



**CHROME IAS**

*Giving Wings To Your Dreams !!!*

# **EDITORIALS**

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## **A thumbs down to unilateralism**

Category: GS 2 (International Relations)

1200 words summarized to 200

The U.S. is acting in defiance of agreed rules to target India.

### **Introduction**

U.S. took a series of unilateral actions against India's exports followed by India's retaliatory move..

### **Some background**

In the past, U.S. agencies have "investigated" India's trade policies to demand benefit for American businesses.

### **Propriety and procedures**

The investigations conducted by the U.S. agencies raise several issues of propriety, procedures and substance..

- **PROPRIETY:**
  - The main purpose of the GATT/WTO is to provide a forum for the resolution of disputes by following multilaterally agreed rules. The only country disagreeing with this position is the U.S.
- **PROCEDURE**
  - The procedure of conducting the investigations was deeply flawed for it provided a platform for vested interests in the U.S. to make common cause against India's policies.
- **SUBSTANCE**
  - The substance of the investigations touched trade-related issues that are covered by the WTO agreements.

### **What lies at the core**

The India-U.S. discord over trade stems from a desire of U.S. businesses to have a bigger footprint in the Indian economy, and to achieve this goal, it is stepping beyond legitimate means.

## What lies ahead

- Early resolution of this discord seems difficult as the U.S. has decided to undermine the WTO's dispute settlement mechanism
- India would have focus on two fronts: to remain engaged with US and to also engage actively with the global community.

## New framework

Category: GS 3 (Economy)

450 words summarized to 150

SEBI has come up with more stringent regulations to govern the management of mutual funds.

## New SEBI Regulations

- Liquid mutual fund schemes will have to invest at least 20% of their funds in liquid assets like government securities.
- They will be barred from investing more than 20% of their total assets in any one sector.
- When it comes to sectors like housing finance, the limit is down to 10%.
- Assets of mutual funds be valued on a mark-to-market basis.

## Justification of SEBI regulations

- will ensure a modicum of liquidity.
- will discipline funds and force them to diversify their risks.
- Investor interests will be protected by banning funds from entering into standstill agreements

## Caution needed

- there could be unintended consequences to the regulator's actions
- Fund flow into the bond market could be hindered.

## The concern

- whether the regulator can really protect investors beyond a certain point.
- investors seeking high returns may in fact be willing to assume the increased risk

### **Conclusion**

To boost investor confidence, SEBI's latest rules should be welcomed.

## **Among members**

Category: GS 2 (International bodies)

450 words summarized to 120

### **Introduction**

G-20 accounts for 85% of the world's nominal GDP.

### **Highlights of the G-20 summit**

- U.S. and China have called a halt to raising tariffs.
- India raised several concerns such as dealing with economic offenders and fugitives, as well as climate change funding..
- India sent a tough message by refusing to attend the digital economy summit.
- Consensus was achieved on issues such as ocean pollution management, gender equality and corruption.

### **What lies ahead**

- India to hold the G-20 summit in 2022.
- Global challenges, such as climate change, technology-driven terrorism, will become even more critical for the grouping.

### **Way forward**

- India should lead in making the G-20 more effective in dealing with the inequities in its system.

- The G-20 must not be detracted from its original purpose of promoting sustainable growth and financial stability.

## Jobless growth becomes more systemic

Category: GS 3 (Economy)

750 words summarized to 150

The findings of the latest employment survey point out the two biggest issues:

- the shrinking share of the labour force; and
- the rising unemployment.

### **The data of concern**

- Labour force participation rate has shrunk to 49.7% in 2018.
- Number of workers to 461.5 million in 2018.
- Overall unemployment rate is at 6.1% .
- The highest unemployment rate of a severe nature was among the urban women at 10.8%.
- Youth unemployment rate has reached a high 17.8%.

### **Women labour**

- exclusion from the labour force
- inability to access employment when included in the labour force.
- decline in women's labour force participation to 24%.

