365.7 m (1,200 ft). The Periyar National Park in Thekkady is located around the dam's reservoir. The dam is built at the confluence of Mullayar and Periyar rivers. The dam is located in Kerala on the river Periyar, but is operated and maintained by the neighbouring state of Tamil Nadu

The Periyar river which flows westward of Kerala in to the Arabian Sea was diverted eastwards to flow towards the Bay of Bengal to provide water to the arid rain shadow region of Madurai in Madras Presidency which was in dire need of a greater supply of water than the small Vaigai River could provide.

The control and safety of the dam and the validity and fairness of the lease agreement have been points of dispute between Kerala and Tamil Nadu states. Supreme court judgment came on 27 February 2006, allowing Tamil Nadu to raise the level of the dam to 152 ft (46 m) after strengthening it. Responding to it, Mullaperiyar dam was declared an 'endangered' scheduled dam by the Kerala Government under the disputed Kerala Irrigation and Water Conservation (Amendment) Act, 2006.

Tamil Nadu has insisted on raising the water level in the dam to 142 feet, pointing out crop failures. However, the court has clarified Tamil Nadu is not a riparian state. "In the process the farmers of the erstwhile rain shadow areas in Tamil Nadu who had started a thrice yearly cropping pattern had to go back to the bi-annual cropping."

The Kerala Government maintains that this is not true. During the year 1979–80 the gross area cultivated in Periyar command area was 171,307 acres (693.25 km<sup>2</sup>). After the lowering of the level to 136 ft (41 m), the gross irrigated area increased and in 1994–95 it reached 229,718 acres (929.64 km<sup>2</sup>).

In 2006, the Supreme Court of India by its decision by a three-member division bench, allowed for the storage level to be raised to 142 feet (43 m) pending completion of the proposed strengthening measures, provision of other additional vents and implementation of other suggestions.

However, the Kerala Government promulgated a new “Dam Safety Act” against increasing the storage level of the dam, which has been challenged by Tamil Nadu on various grounds. The Supreme Court issued notice to Kerala to respond, however did not stay the operation of the Act even as an interim measure. The Court then advised the States to settle the matter amicably, and adjourned hearing in order to enable them to do so. The Supreme Court of India termed the act as not unconstitutional. Meanwhile, the Supreme Court constituted a constitution bench to hear the case considering its wide ramifications.

The Kerala Government states that it does not object to giving water to Tamil Nadu as a shared commodity, their main cause of objection being the dam’s safety as it is 126 years old. Increasing the level would add more pressure to be handled by the already leaking dam. They also raised the problematic definition of inter-State River when in its entirety the river goes into the sea within Kerala without passing through any other states. They also raised the complexity of the judgment and disputes that it can raise in other states that have small catchments of other-State rivers and right to claim part of waters.

In May 2014 the Supreme Court of India declared the Kerala Irrigation and Water Conservation (Amendment) Act of 2006 as unconstitutional and struck down the law passed by the Kerala Assembly on the Mullaperiyar Dam that said that the water level cannot be increased beyond 136 feet. The court has ruled that Tamil Nadu can increase the water level to 142 feet and constituted a permanent Supervisory Committee in order to take care of the affairs relating to maintenance of the Mullaperiyar Dam.

**59. National Disaster Management Authority.**

National Disaster Management Authority (India), abbreviated as NDMA, is an apex Body of Government of India, with a mandate to lay down policies for disaster management. NDMA was established through the Disaster Management Act enacted by the Government of India on 23 December 2005.

**60. Dam Safety Act 2021.**

Dam Safety Act 2021 provides for four tiers of institutional mechanism: establishment of National Committee on Dam Safety (NCDS) and National Dam Safety Authority (NDSA) at Centre level and establishment of State Committee on Dam Safety and the State Dam Safety Organization at State level.

**61. Game of Chance.**

A game of chance is in contrast with a game of skill. It is a game whose outcome is strongly influenced by some randomizing device. Games like craps, roulette, and lotteries are easy to categorize as games of pure chance, because the player is betting against random numbers.

**62. Game of Skill.**

A game of skill or game of wits is a game where the outcome is determined mainly by mental or physical skill, rather than chance. A game of skill is when a player invests his/her time in learning, practicing and refining his skill to perform in a particular game. The Supreme Court noted that games of skill would be where: Success depends principally upon the superior knowledge, training, attention, experience and adroitness of the player. Ex: rummy

**63. Digital India Vision.**

Digital India is a flagship programme of the Government of India with a vision to transform India into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy. The programme was launched on July 1, 2015.

