




MONTHLY CURRENT AFFAIRS CAPSULE (UPSC)

NOVEMBER 2023



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PREFACE

Hello PRAYAAS' Students Community,

Fear of current affairs among UPSC students is justified due to the vastness of the current affairs, the dynamic nature of current events, the unpredictability of the exam, the need for a deep understanding, and the pressure to stay updated.

From above, we recognize that the UPSC examination demands a thorough understanding of current affairs and their implications on a broader scale. **Therefore, "PRAYAAS PRABHAV" is not merely a compilation of news headlines but a gateway to a deeper comprehension of the interconnected world we live in.**

Each article in this magazine is designed to foster critical thinking and analytical skills, essential for excelling in the UPSC examinations and becoming an astute civil servant.

As you delve into the pages of this magazine, we encourage you to engage actively with the content, ponder over the implications, and form your independent viewpoints.

At the end of Magazine, you will get **QR Code of weekly lectures by our faculty (Dhananjay Sir)**. These lectures are available **Free of Cost** to all Sincere Aspirants. In that lectures you will thoroughly understand each topic of these Monthly Compilation. Make Most use of it to understand topic better.

Till, December, we are Specifically focusing on Mains perspective. Mains focus will be on how to develop that thinking abilities and how to decipher topics for mains.

Start from January till prelims, we will shift our focus specifically on Prelims Perspective here our special focus on linking Current with Static.

The UPSC examinations not only assess your factual knowledge but also value your ability to analyse, synthesize, and present coherent arguments. **Let "PRAYAAS PRABHAV" be your ally in honing these essential skills.**

We are hopeful that this efforts from PRAYAAS will bring more clarity in Your UPSC Journey. As in the name of our institute "PRAYAAS Institute of Excellence", it will bring excellence in your current affairs and over all journey of UPSC.

Your Thankful,

Team PRAYAAS

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GS 2

India's Approach to China

Context: -

- In recent weeks, India's QUAD partners—Australia, Japan, and the US—have rekindled high-level political interactions with China. However, India is unwilling to resume political and economic discussions with China until the Ladakh military standoff, which started in spring 2020, is satisfactorily resolved.
- President of USA has also interacted with Xi so debate starts around that India should also need to start interaction with China.

Syllabus of Mains – GS 2- India and its neighbourhood- relations.

Introduction: -

- China is India's largest neighbour and is a major trade partner, supplier of critical ingredients in strategic industries, and a partner in climate change.
- However, it is also a formidable competitor to India's global aspirations.
- Relations with China have been central to India's Foreign Policy in both crests (Panchsheel) and troughs (Doklam stand-off, Galwan Valley clash). China is therefore considered one of **India's most formidable Foreign Policy Changes.**
- “India Conquered and dominated China culturally for 20 centuries without ever having to send a single soldier across her border.” - Hu Shih

Key Disputes between India- China

Border Disputes: -

Western Sector (Ladakh):

- The **Johnson Line** proposed by the British placed Aksai Chin in the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir.
- China rejected the Johnson Line and favoured the McDonald Line, asserting control over Aksai Chin.

Middle Sector (Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand):

- The Middle Sector has a relatively minor dispute.

Eastern Sector (Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim):

- China considers the McMahon Line illegal and unacceptable claiming it is part of Tibet.

Border Incursions:

- Border between India and China is not clearly demarcated throughout and there is no mutually agreed Line of Actual Control (LAC) along certain stretches.
- Border confrontations have occurred in different instances, including Demchok in 2014, Depsang in 2015, Doklam in 2017, and the Galwan incident in 2020.

Water Sharing:

- China's advantageous geographical positioning creates an asymmetry that allows it to capitalize on the reliance of downstream nations, such as India, on hydrological data.
- Ex- Issues of Dam on Brahmaputra River.

Tibet Issue:

- India hosts the Tibetan government-in-exile and spiritual leader the Dalai Lama, which has been a point of contention with China.
- China accuses India of supporting Tibetan separatism, while India maintains that it respects the "One China" policy but allows the Tibetan community to reside in India.

Concerns over Belt and Road Initiative (BRI):

- India's main objection to the BRI is that it includes the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which passes through the Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK), a territory that India claims as its own.

Trade Imbalance:

- India's trade deficit with China reached the historically high level of USD 87 billion in 2022.

China opposed to UNSC Reform:

- Specifically opposed to the demand of permanent seat for India.

Chinese support to Pakistan:

- In matters of Kashmir, Terrorism, Hafiz Sayeed.
- China has called India's moves on Article 370 as altering the status quo ante while India calls it an internal matter.

Key convergence between India- China: -

International Cooperation Organizations:

- Both are members of Shanghai Cooperation Organization, East Asia Summit, RIC (Russia India China grouping), BRICS and G-20

New Economic Order reform:

- Both support World Bank and IMF reforms.

Support WTO Reform:

- Strengthening rules-based multilateral trading order

Climate Change:

- Both support principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities

Financial Mechanisms:

- India and China are prominent stakeholders in AIIB and NDB

Energy Security:

- Against Asian Premium

Geopolitics Behind China's Assertion: -

China's Salami Slicing Strategy:

- In military terms, Salami Slicing refers to a divide-and-conquer strategy involving incremental threats and alliances to overcome opposition and acquire new territories.

Chinese Debt Trap Diplomacy:

- China's debt trap diplomacy refers to a strategy in which China extends loans to developing countries, often for infrastructure projects, with the intention of creating economic dependence.
- Ex- Pakistan's Gwadar port and Sri Lanka's Hambantota port.

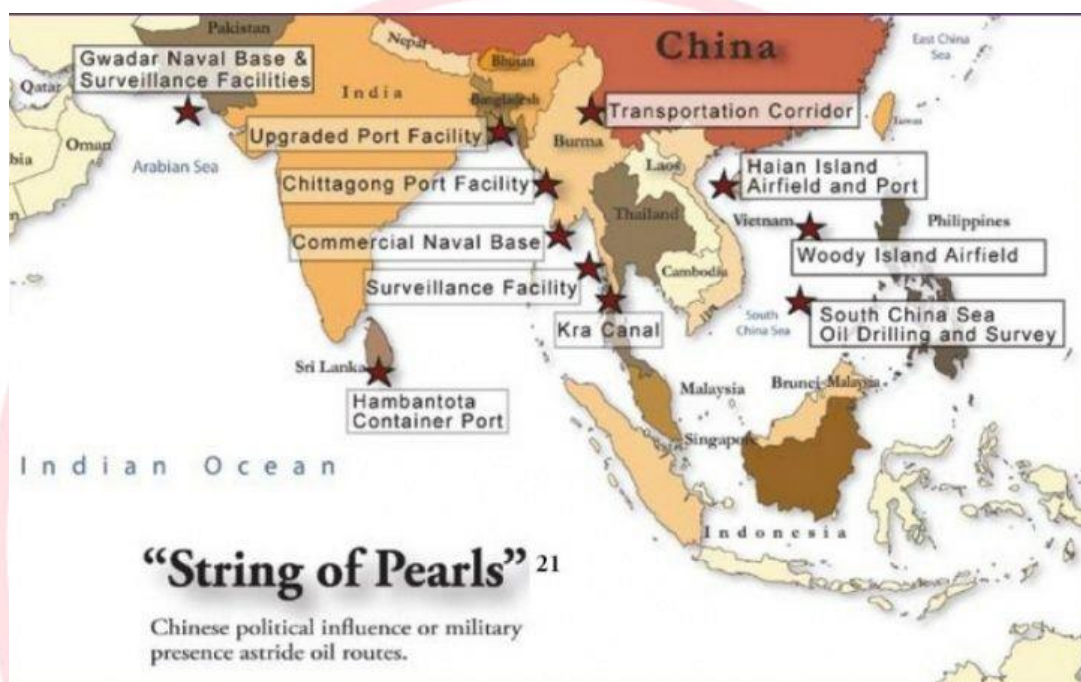
China's Five Fingers of Tibet Strategy:

- The "Five Fingers of Tibet" is a term used to describe China's territorial claims and strategic approach in relation to Tibet.
- The metaphorical term describes Tibet as the palm, with China aspiring to control or influence the five surrounding regions, referred to as fingers.

- Metaphorical "fingers" **represent the following areas: Ladakh, Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan, and Arunachal Pradesh.**

Strategic Encirclement of India by China’s “String of Pearls”:

- China's "String of Pearls" refers to a geopolitical and strategic initiative that involves building a network of Chinese-funded, owned, or controlled ports and other maritime infrastructure facilities in strategic locations across the Indian Ocean.



India Response to China's Geopolitics: -

Global Strategic Alliances:

- **QUAD**: It is the grouping of four democracies –India, Australia, the US, and Japan. All four nations find a common ground of being democratic nations and support the common interest of unhindered maritime trade and security.
- **I2U2**: It is a new grouping of India, Israel, the USA, and the UAE. Forming alliances with these countries strengthens India's geopolitical standing in the region.

India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC):

- Launched as an alternative trade and connectivity corridor, IMEC aims to strengthen India's presence in the Arabian Sea and the Middle East.

- Funded by the Partnership for Global Infrastructure Investment (PGII), it serves as a counter-initiative to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) with the support of G7 nations.

International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC):

- INSTC, established through an agreement between India, Iran, and Russia, creates a comprehensive 7,200-km multi-mode transportation network connecting the Indian Ocean, Persian Gulf, and Caspian Sea.

India's Necklace of Diamonds Strategy:

- In response to China's String of Pearls strategy, India adopted the Necklace of Diamonds strategy, emphasizing the encirclement of China by enhancing its naval presence, expanding military bases, and strengthening diplomatic ties with regional nations.
- This strategy aims to counter China's military network and influence in the Indo-Pacific and Indian Ocean regions.



Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) :

- It is an intergovernmental organization established to promote economic cooperation and regional integration among countries bordering the Indian Ocean.

Way Forward: -

To secure Peace, Prepare for War:

- India needs to prepare for the possibility of conflict with China which involves bolstering India's military capabilities.
- The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Defence has recommended that allocation for defence should be 3% of GDP to maintain India's deterrent posture.
- Development of infrastructure along the border, such as roads and bridges, can help both countries access remote areas and reduce the possibility of any misunderstandings or conflicts.

