



EDITORIALS

Monthly Gist Compilation

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The Anti-Corruption Scorecard

Category: GS 2 (Corruption)

Last few years have seen attacks on anti-corruption laws and institutions.

Blows to fighting graft

- PCA: The amendment to PCA narrows down the definition of corruption, and negatively impacts the whistle-blowers.
- CBI: Recent months have witnessed a brazen undermining of the autonomy of the CBI.
- LOKPAL: The government failed to take the necessary steps to appoint a Lokpal in five years.
- WHISTLE BLOWERS: The government has failed to promulgate rules and operationalise the Whistle Blowers Protection Act, 2014.
- GRIEVANCE BILL: No attempts have been made by the government to reintroduce the Grievance Redress Bill that deals with 'petty corruption'.
- RTI Act: Not a single commissioner was appointed to the Central Information Commission in the last five years without intervention by courts.
- ELECTORAL BONDS: The electoral bond scheme prevents citizens from finding out who is funding political parties.

Conclusion

Political will to take necessary steps to curb corruption is needed.

Rethinking India's Space Policy

Category: GS 2 (IR), GS 3 (Science and tech)

India has signalled its determination to deter space threats by doing ASAT test.

Factors that India should take care of:

- A comprehensive military space policy and the necessary investments.
- India must now wrestle with the exponential growth of the space market.
- India must promote a massive expansion of the private sector's role in space.
- Instead of trying to do everything, ISRO could focus on a few critical objectives.
- India must prepare for the inevitable evolution of the global space regime centred around the 1967 Outer Space Treaty.
- India needs collaboration with allies and partners in outer space

Conclusion

India will need all the strategic pragmatism, legal acumen and diplomatic skill in shaping new rules for the regulation of outer space.

A Washington Pipe Dream

Category: GS 2 (International)

Why has this issue been raised?

U.S. has decided not to issue any additional 'Significant Reduction Exceptions' to existing importers of Iranian oil.

Countries impacted this decision

India, China and Turkey will feel the greatest impact of this policy.

China's response

- China is likely to defy the American demand as it is a major world power.
- Furthermore, it is firmly opposed to unilateral sanctions.

Turkey's response

Turkey and Iran have overlapping strategic interests such as regarding Kurdish secessionism, territorial integrity of Iraq, shared antipathy towards Saudi Arabia. Therefore, it is unlikely that Turkey will bend completely to American will.

India's response

- New Delhi is likely to comply with American demands because of the following factors:
 - U.S. is India's largest trading partner.
 - convergence of American and Indian interests regarding containing China.
 - civil nuclear relationship with the U.S. is very important for India
- However, India will have to pay the price for compliance with the American diktat because:
 - India is involved in building the Chabahar port in southern Iran.
 - Iran is also important for in the context of Afghanistan.
 - Iran shares India's antipathy toward Pakistan.

Will Iran surrender to American threat?

Iran has stood up to unprecedented sanctions for four decades and remained unbowed. The current American policy of forcing Tehran to cut its oil exports to zero will only end up with Tehran adopting an even more virulent anti-American posture.

A dark scenario possibility

- It can well become a prelude to another major war in West Asia.

- Iran is likely to retaliate by withdrawing from the nuclear accord.
- This could lead to strikes on Iran's nuclear facilities which Iran will retaliate to.
- The mayhem in the region can be disastrous for West Asia and for flow of energy supplies.

Conclusion

If not reversed, such a strategy could well lead to another American misadventure in West Asia.

The Gender Ladder to Socio-economic Transformation

Category: GS 2 (Women empowerment)

India's recent election has given unprecedented focus on women's employment.

What data show?

The female labor force participation rate in India fell to 23.3% in 2017-2018..

Factors responsible for low workforce participation

- Low social acceptability of women working outside the household
- Lack of access to safe and secure workspaces
- Widespread prevalence of poor and unequal wages
- Dearth of decent and suitable jobs.