**64. Online Gaming Industry.**

Online game is a video game that is either partially or primarily played through the Internet or any other computer network available. Online games are ubiquitous on modern gaming platforms, including PCs, consoles and mobile devices, and span many genres, including first-person shooters, strategy games, and massively multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPG). Since the 2010s, a common trend among online games has been to operate them as games as a service, using monetization schemes such as loot boxes and battle passes as purchasable items atop freely-offered games. Unlike purchased retail games, online games have the problem of not being permanently playable, as they require special servers in order to function.

**65. CAGR.**

The compound annual growth rate (CAGR) is the annualized average rate of revenue growth between two given years, assuming growth takes place at an exponentially compounded rate.

**66. India Techade.**

India is known as an IT hub and now it aims to take lead in Artificial intelligence, Semicon design and production, quantum computing etc. India's Techade signifies India's dedication to embracing the digital age to ensure sustainable development, create new job opportunities, enhance quality of life, and establish a strong presence in the global technology landscape. India Semiconductor Mission has been setup by the Government of India to create an end-to-end semiconductor ecosystem to enable the nation to become a significant player in the global semiconductor industry. Aligning with India's Semi-Conductor Mission and with an aim to strengthen the semiconductor facilities in India, Hon'ble

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi will lay down the foundation stone of the three Semiconductor facilities on 13th March 2024. The three semiconductor facilities are:

- i. India's First Fab Facility in Dholera, Gujarat

Fab, short for fabrication facility, refers to a specialized factory where semiconductors are produced. It is where the complex process of producing integrated circuits takes place.

- ii. OSAT (Outsourced semiconductor assembly and test services) facility in Sanand, Gujarat
- iii. OSAT (Outsourced semiconductor assembly and test services) facility in Morigaon, Assam

#### **67. Digital Economy.**

The digital economy refers to the economic activities that emerge from connecting individuals, businesses, devices, data and operations through digital technology.

#### **68. Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code Rules 2021.**

Intermediaries must ensure compliance with rules and regulations, privacy policy, and user agreement, and make reasonable efforts to cause users to not create, upload, or share prohibited content. They must also respect the Constitutional rights of users.

#### **69. Global Plastics Treaty.**

Phasing out all unnecessary plastic products that pose a high pollution risk, including single-use items and excessive packaging. Establishing binding and specific design requirements for plastic products that lead to a decrease in plastic consumption. The aim is to address plastic pollution across its entire life cycle, including its impact on marine environments. India, playing a significant role as a key representative from the Global South, holds considerable sway in these negotiations.

#### **70. Common but Differentiated responsibility.**

Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities (CBDR-RC) is a principle within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) that acknowledges the different capabilities and differing responsibilities of individual countries in addressing climate change.

#### **71. Plastic Waste Management.**

Plastic waste management is the efficient and precise conversion of plastic waste into innovative products that are better, environmentally-friendly, and cost-effective. Advantages of implementing plastic waste management: Reduced environmental pollution. Reduced virgin plastic production.

#### **72. Gaza Strip.**

The Gaza Strip, or simply Gaza, is a polity and the smaller of the two Palestinian territories. On the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea, Gaza is bordered by Egypt on the southwest and Israel on the east and north.

Area: 365 km<sup>2</sup>

Population: 20.5 lakhs (2020)

Largest city: Rafah

**73. Hamas.**

Hamas, an acronym of its official name, Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiya, is a Palestinian Sunni Islamist political and military movement governing the Israeli-occupied Gaza Strip since 2007.

**74. Rafah Crossing.**

The Rafah Border Crossing or Rafah Crossing Point is the sole crossing point between Egypt and Palestine's Gaza Strip. It is located on the Egypt–Palestine border. Under a 2007 agreement between Egypt and Israel, Egypt controls the crossing but imports through the Rafah crossing require Israeli approval.

**75. Floor test.**

A floor test (also called a 'trust vote') is held in legislative bodies, to find out whether the government that is suspected to have lost the majority still retains the confidence of the House. This is done through a vote among the members

**76. Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR).**

The Indian Council of Medical Research, the apex body in India for the formulation, coordination and promotion of biomedical research, is one of the oldest and largest medical research bodies in the world. Headquarters: New Delhi. Founded: 1911.