Diplomatic Dialogue from a position of Strength:

- Compartmentalization of Issues
- Address Border Disputes
- Engage in High-Level Talks
- Implement Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs)

Strategic Autonomy in Foreign Affairs:

- The geopolitical considerations of India's China policy have an independent logic.
- Rather than expressing apprehension about potential shifts in US-China relations, India should prioritize leveraging current opportunities with the US and the West.
- The strategic focus should seek to hasten India's rise in the global power hierarchy, diminish the strategic gap with China, and strengthen military deterrence.

Economic Cooperation:

- Diversify Imports
- Boost Exports
- Develop Domestic Industries

Encourage Cultural Exchanges:

- Encourage People-to-People Contacts: Promote cultural exchanges, educational programs, and tourism to enhance understanding between the people of India and China.
- Promote Track II Dialogues

Collaborate on Global Issues:

- Work together on global challenges such as climate change, public health, and counter-terrorism, showcasing joint leadership on the world stage.

Emerge as a Net Security provider in the Indo-Pacific Region:

- Maritime Security: India should participate in efforts to ensure the safety and freedom of navigation in critical sea lanes, contributing to the overall security architecture in the Indo-Pacific.
- Humanitarian Assistance: India should keep its commitment to regional security by actively participating in humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations.

Conclusion

- Xi Jinping, the Chinese premier said **at Mamallapuram Summit**: “To achieve the **‘Dragon and Elephant Dance’ is the only correct choice** for China and India. In line with the same, it is important that both India and China resolve their differences and cooperate **to usher in the Asian century as agreed in the Wuhan Consensus**.

Question for practice: -

Q) In the face of changing power dynamics in Indo-pacific, what diplomatic approaches would you suggest for India’s foreign policy towards China?

All India Judicial Services (AIJS)

Context: -

- Recently on India's Constitution Day or Law Day, President suggested the establishment of an All-India Judicial Services (AIJS) to provide opportunities to young lawyers.
- President's recent proposal to establish an AIJS in pursuit of a more diversified judiciary is a testament to the ongoing discourse surrounding the optimal methods of recruiting judges.
- Advocating for the infusion of bright and talented individuals from diverse backgrounds into the judicial system, the President's suggestion hinges on the promise of a merit-based selection process.

What is All India Judicial Service (AIJS)?

- AIJS is a proposed centralized recruitment system for judges **at the level of additional district judges and district judges** across all states.
- AIJS aims to centralize the recruitment of judges, like the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) model, assigning successful candidates to states.
- Originating from Law Commission reports in 1958 and 1978, AIJS seeks to address structural issues like **varying pay, faster vacancy filling, and standardized nationwide training**.
- The idea was revisited in 2006 by the Parliamentary Standing Committee, supporting a pan-Indian judicial service.

What will be constitutional basis for this?

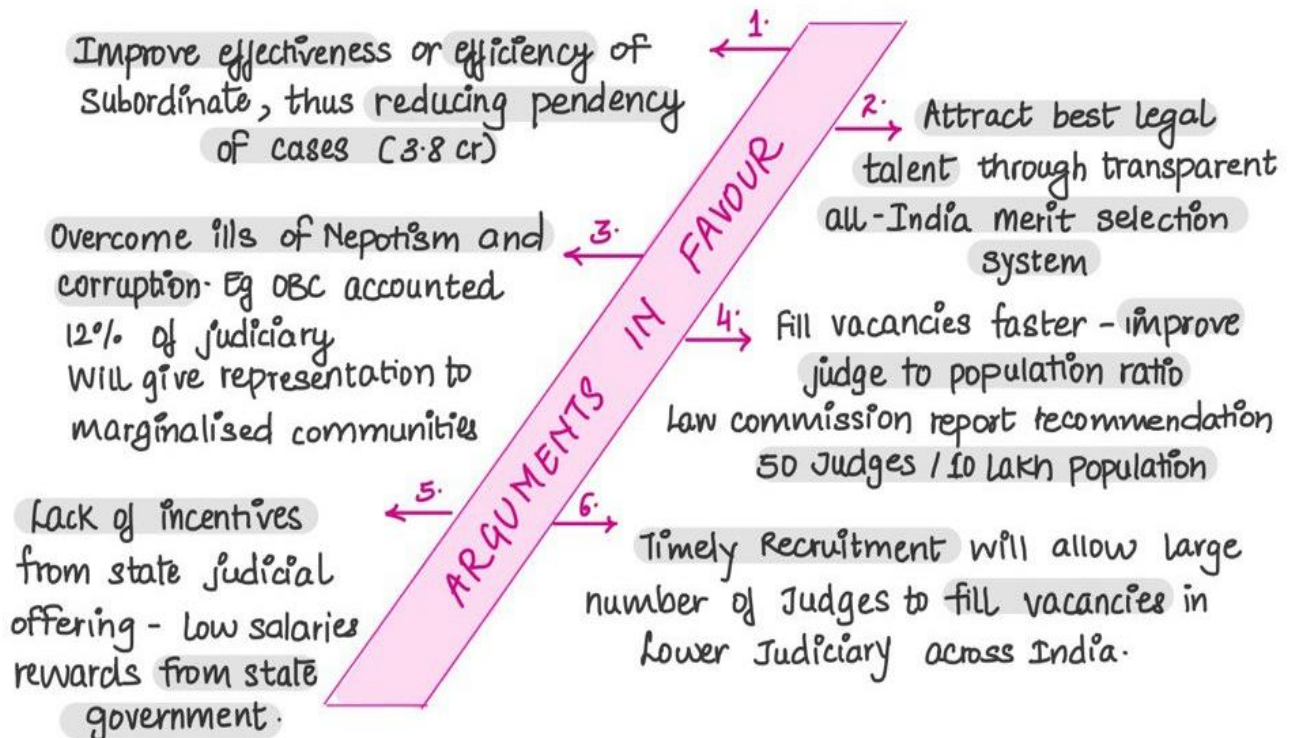
- Art. 312 of the IC provides for the creation of one or more All India Services common to the Union and the States.
- Such a service can be created and regulated by the Parliament by law, provided that **the Council of States (by the Rajya Sabha) has declared by resolution, supported by not less than two-thirds of the members present and voting**, that it is necessary or expedient in the national interest to do so.
- The Amendment act says that the AIJS shall not include any post inferior to that of a district judge.

Current recruitment of Judges:

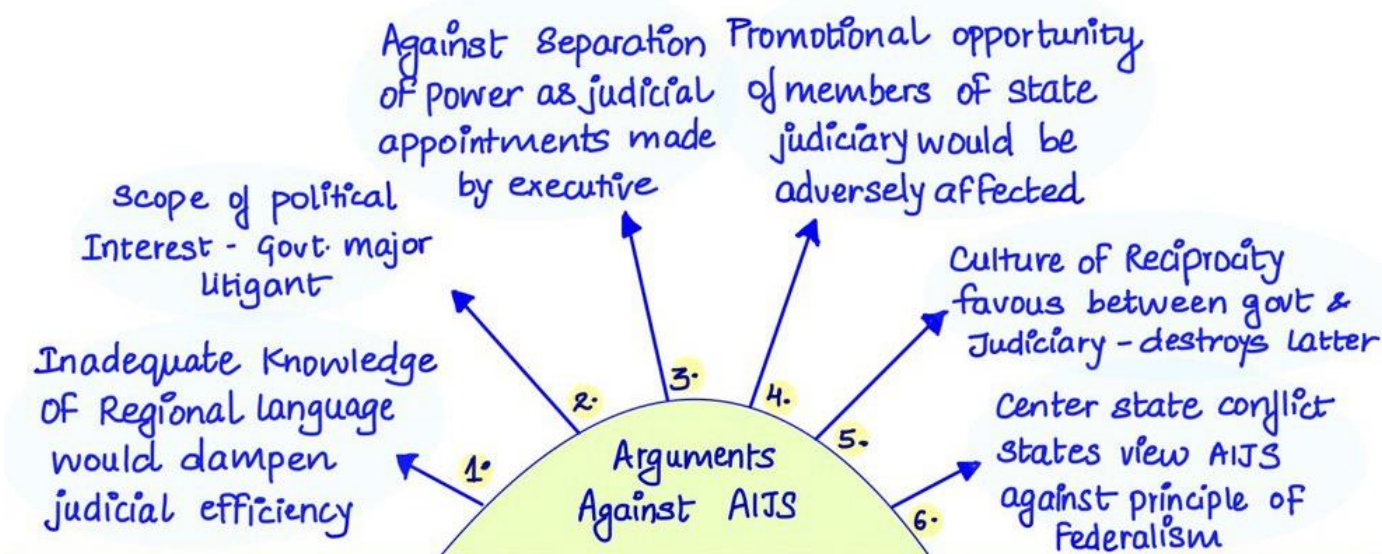
- Articles 233 and 234 of the Constitution of India deal with the appointment of district judges and place it in the domain of the states.
- The selection process is conducted by the State Public Service Commissions and the concerned High Court since High Courts exercise jurisdiction over the subordinate judiciary in the state.

- Panels of High Court judges interview candidates after the exam and select them for appointment.
- All judges of the lower judiciary up to the level of district judge are selected through the Provincial Civil Services (Judicial) exam.

Argument in Favour of AIJS(Significance): -



Arguments Against AIJS(Challenges): -



Way Forward:

- Facilitate dialogues and consultations with states, high courts, and legal experts to address concerns and garner support for AIJS.
- Consider implementing AIJS on a pilot basis in select states to assess its impact and address concerns gradually.
- Design AIJS with flexible mechanisms allowing adaptation to local laws, languages, and customs, ensuring effective functioning without disregarding regional nuances.
- Establish a periodic review mechanism to assess the impact of AIJS on federal structure, autonomy, and the effective functioning of the judiciary, making necessary adjustments as needed.

Conclusion

- The establishment of AIJS has the potential to address longstanding issues in the Indian judiciary, including the problem of vacancies and regional imbalances.
- However, it is **important to resolve the challenges carefully, taking into consideration the principles of federalism, language diversity, and the need for a transparent and accountable system.**

Criminalization of Politics

Context: -

- The Supreme Court recently issued guidelines to monitor the speedy disposal of cases against MPs and MLAs.
- Recently, the **Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR)** has revealed that the number of candidates with criminal cases has increased in all major political parties in MP, RJ, CH, ahead of the 2023 Assembly Elections, highlighting the Issue of Criminalisation of Politics.
- Recently, the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) wrote to the Election Commission (ECI), seeking action against political parties that failed to publish details of criminal records of their candidates as per orders of the Supreme Court and the ECI.