Education and work relation

Women increase in education levels, women do not want to do manual labor and prefer salaried jobs

Involvement in unpaid work

Women devote a substantial amount of their time to work which is not considered as work for example childcare, elderly care, household work, agriculture, etc.

Way forward

- facilitating women's access to decent work
- recognize, reduce, redistribute, and remunerate women's unpaid work.
- gender-responsive public services such as public toilets, public transport, etc
- fair and decent living wages and appropriate social security
- safe and dignified working and living conditions for migrant workers
- social housing spaces for women workers

Conclusion

Unless the structural issues which keep women from entering and staying in the workforce are addressed, promising more jobs is unlikely to lead to the socio-economic transformation.

The Cost of Resistance

Category: GS 2 (Health)

Even though antimicrobial resistance is acknowledged, few have considered its economic impact.

The economic impact of antimicrobial resistance

- May cause high scale global economic shocks
- nearly 10 million people estimated to die annually
- health-care costs and the cost of food production will spike
- income inequality will widen
- world may lose 3.8% of its annual GDP by 2050

India's case

- difficulty in implementing India's antimicrobial resistance plan
- twin challenges of antibiotic overuse and underuse
- poorly regulated pharmaceutical industry

Way forward

- Nations must acknowledge this eventuality and act to fight it.
- Phase out critical human-use antibiotics in the animal husbandry sector
- Private pharmaceutical industries must distribute drugs in a responsible manner.
- Philanthropic charities must fund the development of new antibiotics
- Citizen activists must drive awareness
- improve hygiene and vaccinations

Conclusion

India must consider the consequences of a failure.

Conservation minus the People?

Category: GS 3 (Environment)

India is moving away from community-involved conservation models.

Why has this issue cropped up?

Recently, the Supreme Court issued ordered eviction of more than a million forest-dwellers.

Importance of this court order

It provides valuable insights into India's conservation objectives and approaches..

Importance of involvement of communities

Involving communities is an effective tool of conservation. This was affirmed by the 1992 Earth Summit and IUCN.

The reality of conservation in India

- India's conservation policies and legislation over the years reveal a dichotomy of intent and action.
- Indian Forest Act, 1927 and the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 contain provisions to restrict local use of natural resources and landscapes.
- Joint Forest Management Guidelines (JFM), 1990, created community institutions for co-management, in collaboration with the forest bureaucracy.
- Forest Rights Act, 2006 conferred rights to local communities over forest land and produce.

Role of Communities ignored in India

- Third National Wildlife Action Plan, introduced in 2017 is of the view that locals hinder conservation.
- In 2018, there was a Draft National Forest Policy that left little room for communities.
- The Supreme Court's order in early 2019 rejected claims under the Forest Rights Act.
- In March 2019, the proposed amendment to Indian Forest Act extinguishes rights granted under the Forest Rights Act.

Conclusion

While other countries are recognizing the value of community-involved conservation models, India is moving in the opposite direction.

Private, Public and Political Morality

Category: GS 4 (Morality)

Theme of the article

People with a political life must follow an ethic distinct from private morality.

Introduction

Though related, political, public and private morality are not identical.

Asoka's version of ethics

- Neither hate speech nor speech glorifying oneself was acceptable as part of public morality.
- Ruler owed janahita and janasukham to his subjects.
- The political domain requires the impartial or just use of power for the good of all.

Hegel's version of ethics

- Politicians have enduring consequences affecting the lives of large number of people. This brings with it enormous public responsibility.
- Powerful politicians must show great care and sensitivity to the appropriate use of force and violence.

Private and political morality

- It is wrong to think that moral scrupulousness in one's private life automatically guarantees high moral stature in political life.
- A person who is profoundly moral in his private life may brazenly violate all norms of political morality.

Conclusion

It would be wonderful if our private and political moralities were perfectly aligned and we achieved the highest moral standards in both.