**77. Ultra Processed Foods.**

An ultra-processed food (UPF) is an industrially formulated edible substance derived from natural food or synthesized from other organic compounds. The resulting products are designed to be highly profitable, convenient, and hyperpalatable, often through food additives such as preservatives, colourings, and flavourings.[3] UPFs have often undergone processes such as moulding/extruding, hydrogenation or frying.

Ex:

- sugary drinks.
- syrups and jams.
- chocolate and candies.
- potato chips and pretzels.
- sauces, dressings and gravies.

- ice cream and frozen desserts.
- bakery products like muffins and cakes.
- fast foods like French fries and burgers.

**78. Saccharine.**

Saccharin, also called saccharine, benzosulfimide, or E954, or used in saccharin sodium or saccharin calcium forms, is a non-nutritive artificial sweetener. Saccharin is a sultam that is about 500 times sweeter than sucrose, but has a bitter or metallic aftertaste, especially at high concentrations. Most health authorities agree that saccharin is safe for human consumption. And replacing sugar with artificial sweeteners like saccharin may have some weight loss benefits. Saccharin is one of the oldest artificial sweeteners on the market. Carbohydrate.

**79. Proteins.**

Proteins are biopolymeric structures composed of amino acids, of which there are 20 commons found in biological chemistry. Proteins serve as structural support, biochemical catalysts, hormones, enzymes, building blocks, and initiators of cellular death.14 Nov 2022

Proteins are large, complex molecules that play many critical roles in the body. They do most of the work in cells and are required for the structure, function, and regulation of the body's tissues and organs.26 Mar 2021

**80. Amino Acid.**

Amino acids are molecules that combine to form proteins. Amino acids and proteins are the building blocks of life. When proteins are digested or broken down, amino acids are the result. The human body then uses amino acids to make proteins to help the body: Break down food.

**81. Index of Industrial Production (IIP).**

The Index of Industrial Production (IIP) is a measure of the rate of growth in the economy's various industry groups over a given time period. The Central Statistical Organization (CSO) computes and publishes the IIP index on a monthly basis. It is the only measure of the physical volume of production. It is also extremely useful for the projection of advance GDP estimates.

**82. Consumer Durables.**

In economics, a durable good or a hard good or consumer durable is a good that does not quickly wear out or, more specifically, one that yields utility over time rather than being completely consumed in one use.

**83. Consumer Non-Durables.**

They may be defined as goods that are immediately consumed in one use or have a lifespan of less than three years. Examples of non-durable goods include cosmetics, cleaning products, food, fuel, beer, cigarettes, paper products, rubber, textiles, clothing and footwear.

**84. Theravada Buddhism.**

Theravada (Pāli, literally “School of the Elders”) is the most commonly accepted name of Buddhism’s oldest extant school. The school’s adherents, termed theravādins, have preserved their version of the Gautama Buddha’s teaching in the Pāli Canon. The two fundamental concepts of Theravada Buddhism are nirvana and arhat. Nirvana is the perfect place that is free from all suffering. The ultimate goal of Theravada Buddhism is to attain Nirvana at the end of the cycle of their lives. This is a key difference between Theravada and Mahayana Buddhists. Whereas Theravada Buddhists strive to become Arhats and gain freedom from the cycle of samsara, Mahayana Buddhists may choose to stay in the cycle of samsara out of compassion for others.

**85. Demographic Shocks.**

Demographic shocks convey the idea of a sudden change in those factors, external or exogenous to the demographic system, that affect mortality, fertility, or migration.

**86. Prosaic.**

Prosaic means ordinary or dull. Most of us lead a prosaic everyday life, sometimes interrupted by some drama or crisis. This adjective is from Latin prosa, “prose,” which is ordinary writing intended to communicate ideas and information.

**87. Disingenuous.**

Disingenuous: adjective; lacking in frankness, candor, or sincerity; falsely or hypocritically ingenuous; insincere: Her excuse was rather disingenuous.

**88. Chahabar Port.**

Chabahar Port is a seaport in Chabahar located in southeastern Iran, on the Gulf of Oman. It serves as Iran’s only oceanic port, and consists of two separate ports named Shahid Kalantari and Shahid Beheshti, each of which has five berths. It is only about 170 kilometres west of the Pakistani port of Gwadar. In 2016, India signed a deal with Iran entailing \$8 billion investment in Chabahar port and industries in Chabar Special Economic Zone, including an aluminium smelter and a urea making facility, at Chabahar port is being developed was a transit route to Afghanistan and central Asia.