### **Educated employment**

- unemployment rates go up as levels of education go up
- educated persons aspire for specific jobs and hence go through a longer waiting period than the less-educated
- here again, the burden is the highest among urban women (19.8%)

### **Conclusion**

A thorough re-examination of the missing linkages between growth and employment is needed.

## Opaque Aadhaar

### GS 2 (Social sector)

1000 words summarized to 150

Aadhaar amendment bill has now been passed by both Houses of Parliament.

#### **Amendment feature**

- It has reinstated many of the provisions of Section 57 of the original Aadhaar Act.
- The amendment comes with no major alteration in either design or use cases.

#### **Concerns with amendment**

- Does not pay heed to the Supreme Court judgment or civil society concerns.
- The dissenting judgment found many other aspects of Aadhaar objectionable.

#### **Problems with technical design of Aadhaar**

- Mandatory deployment of biometric authentication causes denial of service for some.
- The requirement of reliable online connectivity compounds the problem.
- Commercial use of Aadhaar linked data raises serious questions.
- Using same identity across multiple applications may allow illegal profiling.
- Aadhaar is vulnerable to illegal harvesting of biometrics, identity thefts and other frauds.
- Lack of protection against insider threats raise some serious privacy concerns.
- The inadequate privacy safeguards can threaten civil liberty and democracy.
- Aadhaar does not record the purpose of authentication..

#### **Way forward**

- Transparency
- regular design reviews

- public consultation
- privacy guarantees

### Conclusion

Thus, AADHAR's technical design requires serious reconsideration, following amendments to the law.

## Looming challenges to India's standing

Category: GS 2(International relations)

1350 words summarized to 350

### Theme of the article

In the coming five years, a host of geopolitical and economic issues need to be reconciled.

### Recent international events of significance to India

- India was the cynosure at the G-20 meeting in June, in Osaka.
- At the BRICs meeting, India discussed WTO and terrorism.
- Counter-terrorism and climate change discussed with China and Russia.
- In the Japan-India-U.S. grouping, India discussed the Indo-Pacific region.

### A vastly altered situation

- While in the past India was able to take advantage of favourable conditions, this situation no longer exists.
- In the past, India managed a shift from non-alignment to multi-alignment. This is not possible at the present time.
- The global situation that made all this possible has altered. Rivalries among nations have intensified.

## Challenges for India

- India needs to rework many of its policies in the coming five years.
- South Asia, in particular, needs close attention.
- India-Pakistan relations are perhaps at their lowest point.
- India has no role in Afghan affairs and is also excluded from talks.
- India's position in Nepal and Sri Lanka remains tenuous.
- In West Asia again, India is no longer a player to reckon with.
- Across much of Asia, China is the major challenge.
- The challenge in the coming years for India is to check the slide, especially in Asia, and try and restore India to the position it held previously. India cannot afford to wait too long to rectify the situation.
- Deepening India-U.S. relations can make India becoming involved in a new kind of Cold War.
- Closer relations with the U.S. carries the risk of aggravating tensions between India and China.
- The strategic axis forged between Russia and China will impact India.

## Way forward

- Apart from military power, India needs to possess disruptive technologies.
- Capabilities need to be enhanced in areas such as artificial intelligence, biotechnology and cyber methodology.
- India needs to pay greater heed to its economy. Sustaining a rate of growth between 8.5% and 9.5% is needed.

## Conclusion

The looming challenge for India in the coming five years would be how to build a strong economic foundation.

## **Ecological perils of discounting the future**

Category: GS 3 (Environment)

900 words summarized to 150

The Chennai floods are a symbol of consistent human failings and poor urban design.

### **The water scarcity in Chennai**

- More than 30 waterbodies of significance have disappeared in the past century.
- Concretisation has depleted groundwater levels to a point of no return.

### **Urbanisation without vision**

- Urbanisation at the cost of reclaiming water bodies is a pan-India as well as international phenomenon.
- In Bengaluru, 15 lakes have lost their ecological character in less than five years.
- In Mexico city, what was once a network of lakes, has given way to a downtown city centre.
- In Telangana, tanks and lakes built by the Kakatiya dynasty has disappeared.