A Wake-up Call on Proprietary Seeds

Category: GS 3 (Agriculture)

Theme of the article

How India can shift its agriculture from a high-yield ideal to a high-value one.

Why has this issue cropped up?

PepsiCo was suing small farmers in India for growing a potato variety that is used in its Lay's chips.

The downward spiral of small-scale farming

- Many small farmers are reliant, directly or indirectly, on proprietary seeds.
- These seeds are grown in high input environments that erode local biodiversity.
- High inputs, loss of the skills and social relationships has lowered income, status and dignity.

Are farmers to blame for relying on proprietary seeds?

- Agricultural extension officers have taught farmers to buy ever-higher-yielding seeds.
- The Plant Variety Protection law permits farmers to sell seeds to other farmers.

The concern with proprietary seeds

Farmers are adapting to local conditions and traditions in order to use genetically standardized seeds, to ruinous effect.

Time for paradigm shift

- It may be useful to take a peep into recent regulatory efforts in Europe.
 - The EU encourages the use and marketing for organic agriculture.
 - EU is supporting the creation markets and marketplaces facilitating trade of heterogeneous seeds.

How can India shift its agriculture from a high-yield ideal to a high-value one?

- First, small farmers must be educated and encouraged in traditional/desi agriculture.
- Second, an immutable record-keeping system is needed to break the link between the profitable and the proprietary.
- Third, India's invaluable traditional ecological knowledge systems need to be revived.

Conclusion

The lawsuit by PepsiCo must be a wake-up call to the government and policymakers for the economic development of Indian farmers and of the entire nation.

CHROME IAS

Resolving India's Banking Crisis

Category: GS 3 (Economy)

Theme of the article

Acceleration in economic growth is not possible without addressing the problem of non-performing assets

Introduction

The new government will have to resolve India's banking sector problem.

Non-performing assets data

- NPAs at commercial banks amounted to ₹10.3 trillion in 2018.
- Public sector banks (PSBs) accounted for 86% of the total NPAs.

Origin of the NPA crisis

- Credit boom in 2004-05 to 2008-09; Indian firms borrowed furiously.
- Most of the investment went into infrastructure.
- Thereafter, many things went wrong such as environmental clearances.
- Global financial crisis in 2007-08 and the slowdown after 2011-12
- Financing costs rose as policy rates were tightened in India
- The depreciation of the rupee meant higher outflows for companies that had borrowed in foreign currency.
- This made it difficult for companies to service their loans to Indian banks.

NPA problem more concentrated in PSBs

- PSBs had a higher exposure to the five most affected sectors — mining, iron and steel, textiles, infrastructure and aviation.
- PSBs accounted for 86% of advances in these five sectors.

Plans to prevent such crises

- Wholesale privatization of PSBs is not the answer.
- One immediate action that is required is resolving the NPAs.
- Indian Banks' Association has set up a panel to oversee resolution plans.
- Government must infuse additional capital needed to recapitalize banks.

- RBI needs to develop better mechanisms for monitoring.
- Action needs to be taken to strengthen the functioning of banks.
- Governance at PSBs, meaning the functioning of PSB boards, can certainly improve.
- Succession planning at PSBs also needs to improve.

Conclusion

The task of accelerating economic growth is not possible without finding a solution to the problems that confront the banking system.

CHROME IAS

The War on Terror is in Peril

Category: GS 3 (Security)

Theme of the article

The world needs to be united on the issue of terrorism and resolve contradictions.

Why has this issue cropped up?

The brutal attacks on Easter Sunday in Sri Lanka have reignited discussion on the global 'War on Terror'.

A floundering war on terror

- The international coalition failed to end terrorism in Afghanistan, defeat Saddam Hussein and oust Qaddafi.
- The U.S. and allied countries were sidetracked by the 'Arab Spring' in 2011.
- Coalition formed to fight the terror of the IS could not succeed.
- The number of global terror attacks went up from 1,000 in 2004 to 17,000 in 2014.

