



# EDITORIALS

**Monthly Gist Compilation**

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# The Best Way to Vote

**Category: GS 2(Polity & Governance)**

There have been claims of hacking of EVMs and counter-claims of its impossibility.

## **Can EVMs be hacked?**

- All computer systems can be hacked .
- That a system has not been hacked provides no guarantee that it cannot be.

## **Manual ballot vs EVM**

- Manual ballot enables poll officials to ensure correctness on the spot.
- In contrast, the obscurity of EVM does not provide this facility.

## **Ways to secure voting**

- Onus of establishing trust must always lie with the designers.
- All votes must be accurately counted.
- It should be impossible to determine who an individual voted for.
- If a voter claims to have voted differently from what he actually did, it should be possible to prove that the claim is false.
- Identity verification must be certified by the polling officer.
- EVM should be tamper-proof.
- EVM should be resilient to network and component failures.
- Design and implementation of all EVMs must be identical.
- The EVM should be able to self-certify.

## **Conclusion**

EVM Must be subjected to rigorous scrutiny by the general public, institutions, political party representatives and experts. s

# Ensure a Minimum Income for All

**Category: GS 2 (Welfare)**

**Why has this issue cropped up?**

The idea of a universal basic income (UBI) is gaining ground globally.

**What is UBI ?**

It requires the government to pay every citizen a fixed amount of money on a regular basis and without any conditionalities.

**Why a UBI ?**

Millions of people remain unemployed and are extremely poor.

**Limited version of UBI**

Govt has unfolded a limited version of the UBI in the form of the PM-KISAN.

**Where will UBI work ?**

- It is not a substitute for basic public services.
- There is need to transfer money only to extremely poor such as landless labourers, agricultural workers and marginal farmers.

**How the above groups are at disadvantage?**

- Institutional credits for these groups are very low.
- They have to borrow from moneylenders at exorbitant interest rates.
- Benefits of subsidised fertilizers and power do not reach them.
- Automation of low-skill jobs and formalisation of the retail sector have rendered them jobless.

**How can UBI help these groups?**

- An income support can be a good supplement to their livelihoods.
- This additional income can reduce the incidence of indebtedness.
- Can improve nutrient intake and increase enrolment and school attendance.
- Improved health and educational outcomes and hence a more productive workforce.
- It will reduce income inequalities.
- Increased demand due to increased income will promote economic activities in rural areas.

### **Can UBI discourage beneficiaries from seeking work?**

The income support suggested above is not too large to discourage beneficiaries from seeking work.

### **Can UBI replace basic services?**

UBI will deliver the benefits only if it comes on top of public services such as health and education.

### **How to make UBI effective?**

- transfer the money into the bank accounts of women.
- Budgetary allocation for basic services should be raised significantly.
- Programmes such as MGNREGS should also stay.
- It will have to be restricted to the poorest of poor households.
- Aadhaar can be used to rule out duplications and perform updation.
- The tax kitty can be expanded by reintroducing wealth tax.
- The cost of UBI will have to be shared by States.

### **Conclusion**

The income transfer scheme is costly but poverty is much higher.

# The Basics are Vital

**Category: GS 2 (Health)**

**Theme of the article**

There is no alternative to strengthening primary health care.

**Why has this issue cropped up?**

The National Health Policy (NHP) 2017 advocated allocating resources of up to two-thirds or more to primary care.

**Is India on the path of providing primary health care?**

- The current expenditure outlay is less than half of the estimated requirement.
- The present rate of building health and wellness centres is inadequate.
- NHM's share in the health budget fell to 50% in 2019.
- There is a shortage of PHCs and sub-health centres .
- Numerous primary-level facilities lack basic facilities such as toilets.
- There is a staggering shortage of medical and paramedical staff.

**Significance of primary health care**

- There is no alternative to strengthening primary health care.
- It's role shall also be critical in the success of the PMJAY insurance scheme.

**Conclusion**

Without Primary Health Care, the ninth dimension ('Healthy India') of "Vision 2030" will remain unfulfilled

# The Gulf as a Channel of Peace

Category: GS Paper 2 ( International Relations)

## Theme of the article

Gulf countries can help defuse the tensions between India and Pakistan.

## The Pakistan angle

- In the past, shared religious identity of Gulf with Pakistan gave it a political edge over India in the region.
- In recent years, India has begun to correct that imbalance which can cause Gulf countries to put some pressure on Pakistan.