### **Lessons to be learnt**

- Telangana launched “Mission Kakatiya” to restore irrigation sources.
- Hyderabad is now moving towards a sustainable hydraulic model.
- Mexico city has created a new executive position of a “resilience officer”.
- Bengaluru has reclaimed Kundalahalli lake (once a landfill).

### **Conclusion**

What has happened in Chennai now or what happened in Kerala last year should wake up us now.

## Karnataka conundrum

Category: GS 2 (Polity)

500 words summarized to 150

Recently, the Supreme Court asked the Karnataka Speaker not to decide the issue of MLAs' resignation or disqualification.

### Is preventing from resignation justified?

- Politicians cannot be tied down to parties against their will.
- Issuing a whip to all MLAs to be present in the House and vote for the government is not justified.
- Converting resignation into a disqualification matter is an attempt to deny a member's right to quit his seat.

### The logic behind resignation

A disqualified member cannot become a Minister without getting elected again, whereas one who resigns can be inducted into an alternative Cabinet without being a member.

### Constitutional issue

- Resignation and disqualification should not be mixed up.
- The political class attempts to twist and stretch the law in their favour.

### The speaker's powers

- Many Speakers have evaded judicial scrutiny by merely not acting on disqualification matters.
- The question whether the Speaker's inaction can be challenged in court is pending before a Constitution Bench.

### Conclusion

The current crisis in Karnataka has exposed a new dimension to partisan action by Speaker.

## **At the UNSC, a three-point agenda**

Category: GS 2 (International Institutions)

1200 words summarized to 200

India is to re-enter the UNSC after a gap of 10 years. The previous time, in 2011-12, followed a gap of 20 years.

### **Changing state of world**

- Troubled region ( terrorism, insurgency, etc) between West and East Asia.
- Turbulence in North and South Asia such as North Korea and Afghanistan.
- Other problems in Asia include strategic mistrust, unresolved borders and territorial disputes..
- In the western world, the benign international system that followed the Cold War has disappeared.

### **Role of UNSC**

- The world is in a better place today than when the UN was first established.
- The record on maintaining international peace and security has been positive.
- The world has been distracted from its other shared goals, especially international social and economic cooperation.

### **What should India aim to do?**

- India will have to increase its financial contribution to UN.
- India should increase its contribution to UN peacekeeping operations.
- India has an opportunity to promote well-balanced, common solutions.
- India should work towards a rules-based global order.
- India should ensure multilateral action by UNSC uninfluenced by national interest.
- India must lead the way by pursuing inclusion, the rule of law, constitutionalism, and rational internationalism.
- India must lift its relations in South Asia and its larger neighbourhood.

### **Conclusion**

India's singular objective as a non-permanent member of UNSC should be to help build a stable and secure external environment.

## **Green shoots of economic growth**

Category: GS 3 (Economy)

900 words summarized to 250

India aims to become a \$5-trillion economy by 2024 as envisaged in the Economic Survey this year.

### **The concern**

Unless there are adequate investment reforms in primary sectors, steps taken to augment growth in other sectors would be futile.

### **Investment is the key**

- Investment is the key to unlocking the potential of a developing economy.
- Insufficient investment in the agriculture sector can contribute \$1-trillion.

### **Suggestions on investment**

- First, investment should touch segments such as agro-processing, and exports.
- Second, investment needs to be driven to strengthen extension advisory systems and agri-education.
- Third, investment should be made to utilise livestock surplus by employing next-generation livestock technology.
- Fourth, a farm business organisation is another source of routing private investment to agriculture.

### **Pivotal role for data**

Data is the key driver of modern agriculture which in turn can power artificial intelligence-led agriculture, e-markets, soil mapping and others.

### **Significance of agricultural sector**

- It is most trusted sector in helping alleviate poverty, hunger and malnutrition and ensuring better income distribution.
- It believed to be one of the most fertile grounds to help achieve the SDGs.