Approaches to fighting terror

- South Asian strategy to fight terror cannot be compared to that of European states.
- It should be acknowledged that radicalised terrorists are a part of a community and hence should be given a second chance.
- Counter-radicalization measures such as banning beards and hijabs or internment camps would be futile.

Contradictions in global war on terror

- The world has failed to agree on a common definition of terrorism.
- China had been blocking designation of Masood Azhar as a global terrorist.
- U.S. treats terror-hubs like Saudi Arabia and as "frontline allies" on terror.

Conclusion

Unless the world is truly united on the issue and resolves contradictions, the global War on Terror will only get weaker.

All out at Sea

Category: GS 2 (International Relations)

Why has this issue cropped up?

India is setting a high tempo of naval operations in Asia.

The recent exercises in the Indian Ocean

- Indian and Australian warships held drills in the Bay of Bengal.
- Anti-submarine exercise with the U.S. Navy near Diego Garcia.
- Joint exercise 'Varuna' with the French Navy off the coast of Goa and Karwar.
- Indian warships participated in a 'group sail' Japan, Philippines and US.

Reasons behind the India's interest in Indian Ocean region

- Rapid expansion of China's naval footprint in the Indian Ocean.
- South Asian navies have been making their presence felt in the seas of the subcontinent.
- Pakistan too is becoming an increasingly potent actor in the northern Indian Ocean.

Need of partnerships for India

- A paucity of assets and capacity has forced the Navy to seek partners.
- Partnerships are also vital to deter Chinese undersea deployments in South Asia.

Analyzing India's Ocean focus

- India has moved to deepen its regional engagement.
- However, it hasn't succeeded in leveraging partnerships for strategic gains

Conclusion

Indian Navy's regional strategy is a mere 'risk management' tactic, with limited approach to shape events in littoral-Asia.

The Need for Judicial Restraint

Category: GS 2 (Polity)

Theme of the article

Lawmaking is not the job of the judges, but of the legislature

Introduction

The Supreme Court is resorting more to judicial activism rather than judicial restraint.

Recent examples of judicial activism

- time limits to burst firecrackers on Diwali
- judgement on linking rivers
- recently, a leader was asked to apologize for sharing a meme

Types of jurisprudence

- Positivist theory: lawmaking is not the job of the judges, but of the legislature.
- Sociological jurisprudence: court can lay down anything as law according to its own subjective notions.

Instances of sociological jurisprudence by the Supreme Court

- It created the collegium system which was not based on any provision in the Constitution.
- Despite the unanimous will of Parliament in favor of the NJAC, the Supreme Court declared the NJAC Act to be unconstitutional.
- In recent times, the Supreme Court has increasingly adopted the sociological school of jurisprudence in an aggressive manner.

Is sociological jurisprudence justified?

- In a parliamentary democracy, the buck ultimately stops with the citizens, who are represented by Members of Parliament.
- Sociological jurisprudence can be justified in very rare circumstances, such as striking down of Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code.

Conclusion

The Supreme Court should limit its usage of the sociological school of jurisprudence to only the most exceptional situations, and employ the positivist school as far as possible.

Managing the Great Power Flux

Category: GS 2 (International Relations)

Introduction

There is an unfolding movement in the world's two most important strategic relationships.

The two relationships

- Between world's leading economic powers — US and China.
- Between world's top military powers— US and Russia.

The US—China fight

- US raised tariffs on Chinese exports.
- US is accusing China of stealing its intellectual property.
- US is pushing back against China's assertive policies in the South China Sea and renewing a measure of strategic support to Taiwan.

What lies ahead in US-China-Russia relationship?

- The deep economic interdependence puts a limit on the conflict.
- Anti-Russian mood in US and vice-versa will prevent even a minimal understanding.

Impact on India

- Whichever way the great power dynamic moves, there will be consequences — some bad and others good — for India.
- For example, whether US cuts a deal or escalates the economic war with China, India can't continue with its trade policy lassitude.