Syllabus of Mains – GS 2- Salient features of the Representation of People’s Act.

Parliament and State legislatures—structure, functioning, conduct of business, powers & privileges and issues arising out of these.

Introduction

- Criminalization of politics has become a headache for the Indian democracy, and it is a harsh reality now.
- It is **more vicious than terrorism**. Our ancestors, who fought for our freedom and their struggle behind the fight 70 years ago had a dream, but we see the dream being shattered today.

What is the meaning by criminalization of politics?

- The criminalization of politics refers to the involvement of individuals with a criminal record in the political arena.
- This can involve criminals running for and be elected to positions in Parliament and State Legislatures.
- It often occurs due to the close relationship between politicians and criminal elements.

Data:

- According to **data from the ADR**, in 2004, around 24% of Members of Parliament (MPs) had pending criminal cases against them. By 2009, this percentage increased to 30%, followed by a further rise to 34% in 2014. In **2019, as many as 43% of MPs had criminal cases** pending against them.
- In a petition filed in Feb 2023, it was claimed that there has been an increase of 44% in the number of MPs with declared criminal cases since 2009.
- In the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, 159 MPs had declared serious criminal cases against them, including those of rape, murder, attempt to murder, kidnapping, crimes against women.
- Approx. 50% of newly elected Lok Sabha MPs have criminal records, with 30% facing serious criminal cases.

Reasons for the criminalization of politics in India: -

Support of Political Parties:

- For political parties, a criminal individual is a 'tool' to secure votes through money and muscle power.

Muscle power:

- For winnability, Political parties can even hire or nominate criminals as candidates because of their influence. Many politicians chose muscle power to gain a vote bank in the country.

Money power:

- Political parties and candidates use the money generated by criminal activities to influence voters, secure their support, and win elections.
- There also **exists a quid pro quo between politicians and criminals** to exchange favours or benefits.

Poor Conviction Rate:

- It makes **provisions of section 8 of RPA** (Disqualification from Membership) ineffective, allowing criminals to go scot-free despite heinous crimes.

Limitations of ECI:

- Inadequate financial and human resources for monitoring, limited power to punish/disqualify a candidate, etc.

Loopholes in the functioning of the election machinery:

- The voters are not usually aware of the history of the candidate, qualifications, and cases pending against him.

Ineffective judicial system & delayed justice:

- The thousands and thousands of cases are pending in District Courts, High Courts, and Supreme Court against these criminals cum politicians.

Lack of enforcement:

- Several laws and court judgments have not helped much due to the lack of enforcement of laws and judgments.

Vested interests:

- Publishing the criminal history of candidates fielded by political parties may be ineffective, as a major chunk of voters tend to vote through a narrow prism of community interests like caste or religion.

Use of caste and ethnicity in elections:

- Voters vote based on caste, religion, ethnicity, regionalism, etc., ignoring the criminal backgrounds of candidates.

Politico-criminal nexus:

- This nexus between politicians and criminals, such as organized crime syndicates, drug cartels, etc, helps to advance their own interests or to gain power and influence.
- The **Vohra Committee observed that** with the rise of Black Money, the political clout of Political donors has increased manifold that can influence elections.

Implications of Criminalisation of Politics: -**Impediment to Development:**

- Criminalization of politics can act as an impediment to development, as politicians with criminal backgrounds may prioritize their own interests over the welfare of the people.

Weakening of Democratic Institutions:

- The presence of criminals in politics can also weaken democratic institutions, as they may try to manipulate the system to their advantage.

Impact on the Principle of Free and Fair Election:

- Criminalization of Politics goes against the principles of a free and fair election by limiting the options for voters to choose a deserving candidate.

Impairing Good Governance:

- The issue of criminal elements becoming elected officials undermines the democratic process and hampers the delivery of good governance.
- The major problem is **that the law-breakers become law-makers**, this affects the efficacy of the democratic process in delivering good governance.
- These unhealthy tendencies in the democratic system reflect a poor image of the nature of India's state institutions and the quality of its elected representatives.

Affecting Integrity of Public Servants:

- It also leads to increased circulation of black money during and after elections, which in turn increases corruption in society and affects the working of public servants.

Causes Social Disharmony:

- It introduces a culture of violence in society and sets a bad precedent for the youth to follow and reduces people's faith in democracy as a system of governance.

Erodes Public Trust:

- Criminalization of politics erodes the public confidence in elected politicians who indulge in criminal activities.

Legal Aspects of Disqualification of Criminal Candidates: -

- In this regard, Indian Constitution does not specify as to what disqualifies a person from contesting elections for the Parliament, Legislative assembly or any other legislature.
- The Representation of Peoples Act 1951 mentions the criteria **for disqualifying a person for contesting an election** of the legislature.
- **Section 8 of the act provides** for disqualification on conviction for certain offences, according to which an individual punished with a jail term of more than two years cannot stand in an election for six years after the jail term has ended.
- **However**, the law does not bar individuals who have criminal cases pending against them from contesting elections therefore the disqualification of candidates with criminal cases depends on their conviction in these cases.

Various measures taken to deal with this issue: -

Supreme Court: -

- In the **Association of Democratic Reforms vs. Union of India case**, SC directed that all the candidates must furnish their criminal record when filing nomination papers.
- In the **Lily Thomas case**, the SC held that convicted sitting MPs and MLAs would immediately be disqualified **without being given three months' time for appeal** (section 8(4) of the RPA Act, 1951).
- In the **People's Union for Civil Liberties vs. Union of India case**, SC gave the citizens the 'Right to negative vote' or NOTA (None of the Above) option during elections.
- In the **Public Interest Foundation vs. Uoi case**, SC directed the trial court to dispose of the criminal cases involving MPs and MLAs/MLCs within 1 year after a court of law frames the charges.
- **Fast Track Trial**: The Supreme Court in March 2014 accepted the recommendations of the Law Commission and passed an order directing that trials against sitting MPs and MLAs must be concluded within a year of charges being framed.
- **In 2020**, SC made it mandatory for political parties to publish on national newspapers, local vernacular newspapers, & official social media pages detailed information of criminal cases against their candidates and the reasons for selecting them over others without criminal antecedents.

Steps taken by Election Commission

- Setting up of Expense Monitoring Cell.
- Mandatory declaration of assets and existing criminal charges in self-sworn affidavits to the ECI.
- Effective implementation of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC).
- Entering the neighbourhood of a polling station with any kind of arms is considered a cognizable offense.

What are the ways to decriminalize Indian politics?

Strict Legal Provisions like Lifetime Ban:

- The election commission endorsed the call for a lifetime ban in the apex court. It had argued that such a move would "champion the cause of decriminalization of politics".

Proactive Judiciary:

- Given the reluctance by the political parties to curb the criminalization of politics and its growing detrimental effects on Indian democracy, Indian courts

must now seriously consider banning people accused of serious criminal charges from contesting elections.

- Fast-tracking the judicial process can help weed out the corrupt as well as criminal elements in the political system.
- A time-bound justice delivery system, firmer steps by the ECI and a proper strengthening of relevant laws.

Active Citizenry:

- Voters should also be aware of the potential to misuse funds, gifts, and other incentives during elections.

State Funding of Elections:

- Various committees, such as Dinesh Goswami(1990) and Inderjeet Committee(1988), on the electoral reforms, have recommended state funding of elections which will curb the use of black money to a large extent and thereby will have a significant impact on limiting criminalization of politics.

Strengthening Election Commission:

- Regulating the affairs of a political party is essential for a cleaner electoral process. Therefore, it is imperative to strengthen the Election Commission of India and ensure its independence.

Amending RPA:

- Increasing criminalisation in politics calls for an amendment in the RPA 1951 to debar the persons from contesting elections against whom any serious Nature of crimes is pending.
- Providing the Right to reject the candidates.
- Checking election time crimes such as Paid news.

Conclusion: -

- Milan Vaishnav in his famous book– ‘When crime pays: Money and muscle in Indian politics’ explain how goondas and mafias have been a part of electoral politics since the birth of Indian democracy.
- Every country’s fate depends upon its politics. Abraham Lincoln says, “Democracy is a government of the people, by the people and for the people”. But now, the rule of law can only be found in books. Criminals, powerful people, the machinery has formed such a dangerous cocktail which is now proving to be poisonous for the society.

- Corruption and criminalization of politics are ruining the roots of democracy. Criminalization of politics has become an enduring phenomenon in India politics. It is destroying the real concept of DEMOCRACY.
- Therefore, it's a huge time now- Parliament must take some serious steps to restraint this threat. We must change the nature of the government machinery, make it more transparent, accountable and pervade.
- This is not an easy task, but we are not powerless, and we can create awareness among people (voters) about their rights and they should vote for the right person. Our leader should be someone who doesn't pay for votes and doesn't take any bribes after being elected. **If we want a clean democracy, we must have clean elections.**

Indo-Pacific Economic Framework

Context: -

- The Union Minister of Commerce and Industry will visit San Francisco to attend the Leaders and Ministerial Engagements of the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework.

Syllabus of Mains – GS 2- IR-Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

What is IPEF?

- Indo-Pacific Economic Forum (IPEF) is a **US-led economic grouping** launched at the QUAD summit in 2022 (in Tokyo, Japan).
- Its focus is primarily on standard setting and facilitating trade.
- It is **not a Free Trade Agreement; thus, it does not propose lower tariffs or preferential market access.**
- 14 member countries of IPEF:
 - All 4 Quad members (India, USA, Australia and Japan)
 - 7 members of ASEAN (Except Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar), and
 - New Zealand and Fiji
- The member countries jointly account for about 40% of the global GDP.

Pillars of IPEF:

1. Trade
2. Supply Chain Resilience,
3. Clean Energy-Decarbonisation-Infrastructure, and
4. Taxes and Anti-corruption measures.

Significance of IPEF

Focus on economic prosperity:

- IPEF aims to establish “high-standard, inclusive, free, and fair trade” to fuel economic activity and investments in the Indo-Pacific region.

Strengthening supply chain resilience:

- It aspires to secure access to vital raw materials, semiconductors, critical minerals, and clean energy tech.