## India-Gulf link

- The security of the Indian Subcontinent and the Gulf region have always been inter-linked.
- During British era, the Raj offered security protection, a framework for commerce and some administrative support.
- Independent India tended to underestimate the importance of the strategic intimacy with the Gulf.

## Pakistan replaced India in Gulf

- Pakistan became a member of CENTO which led to its cooperation with a number of countries in the Gulf region.
- India steadily lost political ground to Pakistan in the 1970s.
- Matters got worse in the 1980s as India remained silent on the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan.
- The 1990s saw Pakistan mobilise significant support to castigate India's policies.

## The winds of change

- The nuclear tests by India and Pakistan and the Kargil crisis in led to restructuring of South Asia's relations with the Gulf.
- During the Kargil War, Saudi Arabia encourage Pakistan to pull it's army back.
- That Jaswant Singh was the first Indian foreign minister to ever visit Saudi Arabia in late 2000.
- The bilateral relationship with Saudi Arabia kept on improving since then.

# A Fight for The Forest

Category: GS 2 ( Welfare)

## Why has this issue cropped up?

Supreme Court stayed its order on the eviction of forest dwellers.

## Impact of the order

- The stay offers only a temporary relief.
- It provides an opportunity to protect both nature and social justice.

## Issues with eviction

- Lack of studies that quantify the deforestation caused by marginalized communities.
- Concerns about the rejection process, outdated forest maps, etc.
- Large companies are not treated strictly despite several violations .

## Way forward

- Conservation actions must be based on the same principles as social justice.
- Restriction of human activities must not result in injustice to marginalized.
- District administrations must protect forest dwellers from exploitation.
- Forest diversion by the powerful should not remain unchecked.

## Conclusion

Conservationists should stand up for the welfare of both wildlife and forest dwellers.



# Next Stage in the Great Game

Category: GS 2(International relations)

## Why has this issue cropped up?

International talks with the Taliban leadership has gained momentum.

## India's involvement in talks with Taliban

In 2017, India protested against being cut out of the talks with Taliban leaders. It then negotiated to join them.

## Valid concerns

- The last round of talks appeared to be held on the Taliban's terms.
- Agreements on ceasefire have now been made the last priority.
- These talks have ignored the democratically-led government in Kabul.
- The talks continue without acknowledging a role for India.
- Taliban continues to carry out terror attacks in Afghanistan even during talks.
- The prospect of chaos and civil war after the U.S. pullout from Afghanistan.

## Can history be repeated in Afghanistan?

- Taliban would now not be able to overrun and hold any Afghan city as it did before.
- Given social media and the progress in education, Taliban will not be able to control Afghans now.
- Taliban can't harm Indian interests in the country, given the special place India enjoys, amongst Afghans..

## Way forward

- Direct talks between India and the Taliban at this point would serve little purpose.
- India must leverage its influence to ensure a post-reconciliation vision among various sections.
- India is host to a sizeable population of Afghans and an outreach is important.
- Both India and Pakistan have a shared responsibility in Afghanistan post-reconciliation.
- India should not lose sight of the bigger picture — it's longstanding relationship with the people of Afghanistan.

**Conclusion**

Lack of ambition for the India-Afghanistan relationship would be much more detrimental to India's interest.

CHROME IAS

# Reality of Impunity, Rhetoric of Human Rights

**Category: GS 2 (Human Rights)**

**Theme of the article**

Isolated innovations are not enough to stop cases of custodial torture.

**Why has this issue cropped up?**

Recently, in Bihar, there were two victims of custodial torture.

**A common story in India**

- Torture is common across police stations in India.
- 40% of complaints received by NHRC are against custodial violence.

**Factors responsible for custodial deaths in India**

- Top police officials tolerate it citing it as a 'practical tool'.
- Lower judiciary is not vigilant regarding custodial security.
- Pliant doctors further weaken protections to those in custody.
- Oversight bodies do not show activism in case of complaints.
- Legal precedents towards torture prevention are not paid heed to.
- Political executive must grant permission before public servants can be prosecuted.

**Is custodial torture helpful to reduce crime?**

- Torture is not a useful tool to stop crime besides being illegal and immoral.
- Forced confessions destroys the process of deciding through evidence-based means.
- Torture actually supports more crime by creating a class of criminals.