**89. Consumer Price Index (CPI).**

Consumer price indexes (CPIs) are index numbers that measure changes in the prices of goods and services purchased or otherwise acquired by households, which households use directly, or indirectly, to satisfy their own needs and wants.

**90. Consumer Food Price Index (CPFI).**

Consumer Food Price Inflation, (CFPI), is a specific measure of inflation that focuses exclusively on the price changes of food items in a consumer’s basket of goods and services. It calculates the rate at which the prices of food products consumed by the average household are increasing over time.

**91. Nominal GDP.**

Nominal gross domestic product (GDP) is the value of all the final goods and services at current market prices. In other words, it is the GDP calculated at the current market prices. It takes into account factors such as inflation, price changes, changing interest rates, and money supply at the time of determining GDP.

**92. Prime Minister Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP).**

PMEGP stands for Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme, which is a credit-linked subsidy scheme launched by the Ministry of MSME, Government of India, to generate employment opportunities in the country.

**93. Annexation.**

Annexation, in international law, is the forcible acquisition and assertion of legal title over one state's territory by another state, usually following military occupation of the territory. In current international law, it is generally held to be an illegal act.

**94. Crimea.**

Crimea is a peninsula in Eastern Europe, on the northern coast of the Black Sea, almost entirely surrounded by the Black Sea and the smaller Sea of Azov. The Isthmus of Perekop connects the peninsula to Kherson Oblast in mainland Ukraine. Currently under Russian occupation/Annexation

**95. Yevgeny Prigozhin.**

Yevgeny Viktorovich Prigozhin was a Russian mercenary leader and oligarch. He led the Wagner Group private military company and was a close confidant of Russian president Vladimir Putin until launching a rebellion in June 2023.

**96. Merchandise Exports.**

Merchandise exports are goods that are produced in one country and sold to another country. Only physical objects are counting under this kind of exports. For example, cars, clothing, machinery, and agricultural products are merchandise exports.

**97. OPEC+.**

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries Plus (OPEC+) is a loosely affiliated entity consisting of the 13 OPEC members and 10 of the world's major non-OPEC oil-exporting nations. The non-OPEC countries which export crude oil are termed as OPEC plus countries. OPEC plus countries include Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Brunei, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Mexico, Oman, Russia, South Sudan and Sudan.

**98. Deleterious Effects.**

Something that has a deleterious effect on something has a harmful effect on it. Petty crime is having a deleterious effect on community life. Synonyms: harmful, bad, damaging, destructive More Synonyms of deleterious.

**99. World Trade Organization.**

The World Trade Organization is an intergovernmental organization headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland that regulates and facilitates international trade. Governments use the organization to establish, revise, and enforce the rules that govern international trade in cooperation with the United Nations System. Founded: 1 January 1995. Headquarters: Geneva, Switzerland.

**100. Instant Gratification.**

Instant gratification is the immediate fulfilment of a person's needs or desires. When someone makes an impulsive choice to do something for the instant feeling of pleasure or satisfaction, they are receiving instant gratification.

**101. Algorithms.**

Algorithms are step-by-step procedures designed to solve specific problems and perform tasks efficiently in the realm of computer science and mathematics. These powerful sets of instructions form the backbone of modern technology and govern everything from web searches to artificial intelligence.

**102. Head Winds.**

A wind having the opposite general direction to a course of movement (as of an aircraft): a force or influence that inhibits progress. Power-plant construction is facing headwinds, as renewable energy projects and slack demand throw the economics of new generators into question.

**103. Quad.**

The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QSD), commonly known as the Quad, it is a strategic security dialogue between Australia, India, Japan and the United States that is maintained by talks between member countries.

**104. Hegemons.**

Hegemon: something (such as a political state) having dominant influence or authority over others: one possessing hegemony. In Ancient Greece (ca. 8th BC – AD 6th c.), hegemony denoted the politico-military dominance of the hegemon city-state over other city-states.