Way forward for India

- Cope with the volatility in the relations between America, China and Russia.
- Summit meetings such as SCO and G-20 offer an opportunity to assess the nature of the new great power dynamic.

Lies and Loopholes

Category: GS 2 (Polity)

Theme of the article

Non-disclosure of information and filing of falsities in election affidavits can't be treated equally.

Why has this issue cropped up?

Recently, a PIL was filed in the Supreme Court against PM Modi for filing a false affidavit.

The concern

- We are yet to see any strict action taken in this regard.
- Hence, it is important to look into RPA and examine its effectiveness.

The RPA

- RPA mandates all candidates to furnish basic information.
- Failure to furnish information or filing false information is a penal offence..
- However, it does not result in disqualification of candidate.
- Further, it disqualifies any candidate found guilty of corrupt practice from contesting the election.
- Courts' silent stance has led to the understanding that filing false information does not amount to corrupt practice.

Supreme Court verdicts

- In Krishnamoorthy v. Sivakumar & Ors (2015), the court ruled that the voter has right to know the candidate.
- In Lok Prahari v. Union of India & Ors (2018), the court held that non-disclosure of information, is a corrupt practice.

Failure of the Supreme Court

- A petition was filed in the SC in 2018 seeking declaration of the filing of false affidavits a corrupt practice. However, SC expressed its inability to direct a relevant legislation.

Way forward

- It is high time the SC clarifies that filing false affidavits constitutes a "corrupt practice"
- Increase the punishment under Section 125-A to a minimum of two years;

- Conviction under Section 125-A should be a ground for disqualification of candidates.

Conclusion

Changes are needed to ensure that the voter's right to information remains paramount, and the candidate's constitutional right to contest is subservient to it.

Why an industrial Policy is Crucial

Category: GS 3 (Economy)

Theme of the article

No major country has managed to reduce poverty or sustain economic growth without a robust manufacturing sector.

Why has this issue cropped up?

The contribution of manufacturing to India's GDP in 2017 was only about 16%.

India's comparison with other economies

Malaysia roughly tripled its share of manufacturing in GDP to 24%, while Thailand's share increased from 13% to 33% (1960-2014).

Core to growth

- Productivity in industry is much higher than in either agriculture or services.
- Manufacturing creates positive spillover effects in the economy.

International scenario

- In the U.S. and Europe, after the 2008 crisis, there have been efforts to revive industrial sectors.
- Over 100 countries have, within the last decade, articulated industrial policies.

The case of India

India still has no manufacturing policy. Why have an industrial policy in India now?

- First, there is the need to coordinate complementary investments.
- Second, industrial policies are needed to address learning externalities.
- Third, the state can play the role of organizer of domestic firms into cartels in their negotiations with foreign firms or governments.
- Fourth, to avoid competing investments in a capital-scarce environment.
- Fifth, to ensure that the industrial capacity installed is efficient.
- Sixth, to facilitate structural change.
- Finally, manufacturing will create jobs.

Conclusion

Unfortunately, the potential role of industrial policy has been consistently downplayed in developing countries outside of East Asia.

CHROME IAS

Protecting Forest Fringes

Category: GS 3 (Environment)

Theme of the article

How city-forest cooperation can be facilitated.

Why has this issue cropped up?

India is among the fastest urbanizing major countries and forest-rich nations of the world.

The urban expansion and its impact on the environment

- increasing the proximity between forests and the cities.
- likely to pose a severe sustainability challenge.
- local extinction of wildlife, contamination of water bodies, etc
- direct impact on critical wildlife habitats and biodiversity areas

Are we doing enough to tackle with the urbanization challenge?