Hedging against China:

- ASEAN countries can hedge against China without overtly antagonizing it since it only calls for economic cooperation.

Challenges Associated with IPEF**US-led, US-Centred initiative:**

- It might become another forum to raise and harbour US tech firms' commercial interests rather than the interest of the Indo-Pacific region.

Volatile US leadership:

- Past unilateral withdrawals from CPTPP (Comprehensive & Progressive Trade Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership), the Paris Deal, etc., have impacted USA's credibility.

A weak strategic tool for China's containment:

- China is much more deeply integrated with many IPEF members through the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)

IPEC and India**Opportunities****Opportunity:**

- With India's withdrawal from RCEP, IPEF (with several RCEP members) provides India another opportunity to be part of a mega economic arrangement outside the influence of China.

Resilient supply chains:

- IPEF members can serve as alternative sources for raw materials requirements. For, e.g., Chips supplied from Malaysia, Minerals from Australia, etc.

In line with India's interest:

- All 4 pillars are aligned with India's interests. For example, enhanced access to clean energy to meet India's Panchamrit commitment, announced at UNFCCC COP26.

Geopolitical significance:

- India's joining of IPEF is a solid commitment to Indo-Pacific and efforts to insulate the region against China's muscular nationalism and expansionist ambitions.

- It also allows India to emerge as a rule maker and not merely a follower of the rules.

Associated Challenges

Divergent positions:

- India's position on cross-border data flows, data localization, e-commerce and privacy rules, and labour, and environmental laws are in stark contrast to the USA.

Impact on WTO negotiations:

- The USA can use this framework to pressure India to support a permanent moratorium on customs duties on electronic transmissions at the WTO.

Conclusion: -

- **The 3Ts:** Trust, Transparency, and Timeliness mentioned by the PM during the launch ceremony of IPEF – are very important for the success of this initiative.
- Synergise existing initiatives such as B3W (Build Back Better World), QUAD, etc., to avoid duplication of efforts and ensure better outcomes.

GS 3

Freight Business of Indian Railway (IR)

Context-

- The Indian Railways (IR) has been on a spending spree with respect to capital expenditure (capex), particularly after the government merged its rail budget with the main budget.
- However, **its operating ratio**, which is the ratio of ordinary working expenses to the gross traffic receipts, has shown no improvement. A lower ratio implies better profitability and surplus for capital investment.
- Railways are most suited for large volumes of bulky materials over long distances. **Rail freight movement is cost-effective, reliable, fast, and environmentally friendly**.

Syllabus of Mains – GS 3- Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc.
Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources,

Why is Bulk Cargo Increasing?

- The IR's freight segment is profitable, whereas the passenger segment makes huge losses.
- The profit from freight traffic is nullified in cross-subsidising passenger services. To increase revenue, IR is trying to boost its freight volumes.
- Relaxed block rake movement rules to provide a facility to load from/to multiple locations.
- Permitted mini rakes.
- Introduced private freight terminals (PFTs).
- Relaxed conditions in private sidings
- **Economic Growth**: A growing economy often leads to increased production and demand for raw materials and goods. This, in turn, can result in higher volumes of bulk cargo being transported by rail.
- **Industrial Expansion**: If there is an expansion of industries that rely on bulk materials such as coal, iron ore, cement, and agricultural products, it could drive an increase in bulk cargo transportation via railways.
- **Infrastructure Development**: Large-scale infrastructure projects, such as construction of roads, bridges, and buildings, often require significant quantities of construction materials like cement, steel, and aggregates. The

transportation of these materials may contribute to increased bulk cargo movement.

Issues of IR

- **Rising debt:** IR's passenger segment makes huge losses.
- **Reducing the share of the railway in bulk cargo** (trucks doing the job inefficient supply chain high costs as well as more carbon emissions)
- **High logistic cost** (due to long waiting times and inefficient operations)
- **Capacity constraints on certain routes** can lead to delays and disruptions in cargo transportation.
- **Congestion at major ports** can affect the smooth flow of cargo to and from the railway network.
- **Lack of effective last-mile connectivity can be a bottleneck.** Efficient transportation of goods requires smooth connectivity between railway stations and the final destinations or distribution centres.

What are the ways to Increase Freight Business?

- **Develop common-user facilities** at cargo aggregation/dispersal points in mining, industrial & cities.
- **Reduce non-price barriers** for cargo transport.
- The IR must also **look at new commodities** like fly ash.
- **Streamline processes to reduce turnaround times** and enhance overall efficiency.
- Ensure **compliance with industry regulations** and safety standards.
- Invest in technologies that **improve fleet management, such as telematics and predictive maintenance.**

Initiatives to boost Infrastructure Investment in IR

PM Gati Shakti (PMGS) policy for a National Master Plan (NMP):

- It aims **to bring synergy to create a seamless multi-modal transport network** in India.

National Logistics Policy (NLP):

- It focuses on **building a national logistics portal** and integrating the platforms of various ministries.

Conclusion: -

- Indian Railway has **developed the Dedicated Freight (DFC)**. Dedicated Freight Corridor (DFC) is a railway route, which is dedicated to freight (goods and commodity) **traffic movement only**. Two dedicated freight corridors, **Dadri to Jawaharlal Nehru Port (western DFC) and Ludhiana to Son Nagar (eastern DFC)** are currently under construction.



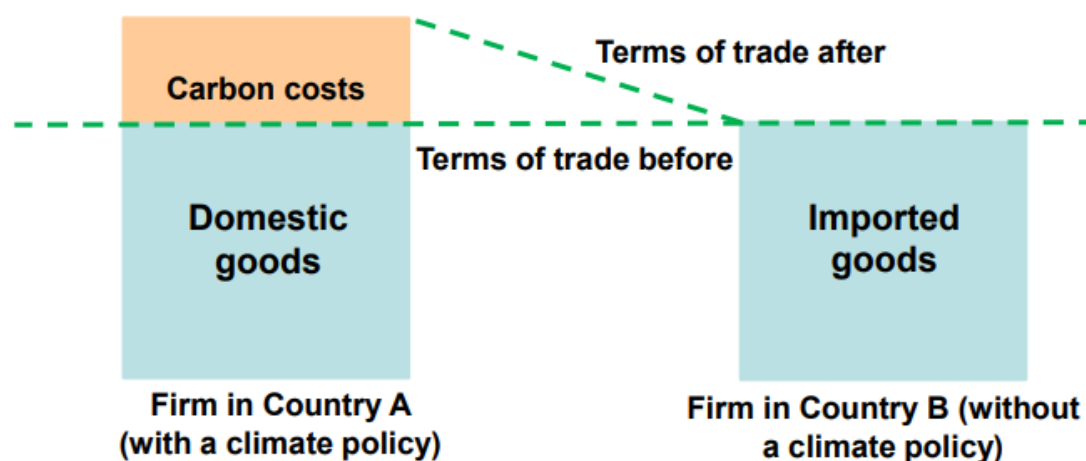
India's Opposition to EU's CRAM

- India has opposed European Union's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) citing that **carbon cannot be priced the same in India and Europe.**
- Government of India has declared that it is working on tax akin to CRAM to aid the local industries.

Syllabus of Mains – GS 3- Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development and employment.

Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM)

- CRAM is a **proposed EU carbon border tax** on imports from countries with carbon-intensive production methods.
- CRAM, which **will start in 2026**, is a part of the **"Fit for 55 in 2030 package"**.
- Imports covered by CRAM: Initially, it will be imposed on the most carbon-intensive imports, i.e. iron and steel, cement, fertilisers, aluminium, hydrogen, and electricity.



Objectives of CRAM / Arguments in Favour of CBAM

Preventing Carbon leakage: -

- Carbon leakage refers to a situation where a company relocates production from strict carbon regulations to more lenient ones.
- CRAM as a carbon border tax will end this loophole of the carbon tax mechanism.
- It preserves the competitiveness of domestic industries subject to carbon pricing.

Level Playing Field: -

- CBAM ensures that domestic and imported goods are subject to similar carbon pricing.
- By doing so it protects the domestic industries from unfair competition.

Encouraging Global Emission Reductions -

- CBAM raises costs for importing for companies from lax climate policy countries.
- This will pressurise these countries to bolster climate policies to remain competitive.

Penalise Free Riders in Fight against Climate Change-

- A free-rider is one who is riding on the contribution of others, despite having means to do so. E.g., the US with its “sometimes in, sometimes out” response to climate action.

Criticism of CBAM: -**Unilateral Measure: -**

- EU has decided on CBAM without agreement with other countries.
- This undermines the spirit of multilateralism and so, it can lead to trade disputes and hinder inter-national climate cooperation.

Discriminatory Trade Barrier for Developing Countries: -

- Historically, developed economies have the primary responsibility for climate change.
- The contribution of the developing countries (the Global South) was negligible. That's why, the Kyoto Protocol acknowledged "common but differentiated responsibilities" in the climate change fight.
- Although, the Paris Agreement asked countries to set voluntary emission targets but it mandated wealthier nations to make financial transfers to developing economies to combat climate change.
- Now, when the developing nations are earning from manufacturing industries, EU by imposing CBAM which considers only present emissions is restricting their development.

Revenue earning mechanism of the EU: -

- The burning of carbon anywhere in the world affects climate change everywhere. CBAM like tax regime can only be meaningful if they are utilised

for the whole world. Otherwise, it will simply become a revenue earning mechanism of the EU.

Double taxation:

- Products being subject to carbon pricing of the exporting country and CBAM.

Market distortions:

- CBAM can inflate the cost of products from specific countries or industries.

Complexity and administrative burden:

- It will become very complication for MNC companies to operate.

Higher consumer prices:

- Ultimately, All the burden goes to final consumer. (Same like GST)

Countries that will be Most Affected by CBAM

- According to United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), countries most affected by CBAM are Russia, China, Turkey, India, Brazil, South Africa, and Mozambique.

India's Trade with the European Union

- The EU is India's third largest trading partner, accounting for 10.8% of total Indian trade.
- India is the EU's 10th largest trading partner, accounting for 2.1% of EU total trade in goods.
- Trade in services between the EU and India reached €30.4 billion in 2020.