### **Suggestions on agricultural investment**

- Public investment in agriculture research at 0.37% of GVA is very low. This needs to rise.
- With the current pace of agriculture growth, India requires 'patient capital'.
- An inclusive business model facilitating strong investor-farmer relations should be created.
- Expanding institutions is essential to accommodate the developmental impacts of foreign agricultural investment.
- There is a need to converge fragmented investments (public, private and foreign) to address the structural weaknesses in the agriculture sector.

### **Conclusion**

Without factoring in agriculture, the vision of a \$5-trillion economy will remain a distant dream.

## **OIC's curious record on Xinjiang**

Category: GS 2 (International bodies)

800 words summarized to 150

Recently, India became the 'Guest of Honour' at OIC.

### **Reference to Kashmir**

- The OIC declaration eschewed reference to Jammu and Kashmir.
- This is unique as the Dhaka Declaration had contained this reference.

### **OIC and concern for Muslims**

- OIC is committed to protecting the interests of the Muslim world.

- However, it has traditionally disregarded the fact that India is a democratic and secular country.
- It has turned a blind eye to the human rights violations committed by its own members..
- It has made no reference to China's Muslim minorities.

### **OIC vs China vs India**

- While the OIC remains critical of India, it has referred only superficially to the Xinjiang matter.
- This is because China is a permanent member of the UNSC, a large market for hydrocarbons and a source of arms and investment.
- However, OIC countries support resolutions against India despite having excellent bilateral ties with the country.

### **Conclusion**

Recent developments such as a call to lift restrictions on Muslims in Xinjiang must have come as deep embarrassment to the OIC.

## **Inappropriate template for a legitimate target**

**Category: GS 3 (Economy)**

**1100 words summarized to 150**

### **Introduction**

The Economic Survey either glosses over or ignores many acute challenges faced by the Indian economy.

### **Insights from psychology**

- The Survey is too late to incorporate insights from psychology into economics.

- Many other countries like the U.K., Australia and Singapore have for long been applying such points to policy design.

### **Private investment**

- The Survey rightly underlines the need to revive private investment.
- However, it invokes the age-old comparison between India and East Asian countries.

### **India's case vs East Asian model**

- East Asian model was largely a story driven by the newly industrialised economies (NIEs). While these economies were successful in encouraging savings, the cost of capital was rather high, not unlike the problem in India today.
- Investment in East Asian countries was due to carefully calibrated reforms. In contrast, due to political compulsions, India's reforms since 1991 have been rather haphazard.

## **Giving ties with Seoul a facelift**

GS 2 (International relations)

600 words summarized to 200

Prime Minister Narendra Modi met South Korean President on the sidelines of the G20 summit.

### **Analysing India South Korea relations**

- Shared values of open society and democracy.
- Sc & tech : Indo-Korea Science and Technology Centre in Bengaluru.
- Defence: Co-production of the K9 Thunder howitzer.
- Regularised education exchanges.
- Regular security dialogue between the intelligence agencies.

### **The fallout of trade war**

- U.S.-China trade war has started impacting South Korean companies.

- India can emerge as a prime beneficiary here because of its cheap labour costs and a stable legal system.

### **India South Korea trade ties**

- India-South Korea trade ties to \$22 billion at the end of 2018.
- Major exports to India include mineral fuels, oil distillates, cereals and, iron and steel.
- The trade target of \$50 billion by 2030 is most likely to be missed.
- The CEPA requires immediate upgrading.
- An early harvest scheme agreed to last year failed to see completion.

### **Lacking in other areas of cooperation as well**

- Indian Chamber of Commerce in Korea (ICCK) is struggling to find its due space in promoting economic and business ties in Korea.
- The Indian Cultural Centre has failed to reach out to common South Koreans.
- Social and economic discrimination against Indians in South Korea is still a regular occurrence.

## **Making the thermal plants accountable**

### **GS 3 : Environment**

**700 words summarized to 200**

### **Introduction**

The advancing of monsoon has been slower with millions facing an acute water shortage.

### **Water and power**

- Installed power capacity needs to be doubled in pursuit of 100% electrification goal.
- Thermal power plants (TPPs) consume significant amounts of water.
- Most of India's TPPs are located in water-stressed areas leading to electricity-generation disruptions.