**105. Khejri (*Prosopis Cineraria*).**

The khejri tree is adapted to withstand both frost and drought, and survives both high temperature and low. It is known to improve soil fertility; it aids nitrate retention in soil. The tree contributes to the micro-flora in desert soil. Its tap root goes deep into the earth, to depths of about 25 feet, seeking water.

**106. Neem (*Azadirachta Indica*).**

All parts of the neem tree- leaves, flowers, seeds, fruits, roots and bark have been used traditionally for the treatment of inflammation, infections, fever, skin diseases and dental disorders. The medicinal utilities have been described especially for neem leaf.

**107. Mahua (*Madhuca longifolia*).**

Flower extracts of *Madhuca longifolia* are used against heart diseases, leucorrhoea, menorrhagia, polyuria, bronchitis, and tonsillitis. The bark of the tree is used for rheumatism, chronic bronchitis, diabetes mellitus, and bleeding. Mahua leaves are used as a medicine for rheumatism and haemorrhoids.

**108. Gum Acacia (*Acacia Nilotica*).**

*Acacia nilotica* is truly multipurpose nitrogen fixing leguminous tree in India commonly called as babul and is a source of Indian gum arabic. It is a complex species with nine subspecies, of which six are native to the African tropics and three others are native to the Indian subcontinent.

**109. Indian Rosewood (*Dalbergia Sissoo*).**

Sissoo wood has good working characteristics and responds well to nearly all machining operations, glues and finishes well. It is also commonly planted in Southern Indian cities as a street tree and is one of the most preferred species for doors and windows in Northern India.

**110. Microsatellites.**

Microsatellites are widely used for DNA profiling, also known as "genetic fingerprinting", of crime stains (in forensics) and of tissues (in transplant patients). They are also widely used in kinship analysis (most commonly in paternity testing).

**111. Star Campaigners.**

Star campaigner is a famous person with a huge fan following chosen by a political party to contest or campaign during elections. The Representation of the People Act, 1951 (RP Act) provides for law relating to expenditure incurred by 'leaders of a political party'. These 'leaders of a political party' are popularly known as 'star campaigners'. These are usually the top leaders of the party but can include other celebrities as well. The RP Act provides that a recognised political party (National or State)

can appoint a maximum of 40-star campaigners while a registered unrecognised political party can appoint up to 20.

**112. Model Code of Conduct (MCC).**

The Model Code of Conduct (MCC) is a set of guidelines issued by the Election Commission of India to regulate the conduct of political parties and their candidates in the run-up to elections.

**113. Reserve Bank of India.**

The Reserve Bank of India, abbreviated as RBI, is India's central bank and regulatory body responsible for regulation of the Indian banking system. Owned by the Ministry of Finance, Government of India, it is responsible for the control, issue and maintaining supply of the Indian rupee. It also manages the country's main payment systems and works to promote its economic development. Bharatiya Reserve Bank Note Mudran (BRBNM) is a specialised division of RBI through which it prints and mints Indian currency notes (INR) in two of its currency printing presses located in Mysore (Karnataka; Southern India) and Salboni (West Bengal; Eastern India).[6] The RBI, along with the Indian Banks' Association, established the National Payments Corporation of India to promote and regulate the payment and settlement systems in India. Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation was established by RBI as one of its specialized divisions for the purpose of providing insurance of deposits and guaranteeing of credit facilities to all Indian banks.

Until the Monetary Policy Committee was established in 2016, it also had full control over monetary policy in the country. It commenced its operations on 1 April 1935 in accordance with the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934. The original share capital was divided into shares of 100 each fully paid. The RBI was nationalised on 1 January 1949, almost a year and a half after India's independence.

The overall direction of the RBI lies with the 21-member central board of directors, composed of: the governor; four deputy governors; two finance ministry representatives (usually the Economic Affairs Secretary and the Financial Services Secretary); ten government-nominated directors; and four directors who represent local boards for Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, and Delhi. Each of these local boards consists of five members who represent regional interests and the interests of co-operative and indigenous banks.

It is a member bank of the Asian Clearing Union. The bank is also active in promoting financial inclusion policy and is a leading member of the Alliance for Financial Inclusion (AFI). The bank is often referred to by the name 'Mint Street'.