**Way forward**

- Police officers must report any physical torture they know of.
- Prisons should refuse to admit people if they appear injured.
- Disincentives must be put in place to ensure proper accountability.
- India must follow the UN Convention against Torture that it signed.

**Conclusion**

Let the effort to establish guilt or innocence be lawful and humane.

# Another Look at Fiscal Transfers

Category: GS 3 (Economy)

## Theme of the article

To fix the proportion of shareable taxes for the States.

## Introduction

Only a federal structure can efficiently meet the requirements of people from different regions.

## Fiscal federalism

- It is concerned with the assignment of functions to different levels of government.
- An important question in fiscal federalism is the 'tax-assignment problem'.

## Mobile and benefit taxes

- De-centralised levels of government should avoid non-benefit taxes and taxes on mobile units.
- Different Constitutions interpret differently what is mobile and what is purely a benefit tax.
- In India, income tax is levied only by the Central government though shared with the States.

## Taxation in Indian Constitution

- The Indian Constitution lays down the functions as well as taxing powers of the Centre and States.
- Central transfers to States are done through Finance Commissions, Planning Commission and discretionary grants.

## New development

The Fourteenth Finance Commission has recommended increase in the share of tax devolution to States to 42% of the divisible pool.

## The encroachment by Centre

Centrally sponsored schemes, which have ballooned in recent years, may have 'encroached' on the territory of States.

**Way forward**

- Proportion of shareable taxes should be fixed at the desired level.
- The shareable tax pool must also include cesses and surcharges.
- States should be allowed to levy tax on personal income.
- The levy by the Centre and States together should be reasonable.
- An appropriate criteria of bringing about equalisation across States in India is needed.

## On the Learning Curve

Category: GS 2 (Social sector)

### Theme of the article

The systemic approach to transforming education outcomes in India is leading to success.

### Adequately staffed education departments

- The education department has the largest share of employees.
- Besides teachers, there are a number of other officials and administrators.

### The Haryana case study: SAKSHAM

- Haryana declares its blocks with 80% or more students who are grade level competent as “Saksham”
- When all blocks in a district are declared as ‘Saksham’, the entire district is also accorded ‘Saksham’ status.
- Many other States are also embarking on such programmes.

### The lesson learnt

- Inducing competition among administrative units gives better results.
- Govt support encourages education administrators.
- Political commitment can spur meaningful activity in States.

### The efforts of NITI Aayog towards education

- Developed the State-level ‘School Education Quality Index’ (SEQI)
- Launched the Aspirational Districts programme in 2018.

### Way forward

- Right incentives boost administrative efficiency.
- States need to induce competition.
- States need to give a boost to put all key actors in education.

### Conclusion

Improvement in learning outcomes is an immediate goal for India to fulfil its aspirations.

# Maximum Gambit

Category: GS 3 (Economy)

**Why has this issue cropped up?**

The Congress party has promised NYAY scheme to transfer ₹6,000 a month to poor households.

**Hurdles in implementation**

- Fiscal expenditure would be ₹3.6 lakh crore.
- Problem of authentic identification of the poor.
- NYAY can fall short as other programmes have

**Not an unsound idea**

- It will help in addressing health, education and indebtedness needs.
- Landless workers, marginal farmers, unemployed youth would be benefitted.
- It can help spur demand and consumption in rural areas in particular.
- Direct income support in some states have helped reduce agrarian crises.
- PM-KISAN Yojana is a limited version of income transfer.

**Conclusion**

Schemes like NYAY can only be one among several prudent welfare policies.

# Consensus in Foreign Policy

**Category: GS 2 (International relations)**

## **Theme of the article**

India needs a measure of political consensus on regional policies.

## **Disadvantage of absence of consensus**

India's adversaries will continue to gain ground in India's neighbourhood.

## **Involving states in foreign policy**

- Modi government enhanced the role of states in India's engagement with the world.
- It created a "states division" in the Ministry of External Affairs.
- It has also hosted visiting dignitaries in state capitals.

## **The coalition problem**

- During UPA, some states had unprecedented control over foreign policy towards the neighbours.
- West Bengal govt derailed agreements such as Teesta water sharing.
- To keep Tamil Nadu parties happy, Delhi could not pursue an independent policy towards Sri Lanka.