- Environment Protection (EP) Rules June 2018 ended up permitting TPPs to use more water than what was initially specified.

### **Need of strengthening of mechanisms**

- TPPs should disclose the amount of water consumed by them.
- The disclosure process should have great transparency and enforceability.
- TPPs should also be required to submit verifiable evidence to support and substantiate the disclosures.
- Data supplied by TPPs should be placed in the public domain.

### **Way forward**

- EP Act does not stipulate specific penalties for specific offences. This is an area for review by the government.
- The relevant officials in charge of enforcement should be identified, and their roles clearly defined.
- The implementation of the Act should include milestones and time-based targets.
- Shifting to a more aggressive Renewable Energy pathway will help India achieve its global climate targets.

### **Conclusion**

India will need to balance the needs of its growing economy with its heightening water stress.

## **The judicial presumption of non-citizenship**

### **GS 2 (Polity)**

**1200 words summarized to 200**

In context of preparation of National Register of Citizens, Abdul Kuddus case had significant consequences for Assam.

### **Abdul Kuddus case**

- The case argued that an opinion rendered by the Foreigners Tribunal had no greater sanctity than an executive order.
- This meant that an adverse finding against an individual would not automatically result in their name being struck off the NRC.

- Furthermore, the Tribunal's opinion could be subsequently reviewed, if fresh materials came to light.
- In short, Foreigners Tribunal and of NRC should be kept entirely independent of each other.

### **Flawed tribunals**

- The Supreme Court held Foreigners Tribunal was final and binding on all parties.
- There are, however, serious problems with this holding.
  - First, Foreigners Tribunals were established by executive order.
  - Second, it now includes bureaucrats.
  - Tribunals are given sweeping powers to refuse examination of witnesses .

### **Failure of Supreme Court**

- The Court's observations in the Kuddus case can be traced back to two judgments, known as Sarbananda Sonowal I and II.
- In those judgments, the Court declared immigration to be tantamount to "external aggression" upon the country.
- It held that the burden of proving citizenship would always lie upon the person who was accused of being a non-citizen.

### **Conclusion**

In further strengthening the Foreigners Tribunal, the judiciary has failed to fulfil its duty as the last protector of rights.

## **A misleading presentation of MGNREGA**

**GS 3 (Economy)**

**1000 words summarized to 150**

The latest Economic Survey does not take a comprehensive view of the implementation of MGNREGA.

### **Reasons why Survey's presentation of MGNREGA is misleading**

- A lack of adequate financial allocation, pending liabilities and low wages have dogged the MGNREGA.
- Wage payments to MGNREGA workers happen in two stages. While it is true that delays in the first stage have reduced, those in the second stage continue to be unacceptably high.
- Survey attributes an increase in demand for and supply of work in drought-affected areas to Aadhaar ignoring other crucial factors.
- Survey wrongfully wholly attributes positive targeting of the MGNREGA —women, Dalits and Adivasis – to the introduction of Aadhaar..
- It completely ignores numerous instances where technology has resulted in violation of workers' rights under the MGNREGA.

### **Conclusion**

Overlooking these fundamental issues, cherry-picking studies and using flawed analyses to justify technocracy is an example of ethical paralysis.

## **Sucking up surplus**

### **GS 3 (Economy)**

**450 words summarized to 100**

The Centre has decided to suck out SEBI's surplus funds.

#### **Finance Bill**

- The Finance Bill affects SEBI's financial autonomy.
- The amendments require SEBI to transfer 75% of surpluses to the government.

#### **Irrational decision**

- The surplus funds will not make much difference to the government's overall fiscal situation.
- The lack of financial autonomy can affect SEBI's plans to improve the quality of its operations.
- Regulating the economy by consolidating all existing powers under the Finance Ministry will be risky.

#### **Way forward**

Regulatory agencies such as SEBI need to be given full powers over their assets and be made accountable to Parliament.

#### **Conclusion**

Stripping regulatory agencies of their powers will affect their credibility.