- Neither the 'Smart Cities', nor the draft of the new Forest Policy, 2018, look ready to tackle this challenge.
- Urban planners and city administrators have ignored the fact that forests are natural shock-absorbers

Way forward

- eco-sensitive zones (ESZ) around protected areas hold the key
- Forests will have to be soft-fenced from unscrupulous development.
- urban masterplans must recognize land use at forest fringes
- Cities should secure wildlife corridors and 'green belts'.
- Urban residents need to create social fences by strongly advocating for forests in their cities.

Conclusion

Integrating forests with urban planning and governance provides an opportunity to shape cities.

The Case for Informal Regional Diplomacy

Category: GS 2 (International Relations)

Theme of the article

Routine meetings between leaders will liberate the Subcontinent from formalism of summits.

Informal diplomacy: India

- In 2014, PM Modi spent first day in office with leaders from neighbourhood.
- Beyond the formal visits, Modi found opportunities to drop by in the neighbourhood, for example, visiting Nawaz Sharif at his home.

Informal diplomacy: Other nations

- President of Maldives invited Indian PM for his oath ceremony.
- Pakistan's Prime Minister invited foreign leaders for his swearing in ceremony.
- There is also the tradition of South Asian leaders making unofficial visits to temples and dargahs in India.

Overcoming limitations of SAARC

- Limitations of SAARC were seen in 2014 after Pakistan pull out.
- Since then Delhi has emphasised other multilateral mechanisms such as sub-regional cooperation

Way forward

- The Subcontinent can do with more of this kind of engagement.
- Informal diplomacy will make it easier for India to sustain high-level engagement.
- If meetings with Pakistan's leadership become routine and informal, it will be helpful for India.
- Informal diplomacy could also help go beyond SAARC.

Conclusion

Governments should double down on informal diplomacy that could help pave the way for more purposeful regional cooperation.

It's about Social justice, Not Welfare

Category: GS 2 (Social issues)

Theme of the article

Reservation must be based on a rigorous identification of economic backwardness.

Why has this issue cropped up?

124th constitutional amendment provides quotas for EWS.

Basic structure issue

- Parliament's power to amend the Constitution is limited by the basic structure doctrine.
- EWS reservations must satisfy the principle of equality and social justice that are basic features of the Constitution.

Indra Sawhney case

- In the Indra Sawhney case, the Court held that reservations for historically deprived people.
- The Court's observation was that reservations are not poverty alleviation programmes.

Aim of reservations

Reservations are ineffective for distributing economic benefits but more meaningful in distributing opportunities.

Problem with EWS reservation

- It violates equality and social justice standards.
- The government has not constituted any commission to determine EWS reservation criteria.
- They also run into practical and conceptual problems such as regarding income criteria.

Way forward

- Defining EWS properly is needed.
- A commission is required to evolve appropriate criteria and methodologies.

Conclusion

The EWS reservations must be implemented with the fundamental constitutional precepts.

Gulf Crisis, India's Stakes

Category: GS 2 (International Relations)

Theme of the article

By destabilising regions that supply oil and gas, US is keeping Rising Asia off-balance.

Introduction

The geography, politics, security and stability of West Asia over the past century have always been about oil.

The recent shift

With US becoming energy self-reliant, its focus has shifted to retaining control over the sources of supply.

Oil supply disruption and Asian economy

- Asian economies depend critically on Gulf oil.
- India's dependence on imported oil has risen sharply.
- Destabilization of the market is hurting several developing countries.
- US hostility towards Venezuela and Iran is causing supply constraints.
- Regime change in Venezuela is also impacting the supply of oil
- After Sunni, US has been seeking to secure control of the oil exporting Shia world.

What lies ahead for India?

- Any denial of access to new sources of energy or any increase in the cost of energy can only hurt India's growth prospects.
- India has a stake in ensuring peace and stability in the Persian Gulf.
- India can diversify its sourcing of oil and reduce its dependence on Iranian oil.
- If US is insensitive to India's concerns, India will have to seriously rethink its foreign policy options.