Vision India@ 2047

Context: -

- The Vision India@2047 document by Niti Aayog will provide the roadmap for India to become a developed economy with an **estimated \$30 trillion GDP by 2047**.
- It will provide a roadmap for India's progress in 2030 and the ultimate vision for 2047.
- In early 2024, the Prime Minister is expected to unveil a road map to transform the country into a developed nation with a USD 30 trillion economy by the time it completes 100 years of Independence.

Vision India@2047 Contents

The document will outline structural changes and reforms necessary to:

- Transform India into a \$30 trillion developed economy by 2047.
- Achieve per-capita income of \$18,000-20,000.

The vision document will emphasise the development of:

- Human capital
- Leveraging India's market size
- Addressing regional disparities

It will include government process re-engineering and reducing duplication in ministries and departments.

Road To \$30 Trillion Economy				
Indicator	Unit	2030	2040	2047
GDP at current prices	\$ trillion	6.7	16.1	29
Per capita GDP at current prices	\$	4,418	10,021	17,590
Exports	\$ trillion	1.6	4.6	8.7
Imports	\$ trillion	1.9	5.9	12.1
Investment	₹ trillion	195.5	591.1	1,273.4
Savings	₹ trillion	207.8	649.4	1,339.7

Source: Niti Aayog

Current State of the Indian Economy: -

- In 2022, India's GDP surpassed that of the UK & France, making it the world's fifth-largest economy.
- India's GDP is estimated at \$3.7 trillion, and it is expected to overtake Japan and Germany by 2030, with a projected nominal GDP of \$7.3 trillion by that year.

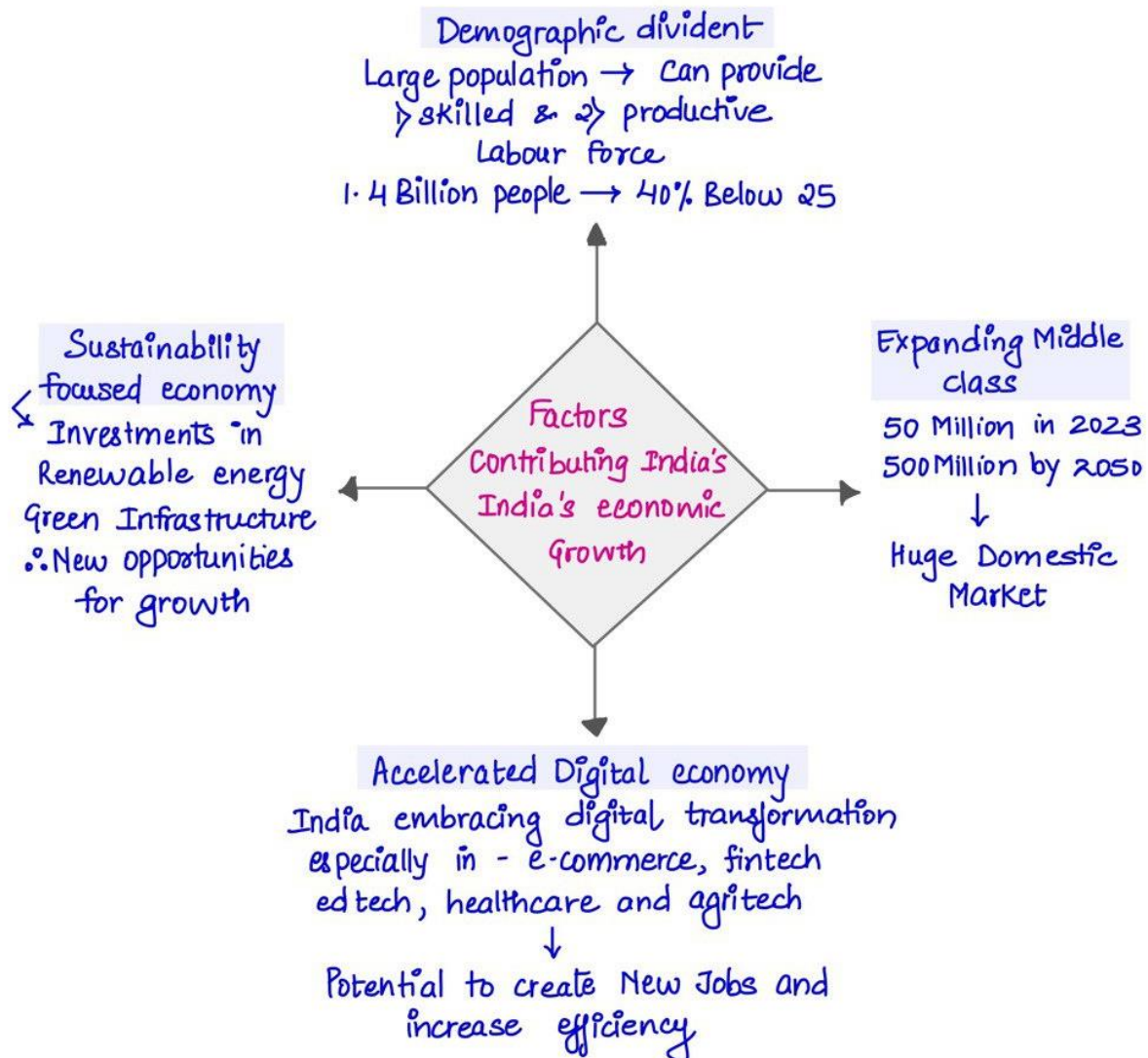
Indian Economy by PPP Exchange Rate

- In 2008, India's GDP in PPP terms surpassed Japan's to become the third-largest economy.
- Currently, India is behind the United States and China.

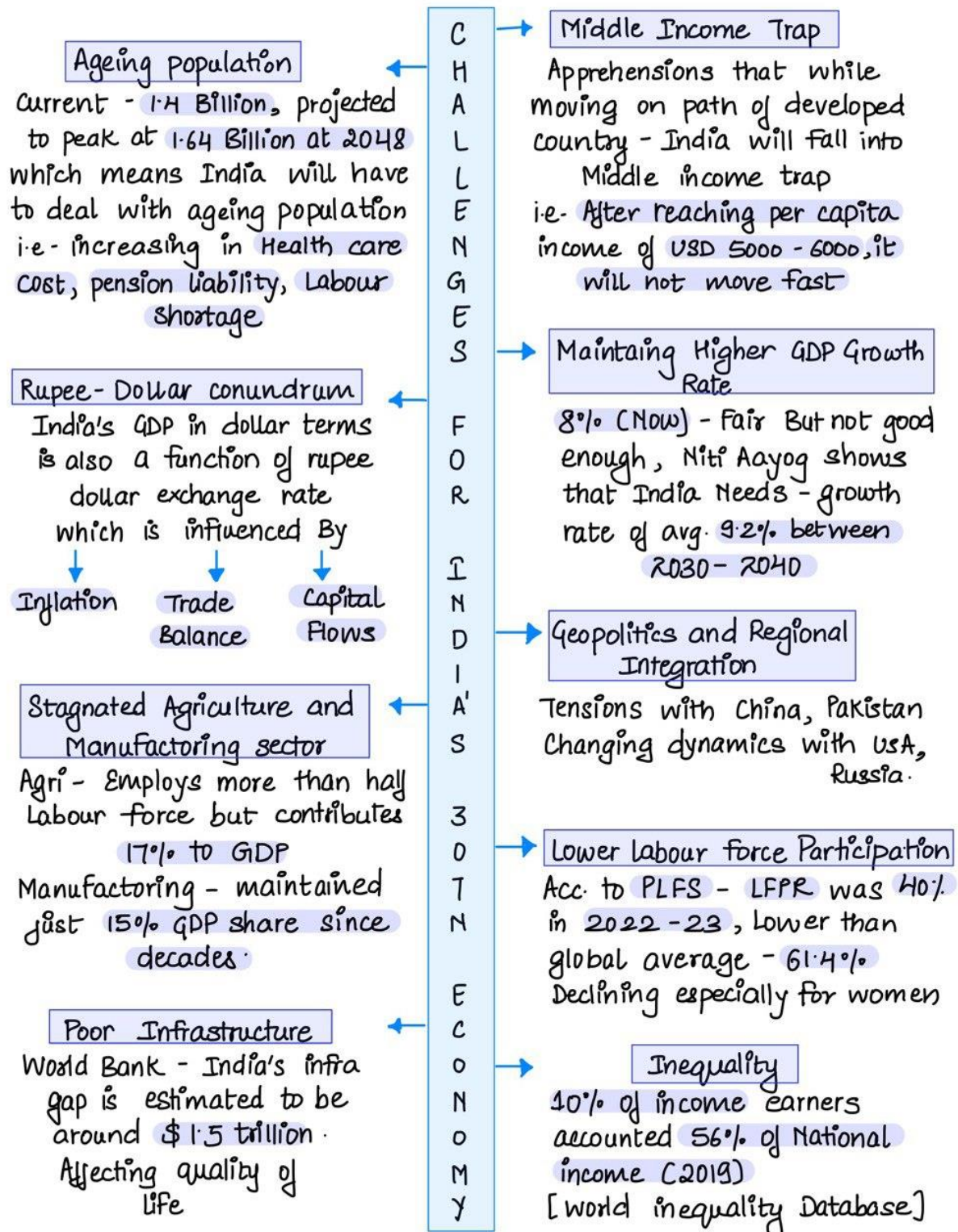
To achieve the Vision India@2047 goals, India needs annual economic growth rates of:

- 9.2% (2030-2040)
- 8.8% (2040-2047)
- 9% (2030-2047)