**114. Contingent Risk Buffer (CRB).**

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI), in consultation with the central government, had constituted a Committee (Chair: Dr. Bimal Jalan) to review the current economic capital framework, in November 2018. The existing economic capital framework was developed in 2014-15, and was operationalised in 2015-16. The economic capital framework provides a methodology for determining the appropriate

level of risk provisions and profit distribution to be made under Section 47 of the RBI Act, 1934. As per this provision, the central bank is required to pay balance of its profits to the central government after making provision for bad and doubtful debts, depreciation in assets, and contributions to staff.

**115. Private Consumption.**

Private consumption includes all purchases made by consumers, such as food, housing (rents), energy, clothing, health, leisure, education, communication, transport as well as hotels and restaurant services.

**116. Tailwinds.**

A wind having the same general direction as a course of movement (as of an aircraft): a force or influence that advances progress toward an improved condition ex: the strengthening housing market should be providing tailwinds for home improvement retailers

**117. Aspirational Districts.**

Aspirational District Programme was launched in 2018 which aims to transform districts that have shown relatively lesser progress in key social areas. Aspirational Districts are those districts in India, that are affected by poor socio-economic indicators. It covers 112 districts across the country.

**118. National Steel Policy (2017).**

The policy projects crude steel capacity of 300 million tonnes, production of 255 MT and a robust finished steel per capita consumption of 158 Kgs by 2030-31, as against the current consumption of 61 Kgs.

**119. Hematite.**

Hematite: Heavy and relatively hard oxide mineral, ferric oxide (Fe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>), that constitutes the most important iron ore because of its high iron content (70 percent) and its abundance. Its name is derived from the Greek word for "blood," in allusion to its red colour.

**120. Charaka.**

Charaka was one of the principal contributors to Ayurveda, a system of medicine and lifestyle developed in ancient India. He is known as a physician who edited the medical treatise entitled Charaka Samhita, one of the foundational texts of classical Indian medicine and Ayurveda, included under Brhat-Trayi.

Charaka, also known as Charaka Muni or Agnivesa, was an ancient Indian physician and scholar who made significant contributions to the field of Ayurveda. Ayurveda is a traditional system of medicine that originated in Indian subcontinent more than 5,000 years ago.

Charaka is believed to have lived during the 4th century BCE, although the exact dates of his birth and death are uncertain. He is considered one of the principal contributors to the Charaka Samhita, an ancient Ayurvedic text that is one of the foundational texts of Ayurvedic medicine.

The Charaka Samhita is a comprehensive treatise on various aspects of medicine, including etiology, diagnosis, treatment, and ethical considerations. It covers a wide range of topics, including anatomy, physiology, herbal medicine, surgical techniques, and the use of minerals and metals in medicine.

Charaka's approach to medicine was holistic and focused on understanding the body as a whole. He emphasized the importance of maintaining a balance among the three doshas (vata, pitta, and kapha) and believed that disease resulted from an imbalance in these doshas. His treatments aimed to restore this balance through dietary changes, herbal remedies, lifestyle modifications, and therapies such as massage and detoxification.

Charaka's contributions to Ayurveda were not only medical but also scientific. He emphasized the importance of observation, experimentation, and logical reasoning in the practice of medicine. He classified diseases based on their etiology and symptoms, and his diagnostic methods included examination of the pulse, urine, and other bodily fluids.

#### 121. **Susruta.**

Sushruta is the listed author of the Sushruta Samhita (Sushruta's Compendium), a treatise considered to be one of the most important surviving ancient treatises on medicine and is considered a foundational text of Ayurveda. The treatise addresses all aspects of general medicine, but the impressive chapters on surgery have led to the false impression that this is its main topic. The translator G. D. Singhal dubbed Suśruta "the father of plastic surgery" on account of these detailed accounts of surgery.

It is generally accepted by scholars that there were several ancient authors collectively called "Suśruta" who contributed to this text.

#### 122. **Aryabhata.**

Aryabhata (476–550 CE) was the first of the major mathematician-astronomers from the classical age of Indian mathematics and Indian astronomy. His works include the Āryabhaṭīya (which mentions that in 3600 Kali Yuga, 499 CE, he was 23 years old) and the Arya-siddhanta.

For his explicit mention of the relativity of motion, he also qualifies as a major early physicist.