## **The majority government**

Absolute majority had an immediate positive effect on foreign policy, for example, in relations with Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.

## **Rival politics not always a problem**

Congress govt in Punjab had worked in tandem with the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government at the Centre.

## **Conclusion**

India needs a measure of political consensus on regional policies.



# Passing ASAT

Category: GS 3 (Defence & Security)

## Introduction

India has become only be the fourth country to test an ASAT weapon.

### ASAT tests by other nations

- By US and Russia in 1960s.
- By China in 2007.

### India lags behind

- Other 3 nations are close to develop space weapons.
- India has a long way to catch up.

### Analysing India's ASAT test

- Targeted a satellite in a low earth orbit of 300 km.
- India has had ASAT capabilities for long.
- Test is more about policy change than a technological breakthrough.

### India's earlier stand on ASAT tests

- India argued against the weaponization of outer space.
- India resisted to manage the emerging space threats.

## Conclusion

India must clearly articulate its military space doctrine.

# The Shape of an Urban Employment Guarantee

Category: GS 3 (Economy)

**Why has this issue cropped up?**

The unemployment rate has reached a 45-year high (6.1%) in 2017-18.

## **The job crisis**

- Unemployment mainly in cities and towns.
- Low wages and precarity is widespread.
- Majority of the urban population in informal sector.

## **India's towns ignored**

- Towns are treated as “engines of growth” rather than job spaces.
- Govt job schemes such as SJSRY have ignored the unskilled.
- Smart Cities Mission and AMRUT benefit only a few towns.
- Urban local bodies lack financial and human capacity.

## **Way forward**

- Introduce an employment guarantee programme in urban areas.
- Madhya Pradesh's “Yuva Swabhiman Yojana” can be emulated by other States.
- Urban Local Bodies should receive timely and adequate funds.
- Urban employment programme and MGNREGA should go hand-in-hand.
- “Green jobs” can be provided such as creation of green spaces and parks.
- Child-care, elderly care and the disabled care jobs can be provided.
- Unemployed with higher education can assist administrative functions.
- Strong transparency and accountability structures should be employed.

## **Conclusion**

An urban employment guarantee programme has multiplier effects on the economy.

# A Stop Sign

**Category: GS 3 (Environment)**

India's carbon emissions grew by 4.8% during 2018.

## **India's per capita emissions**

India's emissions have grown, but per capita they remain less than 40% of the global average.

## **The climate change challenge**

Urgent action to sharply cut carbon emissions is crucial, and all countries, including India, must act quickly.

## **Way forward for India**

- Intensive measures in key sectors will help meet the national pledge to cut energy intensity of GDP.
- India needs to ramp up its capacity in renewable energy sector.
- The potential of rooftop solar photovoltaics needs to be adequately utilized.
- Coal power plants must be cleaned up. This process should be aided by the UNFCCC.
- The Centre's plan to expand electric mobility needs to be pursued vigorously.

## **Conclusion**

India should choose green growth for future energy pathways and infrastructure.

# Pathways to an Income Guarantee

Category: GS 3 (Economy)

Recently a minimum income guarantee (MIG), named NYAY, has been promised by the Congress party.

## Need of MIG:

- Presence of widespread multi-dimensional poverty in India.
- High economic growth and welfare schemes have not helped the poor much.
- Employment prospects of low-skill jobs appear dismal.
- Poor forced to borrow from moneylenders at very high rates.

## Feasibility of MIG:

- It will amount to around 2 % of the GDP
- It is too high to be afforded by the government.

## Impacts of MIG:

- Positive:
  - Reduce income inequalities.
  - Bring households out of poverty.
  - Prevent falling back into poverty trap.
  - Boost economic activities by increasing demand.
  - Reduce indebtedness and role of moneylenders.
  - Supplement income of workforce.
- Negative:
  - Can increase inflation which will hurt the poor
  - Can lead to withdrawals from labour force.
  - Can lead to withdrawal of basic services by state

## Way forward:

- The scheme should be launched in incremental steps.
- SECC and agricultural census can help properly identify poor.
- Preparation of datasets to update the list of needy households.
- Alignment of PM KISAN Yojana to meet a part of the outlay.
- Increase of tax collection by taxing super-rich.
- Sharing of the cost by the States.
- MIG should supplement the public services.