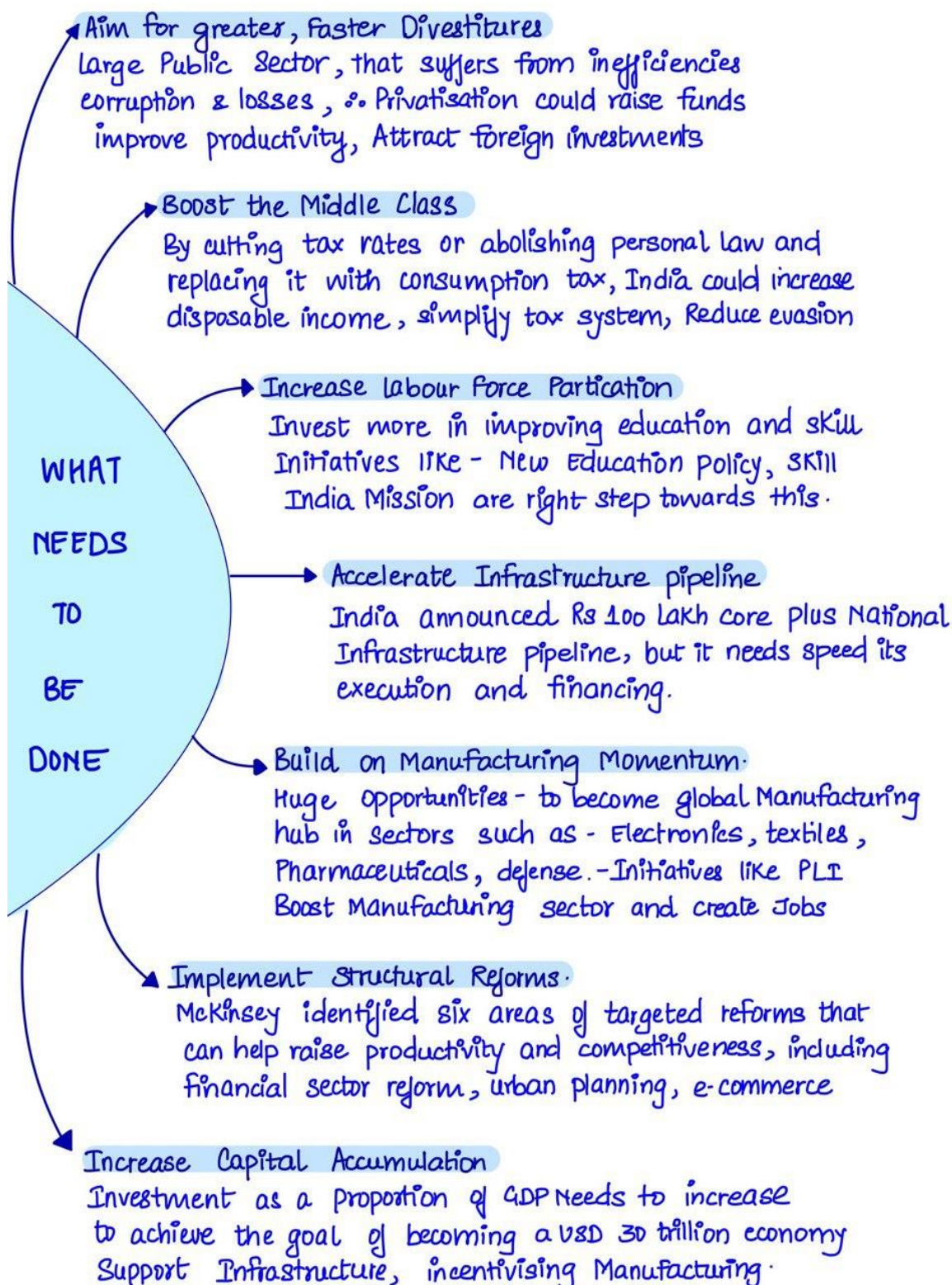
Factors that may Contribute to India's Economic Growth



Challenges before India's 30 trillion Dollar Economy Vision



What Needs to be Done to be 30 trillion economy?



Conclusion: -

- It is imperative that, as a nation we are setting goal for ourselves. We don't need to focus on just numbers and becoming 30 trillion economy but our focus should be on inclusive and humane development. The country where top 1% population held 40% wealth, we must focus on capacity building and not just equality of opportunity but also equality of outcomes.



Long Working Hours

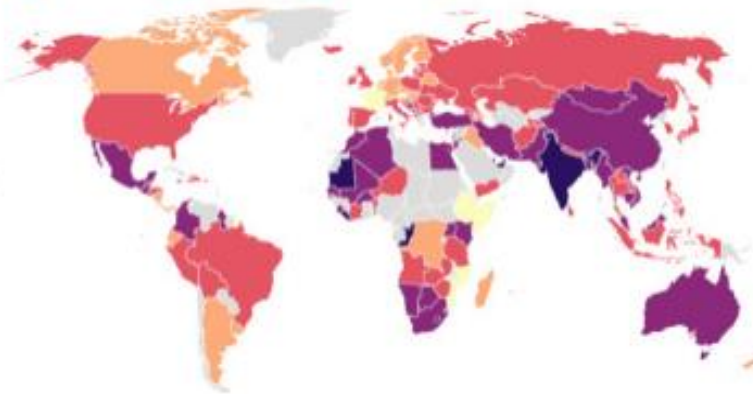
Context: -

- N.R. Narayana Murthy stated that India has one of the lowest productivity rates and suggested that the country's youth should consider working 70 hours a week.
- The data shows that Murthy is wrong on several counts.

Most Hardworking Workforce: -

Average number of hours worked per week

< 30.26	30.26–35.84	35.84–41.42	41.42–47	≥ 47
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- The data suggest that Indians are among the most hardworking workforce in the world.
- India ranks seventh globally for average weekly working hours, with 48 hours per worker per week, according to the International Labour Organization (ILO).
- A significant proportion of the population in the UAE and Qatar comprises Indians, who are among the top ten on the hardworking list.
- The Gov's time-use survey in 2019 found that men between 15 and 59 in urban India spent an average of over 60 hours a week in paid employment.
- A research paper published in Harvard Business shows that the surge in working hours in developed nations can be partially attributed to the availability of the Indian and Chinese workforce.

Working Hours and Productivity: -

- The productivity is not linked to how many hours people work, and there are decreasing returns to working long hours.
- Various studies indicate that working over 50 hours a week reduces productivity. Taking an entire day off each week increases hourly output.

- Countries among the top ten in long working hours, such as Gambia, Bhutan, Lesotho, and the Congo, have very poor productivity.
- On the other hand, countries such as Norway, Denmark, Belgium, and Switzerland, known for their low working hours and great work-life balance, have high productivity.
- Countries such as the UAE and Qatar have higher productivity with longer hours due to the massive capital investments made by these countries.



Issues of Long Working Hour: -

Unsustainable:

- It might be possible for someone to sustain a 70-hour work week for a week or two, but it is not sustainable in the long run.

Affect the well-being:

- Long working hours affect an individual's physical and mental health.
- Working more than 55 hours per week increases the risk of developing cardiovascular diseases.
- The idea that people under 40 can handle a heavier workload is flawed.
- The risk of cardiovascular diseases starts before age 40 due to cumulative damage over the years.

Happiness will be a casualty:

- Extended working hours affects work-life balance & causes mental health issues.
- In the World Happiness Index, 2023, India holds the 126th position.

Loss for Women:

- A long working hour is against women's career progression.
- Women, especially mothers with young children with long working hours, would not have much time for themselves after all the care work.
- They may opt for more minor shifts for lower pay after they become mothers.

Way Forward: -

- It is not advisable for the country's youth to work excessively long hours, as this can have adverse effects on their health and well-being and can ultimately hinder growth and development.
- Gains made from long working hours will eventually be offset by higher healthcare costs and lower life-expectancy.
- Indians should be encouraged to work smarter, not longer. An exhausted nation won't have the time or resources to upskill or innovate. India cannot afford to stop growing.
- It is crucial to implement stricter labour laws that limit working hours to ensure that employees are healthy, productive, and capable of sustaining their careers without compromising their well-being.
- Achieving this balance is essential for the overall well-being of the workforce and the long-term success of any nation.
- Many countries have implemented limits on work hours, typically ranging from 30 to 45 hours per week, with a maximum cap of 55 hours to protect the well-being of employees.
- The government should improve the education system and provide workers with the skills necessary to compete, enhancing productivity.
- It is essential to provide jobs to more people and offer them a chance to enter the formal economy rather than relying on employee overtime.
- As per the "State of Working India 2023" report, over 40 per cent of graduates under 25 years old are unemployed.

Conclusion

- Certainly, **hard work is the foundation of success, but it's not just about the hours put in; it's the dedication and enthusiasm that matter.**
- The goal is to make work fulfilling, allowing a seamless integration of work and personal life. When young professionals are passionate and purpose-driven, achieving work-life harmony becomes a natural outcome.



Snake Venom as Recreational Drug

Context: -

- An FIR was registered under the Wildlife (Protection) Act against Elvish Yadav for allegedly supplying snake venom.
- Snake venom is used as a recreational drug; its smuggling is a multi-million-dollar illicit industry.
- To use snake venom as recreational drug, snakes were deliberately made to bite on the consumer's feet or tongue.
- Neurotoxin nature of snake venom that causes analgesia (inability to feel pain).
- The most commonly used snakes by addicts in India are cobra, common krait, and green snake.
- People who use animal parts/products to obtain a psychoactive stance are known as psychonauts.

What is meant by Recreational Drug?

- A recreational drug is any drug that is used for inducing pleasure or alter one's state of mind.
- They can be legal or illegal. Their types include:
 - **Stimulants:** Increase alertness and energy. E.g., cocaine, methamphetamine, and caffeine.
 - **Depressants:** Produce a calming effect. E.g., alcohol, marijuana, and benzodiazepines.
 - **Hallucinogens:** Produce hallucinations. E.g., LSD, psilocybin, and DMT.

Concerns with Recreational Drugs: -

- **Addiction:** - Some recreational drugs have a high potential for addiction and dependency
- **Overdose**
- **Mental health problems:** - Drug use can lead to short-term and long-term cognitive impairment, affecting memory, attention, and overall cognitive function.
- **Social problems:** E.g., unemployment, crime, and homelessness.
- Recreational drug use can impair judgment and decision-making, leading to risky behaviours such as unsafe sex, driving under the influence, and engagement in criminal activities.

Why Using Snake Venom as Recreational Drug is Problematic?

Toxicity:

- Snake venom can cause life-threatening reactions when introduced into the human body.

Legal Consequences:

- Sec. 42 of Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 prohibits the collection, possession, and sale of snake venom without a permit from the Chief Wildlife Warden of the state.

Conservation Concerns:

- Illegal collection of snake venom causes decline of snake populations.
- Without snakes, the number of prey species like rodents would increase to unnatural levels and destroy the stability of the ecosystem, the food chain, and the food web.

Conclusion: -

- Addressing concerns related to recreational drug use requires a comprehensive approach that involves education, prevention, treatment, and support services.
- Public health initiatives and policies are needed to develop to mitigate the negative impact of drug use on individuals and society.
- It's crucial for individuals to be aware of the potential risks associated with recreational drug use and to seek help if needed.