The Salt Example

Category: GS 2 (Health)

Theme of the article

Anaemia is a public health emergency that needs to be addressed immediately

Introduction

India has been able to dramatically reduce the number of poor but has been unable to show a similar record against malnutrition.

Malnourishment despite govt. efforts

Despite major government interventions such as NFSA, Mid-day Meal Scheme, ICDS, the country is home to the largest number of malnourished children in the world.

The anaemia problem

- It affects every second child in the country.
- Poverty, gender disparity, poor sanitation, etc. continue to impede our fight against anaemia.
- The daily consumption of iron rich vegetables has reduced to 48 per cent of the population.
- NFSA's focus on wheat and rice has forced millets out of the market.

Strategies to deal with the anaemia problem

- Food fortification has the potential to reach every segment of the population.
- Political will of state governments
- Flexibility to allow states to adapt the fortification model
- Capacity building of different stakeholders.
- The FSSAI's role needs to be strengthened.
- Regular consumption of fortified food by the consumers.

Conclusion

Fortifying staples with essential nutrients holds the key in fight against anaemia.

The key Agenda must be to Accelerate Growth

(Category: GS 3 (Economy))

Why has this issue cropped up?

Growth is slowing down. The growth rate in 2016-17 was 8.2%; in 2018-19 it was 7%.

Why growth is important

Only a fast-growing economy can create jobs and sustain social safety nets.

Investment rate needs to rise

- Ratio of Gross Fixed Capital Formation to Gross Domestic Product has stayed low at 29 % in 2018-19.
- For sustained growth, the ratio has to go up, and that too substantially.

How to revive investment

- Government should prepare a programme of public investment for 2019-20.
- A strong public investment programme can be a catalyst of private investment.
- There have to be sector- or industry-wise plans.
- NPA crisis needs to be resolved.
- Setting up of long-term financial institutions, partly funded by government.

Job and growth

- It is faster growth and faster investment which will generate employment.
- An improvement in the financial system may trigger some new jobs.

Way forward

- Agrarian distress needs to be tackled on a priority.
- Making available inputs such as seeds and fertilizers at an affordable cost.
- More attention must be paid to increasing agricultural productivity.
- The glitches in implementation of GST should be removed.
- Address bottlenecks in Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code.
- Land reforms which enable entrepreneurs to buy land needs to take place.
- Labour reforms should wait until the economy has picked up steam.
- Monetary policy should keep a watch on prices.
- Minimum income support should be implemented.

- 'Poor' must be defined and properly identified.

Conclusion

For investment to happen, there must be social and political tranquillity.

CHROMEIAS

The Quest for a Military Footprint

Category: GS 2 (International Relations)

Theme of the article

As Beijing races ahead in quest for a military footprint, Delhi has some catching up to do.

Introduction

India is now making its armed forces interoperable with its friends and partners in the Indian Ocean.

India's response to China's growing foreign military bases

- Counter potential threats from China's military bases
- strengthen military partnerships with its friends and partners
- emulate Beijing's quest for foreign military presence

Competition for foreign military bases

- As China's economic interests spread the entire globe, its quest for military bases grew as well.
- While there is no formal Pakistan "base", the integration of Pakistan into China's military strategy and operations has steadily advanced.
- While Beijing is racing ahead in the search for foreign military presence, Delhi has some catching up to do.

Why India should have military bases

- India's economy is now close to \$3 trillion.
- Delhi's security imperatives are no longer limited to its borders.

What India is doing in this direction

- India is now making its armed forces interoperable with its friends and partners.
- India has signed agreements with the US and France for mutual peacetime use of military bases.

Why the Integrity of Data Matter

Category: GS 3 (Economy)

Theme of the article

The merger of the NSSO into the CSO is a cause for concern.

Why has this issue cropped up?

The government has decided to merge the NSSO into and under the CSO.

Reason for the merger

Apprehensions have risen regarding the veracity of NSSO data.