#### 123. **Bhaskaracharya.**

Bhāskara (c. 1114–1185), also known as Bhāskarāchārya ("Bhāskara, the teacher"), and as Bhāskara II to avoid confusion with the 7th century mathematician Bhāskara I, was an Indian mathematician, astronomer and inventor. From verses in his main work, Siddhānta Śīromaṇī, it can be inferred that he was born in 1114 in Vijjadavida (Vijjalavida) and living in the Satpuda mountain ranges of Western Ghats, believed to be the town of Patana in Chalisgaon, located in present-day Khandesh region of Maharashtra by scholars. In a temple in Maharashtra, an inscription supposedly created by his grandson Changadeva, lists Bhaskaracharya's ancestral lineage for several generations before him as well as two generations after him. Colebrooke who was the first European to translate (1817)

Bhaskaracharya II's mathematical classics refers to the family as Maharashtrian Brahmins residing on the banks of the Godavari.

**124. Chanakya.**

Chanakya (375–283 BCE) was an ancient Indian polymath who was active as a teacher, author, strategist, philosopher, economist, jurist, and politician. He is traditionally identified as Kauṭilya or Viṣṇugupta, who authored the ancient Indian political treatise, the Arthashastra, a text dated to roughly between the fourth century BCE and the third century CE. As such, he is considered the pioneer of the field of political science and economics in India, and his work is thought of as an important precursor to classical economics. His works were lost near the end of the Gupta Empire in the sixth century CE and not rediscovered until the early 20th century. Around 321 BCE, Chanakya assisted the first Mauryan emperor Chandragupta in his rise to power and is widely credited for having played an important role in the establishment of the Maurya Empire. Chanakya served as the chief advisor to both emperors Chandragupta and his son Bindusara.

**125. Madhava.**

Mādhava of Sangamagrāma (Mādhavan) (c. 1340 – c. 1425) was an Indian mathematician and astronomer who is considered as the founder of the Kerala school of astronomy and mathematics in the Late Middle Ages. Madhava made pioneering contributions to the study of infinite series, calculus, trigonometry, geometry, and algebra. He was the first to use infinite series approximations for a range of trigonometric functions, which has been called the “decisive step onward from the finite procedures of ancient mathematics to treat their limit-passage to infinity”.

**126. Patanjali.**

Patanjali was a sage of ancient India who is considered the author of many important Sanskrit texts. Of these, Yogasutra is his greatest work which is the basic text of Yogadarshan. There are three main texts written by Patanjali in Indian literature. Yogasutra, commentary on Ashtadhyayi and treatise on Ayurveda. Some scholars believe that these three texts were written by the same person, others believe that these are the works of different people. Patanjali wrote his commentary on Panini 's Ashtadhyayi which he named Mahabhashya (Maha + Bhashya (review, commentary, discussion, criticism)). His period is considered to be around 200 BC

**127. Panini.**

Pāṇini was a logician, Sanskrit philologist, grammarian, and revered scholar in ancient India, variously dated between the 7th and 4th century BCE.

**128. Thriuvalluvar.**

Tiruvalluvar (flourished c. 1st century BC or 6th century ad, India) was a Tamil poet-saint known as the author of the Tirukkural (“Sacred Couplets”), considered a masterpiece of human thought, compared in India and abroad to the Bible, John Milton's Paradise Lost, and the works of Plato.

**129. National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF).**

The National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF) is a competency-based framework that organizes all qualifications according to a series of levels of knowledge, skills and aptitude.

**130. Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs).**

The terms university and HEIs have mainly become synonymous. Universities of sciences are HEIs accredited to issue advanced academic degrees in each field of study. Other HEIs include universities of applied sciences and business schools where education is 'higher', i.e., advanced.

**131. Zero Shadow Day.**

A 'Zero Shadow Day' is when vertical objects appear to cast no shadow. This is because the Sun is at its zenith and the shadow is directly under the object. For every point on Earth between the Tropic of Cancer and the Tropic of Capricorn, there are two Zero Shadow Days every year.

**132. Tropic of Capricorn.**

The Tropic of Capricorn lies at 23d 26' 22" [23.4394 degrees] south of the Equator and marks the most southerly latitude at which the sun can appear directly overhead at noon. This event occurs at the December solstice, when the southern hemisphere is tilted towards the sun to its maximum extent.

**133. World Development Information Day (WDID).**

World Development Information Day (WDID) was established by the United Nations General Assembly in 1972, coinciding with United Nations Day on October 24. The objective of the day is to draw the attention of the world to development problems and the necessity of strengthening international cooperation to solve them.