Deepfakes Issue: Urgent Need for AI Regulation

Context: -

- Famous personalities worldwide have been targeted using deepfakes.

Syllabus of Mains – GS 3- Science and Technology- developments and their applications and effects in everyday life.

Awareness in the fields of IT

What is meant by Deepfakes?

- Deepfakes are synthetic media in which video, audio, and images are edited and manipulated using artificial intelligence. It is **hyper-realistic digital falsification**.
- The **term** “deepfake” was coined in 2017 when an anonymous Reddit user used Google's open source deep-learning technology to create explicit videos and used the pseudonym “Deepfakes”.

How Deepfake is created?

- Deepfakes are created using a **technique called generative adversarial networks (GANs)**, which involve **two competing neural networks**: a generator and a discriminator.
- The generator tries to create fake images or videos that look realistic, while the discriminator tries to distinguish between the real and the fake ones.
- The generator learns from the feedback of the discriminator and improves its output until it can fool the discriminator.
- Deepfakes require a large amount of data, such as photos or videos, of the source and the target person, which are often collected from the internet or social media without their consent or knowledge.

Why Creating Deepfakes Have Become Easy?

- Advancement in AI and computational power
- Accessibility of deepfake creation tools
- Availability of abundant data (esp. social media): Original video, audio, and images of the targeted person are needed to train AI models.

Deepfakes vs Shallowfakes: -

Features	Shallowfakes	Deepfakes
Creation method	Basic video editing techniques	Artificial intelligence (AI)
Quality	Low-quality	High-quality
Difficulty to spot	Easy	Difficult
Potential for harm	Low	High

Benefits of Deepfakes: -

Education:

- Deepfakes can be used to create more engaging and interactive educational materials.

Language translation:

- It can create realistic and natural-sounding language translations.

Accessibility:

- It can aid people with disabilities by offering realistic sign language interpretation and voice synthesis for non-verbal individuals.

Virtual Assistants:

- It can be used to create more natural and human-like virtual assistants.

Personal Security:

- Some use deepfakes to safeguard their privacy by creating fake online identities, concealing their real identities.

Concerns with Deepfakes: -

Ethical concern:

- Deepfakes can be used for identity theft, defaming innocent individuals, violating privacy rights, and causing personal and social harm to victims.

National security:

- It can propagate misinformation and fuel tensions between communities.

International relations:

- It can create conflicts between unfriendly and friendly nations.

Eroding traditional media:

- It can erode the trust in traditional media, fostering a **culture of factual relativism and liar's dividend.**

Threat to democracy:

- It can manipulate election outcomes by influencing public opinion through misinformation and propaganda.

Financial frauds and scams:

- Large-scale financial frauds and scams can be carried out using it.
- Such incidents can result in personal financial losses and economic destabilisation.

Lack of proper regulations:

- Many countries lack adequate regulations and penalties for controlling and addressing deepfake technology misuse.

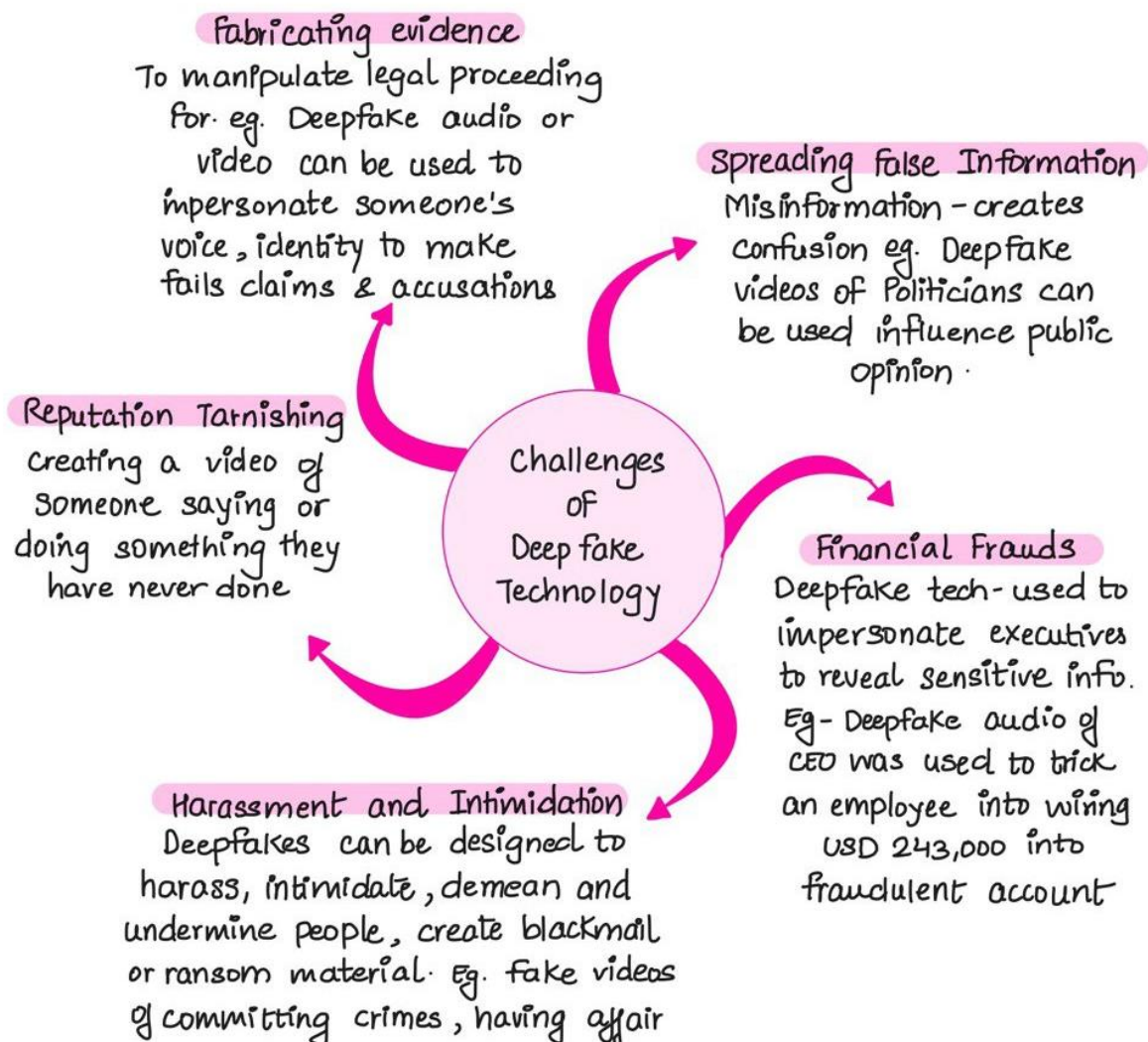
Technological challenges:

- Detecting and mitigating deepfakes is a continual challenge as the technology behind them evolves rapidly.

Hostility for women:

- It makes online platforms more hostile for women.

Challenges of Deepfake:



Regulation for Deepfake Technology in India

- In India, there are no legal rules against using deepfake technology.
- However, specific laws can be addressed for misusing the tech, which includes copyright violation, defamation, and cyber-crimes.

Way Forward

- Technology is a **double-edged sword** rather than a necessary evil. So, deepfake technology must be regulated effectively to reap its benefits while curtailing its misuse.
- Media literacy for consumers is the most effective tool to combat disinformation and deepfakes.

- Developing legislative solutions after collaborating with the technology industry, civil society, and policymakers. For e.g., **Bletchley Park Declaration**.
- Developing accessible technology solutions supported by AI to detect deep fakes.
- Tech companies like Google, Meta, and X should take effective measures to counter deepfakes.
- Using watermarks, metadata, and blockchain technologies to detect deepfake technology.
- Multifactor authentication (MFA) and anti-fraud solutions can also reduce deepfake risks.

Conclusion: -

- The best method to deal with this problem is with technical solutions supported by artificial intelligence that can recognize and block deep fakes.
- Prior to resolving the issues associated with deep fakes, media literacy must be improved.
- There is also a need for easy-to-use and accessible technology solutions to detect deep fakes, authenticate media, and amplify authoritative sources.
- **On the part of society**, to counter the menace of deep fakes, there is a need to take the responsibility to be a **critical consumer of media on the Internet, think and pause before sharing on social media, and be part of the solution.**

The Bletchley Park Declaration: Outcome of the World's First AI Safety Summit

- At the summit, the Bletchley Park Declaration was signed to minimise risks from 'frontier AI'.
- 28 countries signed the declaration, including the US, China, Japan, the UK, France, **India**, and the European Union.

Indian Rupee Depreciation

Context: -

- Rupee depreciation negatively impacted petroleum product imports, but its positively impacted petroleum product exports from India.

Syllabus of Mains – GS 3- Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development and employment.

What is mean by Rupee depreciation?

- Rupee depreciation is the decline in the value of the Indian rupee against other foreign currencies, particularly the US dollar. This means that it takes more rupees to buy one dollar.
- **For example:** USD 1 used to equal to Rs. 70, now USD 1 is equal to Rs. 80, implying that the rupee has depreciated relative to the dollar i.e. it takes more rupees to purchase a dollar.
- Rupee depreciation can have a significant impact on the Indian economy, both positive and negative.

Reasons of Rupee Depreciation: -

Trade Imbalance:

- Increased demand for foreign currencies for imports can pressure the domestic currency, leading to depreciation.

Inflation Differentials:

- Higher inflation than trading partners erodes a country's currency purchasing power.

Interest Rates:

- Lowering interest rates by a country's central bank can make its currency less attractive to investors seeking higher returns, leading to depreciation.

Speculation:

- If traders and investors anticipate that a currency will weaken in the future, they may sell it in large volumes, causing its value to decline.

Political and Economic Stability:

- Political instability, economic uncertainty, or financial crises can undermine investor confidence, leading to currency depreciation in a country.

External Debt:

- As external debt needs to be serviced and repaid in foreign currencies, the demand for those currencies increases, leading to depreciation of the domestic currency.

Global Economic Conditions:

- Factors such as global economic slowdowns, financial crises, or geopolitical tensions can impact currency values.

Impacts of Rupee Depreciation: -**Positive Impacts of Rupee Depreciation: -****Export competitiveness:**

- A weaker rupee makes Indian goods and services more competitively priced in international markets.