The present system

- Every year government departments send subjects to be investigated by NSSO.
- The requests are sent to the National Statistical Commission (NSC).
- The proposals are discussed at length and periodic surveys on important issues are also considered.
- The results are discussed in detail by the NSC and are published after its approval.

Importance of data

They have been used extensively for monitoring of trends and critical assessment of several important aspects of the economy and society.

Is apprehension about NSSO justified?

- The NSSO surveys command wide respect among academics, State governments and non-governmental organisations.
- The NSC commands confidence and respect both within the country and abroad.
- Any apprehension will hugely dent the credibility of the Indian statistical system.

The problems with NSSO

- Inadequate budgetary allocations;
- Acute shortage of trained field staff;
- Scale of surveys is un-manageably large mainly.

Solutions

There is the need to continue research on improving sampling design, field survey methods and validation of data. Correcting these deficiencies is entirely in the domain of government.

Conclusion

Increasing the role of CSO officials in running the NSSO will not solve these problems, but they can help by providing funds for specialised research on survey design and methodology.

CHROME IAS

The Second Coming

Category: GS 2 (International)

Theme of the article

The invitation list for the swearing-in signals government's foreign policy focus.

Why has this issue cropped up?

Prime Minister has invited leaders of BIMSTEC to swearing-in ceremony.

What does this invitation indicate?

- "neighbourhood first" policy.
- regional preferences have shifted from SAARC to BIMSTEC
- concern for India's "Act East" initiative and outreach to East Asia.
- invitation to SCO chairperson indicates commitment to Central Asian grouping
- invitation to Prime Minister of Mauritius indicates close affinity

BIMSTEC and SCO

- India's engagement with both BIMSTEC and the SCO is at incipient stage.
- BIMSTEC didn't even have a fully working secretariat until recently.
- BIMSTEC's deliberations on subregional connectivity have been delayed
- SCO is yet to demonstrate its utility for India..

Conclusion

The attendance at PM Modi's swearing-in ceremony hints towards new avenues of India's multilateral engagements.

Capital Buffers

Category: GS 3 (Economy)

Theme of the article

The RBI's draft norms for non-banking financial companies are timely.

Why has this issue cropped up?

RBI has released draft norms for NBFCs.

The proposed norms

- NBFCs would have to comply with a higher liquidity coverage ratio (LCR).
- NBFCs would have to maintain their LCR at 60% of net cash outflows initially, and improve it to 100% by April 2024.

Why new norms for NBFCs?

- NBFCs are struggling to meet their obligations to various lenders.
- NBFCs run the risk of being unable to pay back their borrowers on time.

Impact of these rules on NBFCs

- Put significant pressure on the margins of NBFCs.
- NBFCs may be forced to park their money in low-risk liquid assets.
- Positive long term impact on the health of NBFCs and financial sector.
- The new norms would discourage NBFCs from borrowing over short term.
- This could compel NBFCs to shrink the scope of their lending.

Conclusion

The latest liquidity norms for NBFCs are still necessary to ward off systemic crises.

Bills of Rights for the Vulnerable

Category: GS 2 (Social sector)

Introduction

With the dissolution of Parliament, several crucial social bills lapsed.

The problematic social bills

- Transgender Bill, Surrogacy Bill, and the Trafficking Bill.
- Consultation with impacted communities was eschewed.
- Transgender Bill did away with the right to self-determination of gender identity.
- Surrogacy Bill excluded LGBT individuals from its ambit, imposed discriminatory age restrictions
- Trafficking Bill criminalized begging without providing any manner of effective alternatives.

Common factors between these bills

- Dealt with intimate subjects such as personal dignity.
- Concerned with vulnerable and marginalized sections of society.
- Drafted without consulting with members of the impacted communities.
- Extended the state's control and domination.
- Met by widespread protests from the communities themselves.

What lies ahead?

- Voices of those who will be directly impacted should be listened to.
- A sustained public movement around these issues is needed.