**134. United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN – ESCAP).**

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific is one of the five regional commissions under the jurisdiction of the United Nations Economic and Social Council.

**135. Founded: 28 March 1947 Headquarters: Bangkok, Thailand**

IUCN Red List.

Species are classified into one of nine Red List Categories: Extinct, Extinct in the Wild, Critically Endangered, Endangered, Vulnerable, Near Threatened, Least Concern, Data Deficient and Not Evaluated. Vulnerable, Endangered and Critically Endangered species are considered to be threatened with extinction.

**136. CITES: Appendix – I.**

Appendix I includes is a competency-based framework that organizes all qualifications according to a series of levels of knowledge, skills and aptitude. in specimens of these species is permitted only in

exceptional circumstances. Appendix II includes species not necessarily threatened with extinction, but in which trade must be controlled in order to avoid utilization incompatible with their survival.

**137. Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 – Schedule I.**

Schedule I: It covers endangered species that need rigorous protection. A person is liable to the harshest penalties for violation of the law under this Schedule. Species under this Schedule are prohibited to be hunted throughout India, except under threat to human life or in case of a disease that is beyond recovery.

**138. Similia Similibus Curantur.**

Similia Similibus Curantur is also called the law of similars. That is, when a drug produces pathological/pathogenic symptoms in healthy individual means, the same drug can relieve similar kinds of symptoms in individuals with the disease.

**139. International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction, 2020.**

To achieve the goal of the Sendai Framework of reducing global disaster risks and losses, the theme of the International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction (IDDRR) 2024, which falls on 13 October, will be on the role of education in protecting and empowering youth for a disaster-free future.

**140. YuWaah.**

Launched in 2019, YuWaah (GenU India) has benefited over 26 million young people to date – through opportunities for skills development and employment, career guidance, volunteering and active citizenship. Central to YuWaah's efforts is the willingness and capacity to listen to and meaningfully engage with young people's needs, ideas and aspirations.

**141. Karbi Anglong Agreement.**

Recently, a tripartite agreement among five insurgent groups of Assam, the Centre and the state government was signed. This agreement is in synergy with the vision of Insurgency free prosperous North East, that envisages all-round development of northeast, peace and prosperity. About the Karbi Anglong Crisis Located in central Assam, Karbi Anglong is the state's largest district and a melting pot of ethnicities and tribal groups – Karbi, Dimasa, Bodo, Kuki, Hmar, Tiwa, Garo, Man (Tai speakers), Rengma Naga. Its diversity also generated different outfits and fuelled an insurgency that did not allow the region to develop. The Karbis are a major ethnic group of Assam, dotted by several factions and splinters. The history of the Karbi group has been marked by killings, ethnic violence, abductions and taxation since the late 1980s. Insurgent groups of Karbi Anglong district like People's Democratic Council of Karbi Longri (PDCK), Karbi Longri NC Hills Liberation Front (KLNLFF), etc. originated from the core demand of forming a separate state. Some of the other demands of the militant groups are:

- Inclusion of some areas into Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC)

- Reservation of seats for Scheduled Tribes
- More powers to the council
- Inclusion of Karbi language in the Eighth Schedule
- Financial package of Rs 1,500 crore

The Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) is an autonomous district council, protected under the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution.

#### **142. Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council.**

Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) is an autonomous district council in the state of Assam, India for development and protection of tribals living in area namely Karbi Anglong and West Karbi Anglong district. The council is constituted under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India and administratively functions under the Government of Assam. It was formed with the name Karbi Anglong District Council on 17 November 1951. Later changed to Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council on 23 June 1952, which is now celebrated as its foundation day.[3] After Signing of M.O.U. between Government of India, Government of Assam and United People's Democratic Solidarity, it was renamed to Karbi Anglong Autonomous Territorial Council.[4] It has administrative functions over two district, Karbi Anglong district and West Karbi Anglong district. Its headquarters is in Diphu, Karbi Anglong district. The total area of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council is 10,434 sq. km having a population of 961,275 as of 2011.

#### **143. Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India.**

The Sixth Schedule of the Constitution provides for the administration of tribal areas in Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram to safeguard the rights of the tribal population in these states. This special provision is provided under Article 244(2) and Article 275(1) of the Constitution.

#### **144. Capex.**

Capital expenditures (CapEx) are funds used by a company to acquire, upgrade, and maintain physical assets such as property, plants, buildings, technology, or equipment.