Boosts tourism:

- Cheaper travel expenses due to a weaker rupee can boost tourism revenue.

Higher remittances:

- A weaker rupee increases the value of remittances.

Balance of Payments:

- Higher export earnings and reduced imports due to increased prices can improve the country's balance of payments.

Negative Impacts of Rupee Depreciation: -

- **Increased debt burden:** When the rupee depreciates, the cost of repaying these loans increases.
- **Inflation:** The increased cost of imports combined with other factors contribute to inflation.
- **Trade deficit concerns:** A weaker rupee may boost exports but raises concerns about a widening trade deficit if higher export earnings are offset by increased import costs.
- Higher import costs
- Reduced purchasing power
- Volatility and uncertainty in financial markets

Why is Indian Rupee Depreciating in 2023?

Indian rupee was the worst performing Asian currency in 2022.

Capital outflows:

- Due to the high US dollar yields, investors are pulling out money from domestic markets and investing in the US market for higher returns.
- The surge of US dollar was driven by investors seeking safe havens amidst concerns about:
 1. a potential global recession
 2. rising inflation in various countries
 3. ongoing war in Ukraine

Inflation pressures:

- High inflation exerts a notable downward pressure on a country's currency value.
- India's retail inflation, which is measured by consumer price index (CPI) surged to a 15-month high of 7.44% in July 2023, up from 4.81% in June.

US Fed policy:

- The US Fed aggressively raised interest rates by 425 basis point (bps) in 2022 in its fight against inflation. This led to a higher interest rate differential between the US and India, and investors pulled out money from the domestic market and started investing in the US market to take advantage of higher rates.

What are Devaluation and Depreciation?

- In general, devaluation and depreciation are often used interchangeably.
- They both have the same effect – a fall in the value of the currency which makes imports more expensive, and exports more competitive.
- However, there is a difference in the way they are applied.
- A devaluation occurs when a country's central bank makes a conscious decision to lower its exchange rate in a fixed or semi-fixed exchange rate.
- A depreciation is when there is a fall in the value of a currency in a floating exchange rate.

Conclusion: -

- There is not any bad thing if currency is depreciating but it should depreciate naturally and not haphazardly by any external shock.
- In Modern economy, it is normal and particularly its more beneficial for developing countries but it must be naturally.



IUCN Red List 2.0

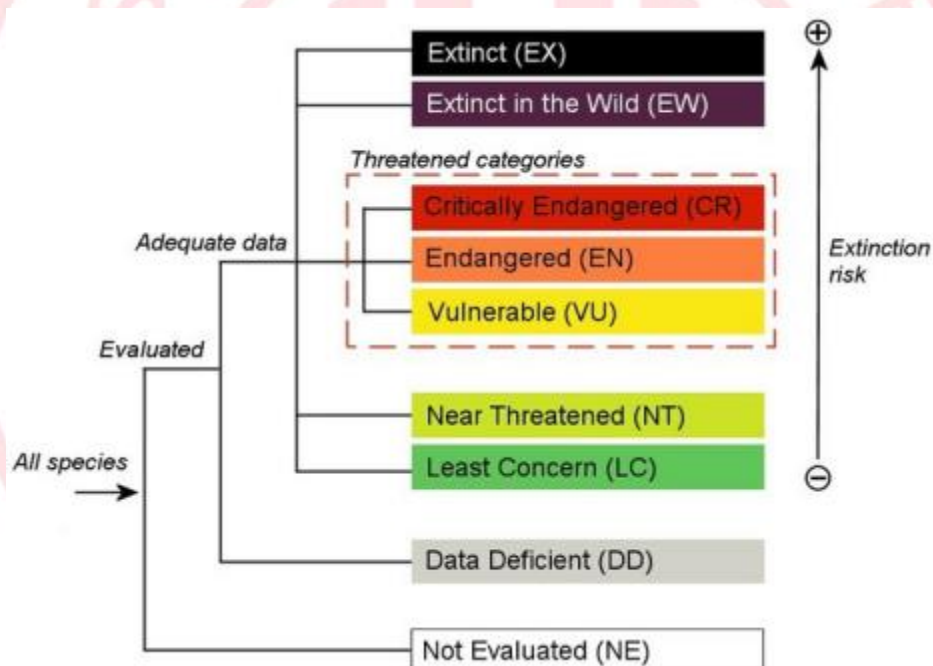
Context: -

- Scientists and conservationists have expressed concerns that the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species is outdated and unreliable. (Source- Down To Earth Magazine)

International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)

- IUCN is an international organisation working in nature conservation and sustainable use of natural resources.
- Founded in 1948, it is **headquartered in Gland, Switzerland**.
- It is a membership union of government and civil society organisations.
- IUCN is now the world's largest and most diverse environmental network.

IUCN Red List of Threatened Species (or Red Data Book)



Issues with IUCN Red List: -

Inadequate coverage:

- IUCN has assessed only 150,000 species, accounting for less than 10% of the world's two million described species.
- The Red List identifies 42,100 threatened species, while the IPBES suggests over a million species are at risk of extinction.

Reassessments:

- IUCN-recommended reassessments every 10 years have not been completed.

Outdated:

- 28% of assessments on the Red List are outdated, posing a potential challenge to its long-term reliability.

Reforms:

- Lack of transparency and reform

Wrong assignment of species status:

- The hegemony within some IUCN SSC sections results in inaccurate Red List statuses.

West Biasness

IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC)

- It is a science-based network of thousands of volunteer experts from almost every country in the world.
- It informs IUCN on biodiversity conservation, species' intrinsic value, ecosystem health, services, and their impact on human livelihoods.

Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES)

- IPBES is an **independent intergovernmental body** established by States to strengthen the science policy interface for biodiversity and ecosystem services.
- It was established in Panama City in 2012 by 94 governments.
- It is **not a United Nations body**.
- ***However***, the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) provides secretariat services to IPBES.

Implications of Flawed IUCN Red List

- It becomes challenging to receive funding for a species that is not threatened.
- Unless the species is categorised as endangered or critical, finding funding becomes difficult.

- Even a vulnerable category is not reason enough to seek funding for conservation.
- Not getting funding from UN various funds

Way Ahead

- There is a need for version 2.0 of the Red List, seeking to overhaul the systems entirely.
- Conserve locally endangered populations, as species extinction happens one population at a time.
- Funders should diversify evidence sources beyond the IUCN Red List when allocating funds.



Electric Vehicles (EVs)

Context:

- Bike and taxi drivers in Delhi have hailed that switching to electric two-wheelers has rendered nearly 50,000 jobless.

Types of EVs

Battery Electric Vehicle (BEV):

- It is fully powered by electricity. These are more efficient compared to hybrid and plug-in hybrids.

Hybrid Electric Vehicle:

Hybrid Electric Vehicle (HEV):

- It uses both an internal combustion (usually petrol) engine and a battery-powered motor powertrain. The petrol engine is used both to drive and charge when the battery is empty. These vehicles are not as efficient as fully electric or plug-in hybrid vehicles.

Plug-in Hybrid Electric Vehicle (PHEV):

- Uses both an internal combustion engine and battery charged from an external socket (they have a plug). PHEVs are more efficient than HEVs but less efficient than BEVs.

Why is there need for EVs?

Paris Agreement goals:

- To meet Paris Agreement goals and achieve targets committed under Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs).

Rising motorization rates:

- NITI Aayog aims to achieve EV sales penetration of 70% for all commercial cars, 30% for private cars, 40% for buses and 80% for two and three-wheelers by 2030.

Improve Air Quality of Cities:

- Internal combustion engines (ICE) have contributed significantly to deteriorating the air quality in Indian cities.

International commitments:

- It can help to fulfil the India's international commitments under Panchamrita such as achieving Net-Zero carbon emissions by 2070.

Improve penetration of related infrastructure:

- To improve battery rechargeable infrastructure in the country which is still concentrated near big cities.

Advantages of EVs**Low operating costs:**

- Lower fuel costs, require less maintenance than traditional gasoline-powered vehicles.

Environmental benefits:

- Produce zero emissions.

Energy independence:

- As more renewable energy sources are used to power EVs, it can reduce dependence on fossil fuels.

Improved performance:

- EVs have instant torque, so they can accelerate quickly, and have a smoother and quieter ride.

Issues with EVs: -

- Longer charging time.
- Limited model options.
- Lack of skilled workers.
- Still evolving battery technology.
- High Initial cost.
- Limited charging infrastructure.

Government Initiatives for EVs

- National Electric Mobility Mission Plan (NEMMP) 2020
- **E-Amrit portal:** Launched at COP26 Summit in Glasgow, it as one-stop destination for all information on EVs.
- **GST restructuring:** GST on EVs has been reduced from 12% to 5%; GST on chargers/ charging stations for electric vehicles has been reduced from 18% to 5% by GST Council.
- PLI scheme for manufacturing of Advanced Chemistry Cell (ACC) to bring down prices of battery.
- **Green license plates** announced by the Ministry of Road Transport & Highways (MoRTH).

- Go Electric campaign to create awareness of the benefits of EVs and EV charging infrastructure.
- Global EV30@30 campaign which aims for at least 30% of new vehicle sales to be electric by 2030.

Way Ahead

Reduction in upfront costs: -

- By enhancing subsidy on electric four wheelers, encouraging States to waive off road tax, by providing compensation, further reducing GST on EVs.

Improvement in Bidding Process: -

- Develop robust mechanism for all bidding processes such as Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme for 'Advanced Chemistry Cell (ACC) Battery Storage'.

Promoting other technologies: -

- Along with EVs such as flex fuel vehicles, Hydrogen ICE, Hydrogen fuel cell vehicles etc.

Non-financial incentives

- Such as priority lanes, reserved parking for EV only vehicle, EV Purchase subsidy over and above FAME II subsidy etc. for better response from consumers.

Single window clearance system: -

- For availing clearances and subsidies/rebate in transparent manner.

Conclusion

- India has set a very ambitious target to achieve net zero by 2070 at UNFCC COP26. To achieve this goal, EVs have a crucial role to play.
- While EVs themselves produce zero tailpipe emissions, the overall environmental impact of electric vehicles depends on the source of the electricity used to charge them. If the electricity is generated from renewable sources like solar or wind, the environmental benefits are maximized.

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