## **An invasive and inefficient tool**

### **GS 3 (Security)**

**600 words summarized to 200**

#### **Why has this issue cropped up?**

The Automated Facial Recognition System (AFRS) has been recently proposed by the Ministry of Home Affairs.

#### **What will AFRS do?**

The AFRS will use images from sources like CCTV cameras, newspapers, and raids to identify criminals.

### **Privacy concern**

- AFRS will not only create a biometric map of our faces, but also track, classify, and possibly anticipate our every move.
- Facial recognition makes data protection close to impossible.
- It can also potentially trigger a seamless system of mass surveillance.

### **Will AFRS bring efficiency?**

- It is assumed that facial recognition will introduce efficiency and speed in enforcing law and order.
- However, the evidence suggests otherwise. Recently, a facial recognition system used by the Delhi police was reported to have an accuracy rate of only 2%. This is a trend worldwide..
- Image recognition is an extremely difficult task, and makes significant errors.

### **Absence of data protection law**

- The AFRS is being contemplated at a time when India does not have a data protection law.
- The Personal Data Protection Bill 2018 is yet to come into force.
- In the absence of safeguards, law enforcement agencies will have a high degree of discretion.

### **Conclusion**

The notion that sophisticated technology means greater efficiency needs to be critically analysed.

## **Ignoring the proportionality principle**

### **GS 2 ( Polity)**

### **1200 summarized to 200**

### **Theme of the article**

The High Court's verdict in the Shakti Mills rape case disregards several judicial standards & precedents.

### **Why has this issue cropped up?**

The Bombay High Court recently gave a judgment upholding the validity of Section 376E of the Indian Penal Code.

### **Section 376E**

- Section 376E is a law that has expanded the scope of death penalty to beyond cases of homicide, and primarily to incidents of rape.
- Its constitutionality has been challenged on multiple grounds due to disproportionality of the punishment.

### **Proportionity principle**

- The constitutional standard that courts must apply when testing laws on the touchstone of Articles 14 and 21 is that of "proportionality".
- Proportionality asks whether a punishment strikes balance between the gravity of crime and interests of the victim and of society.
- Further, it calls for a striking down of laws that are excessively harsh or disproportionate.

### **The deathy penalty**

- Death penalty is a form of punishment qualitatively different from any other as it is permanent and irrevocable.
- Therefore, the Supreme Court has held that it must only be imposed in the "rarest of rare" cases.
- To demonstrate social abhorrence towards some offences can be fulfilled by a sentence of life imprisonment.

### **Conclusion**

It is of utmost importance for courts to scrutinise such laws carefully, and on the touchstone of constitutional standards.

## **The tremor of unwelcome amendments**

**GS 2 (Polity)**

**1200 words summarized 200**

“Amendments” have been made to the RTI Act.

### **The recent amendment**

Sections 13, 16, and 27 of the RTI Act were amended which now empowers the Central government to unilaterally decide the tenure, salary, allowances and other terms of service of Information Commissioners, both at the Centre and the States.

### **RTI: An agent of change**

- RTI is a constant challenge to the misuse of power.
- It has been a lifeline for many of the 40 to 60 lakh ordinary users.
- It has also been a threat to arbitrariness, privilege, and corrupt governance.

### **RTI and democracy**

The RTI law had created mechanisms for the practice of public vigilance that are fundamental to democratic citizenship.

### **Independence of Information Commission**

- An independent Information Commission has been a cornerstone of RTI legislation.
- Its task is no less important than that of the Election Commission.
- Independent structures are vital to a democratic state.
- The separation of powers underscores this independence..
- The Commission will now function like a department of the Central government which will weaken it.

### **Assault on federalism**

The Central government will also control appointment of Commissioners in the States. This is an assault on the idea of federalism.

### **Opaque moves**

The amendments are being pushed through without any citizen consultation and without even proper parliamentary scrutiny.

### **Conclusion**

The amendments weaken the RTI architecture and violate the constitutional principles of federalism.

## **Zero budget natural farming (ZBNF)**

### **GS 3(Agriculture)**

#### **1200 words summarized to 200**

Finance Minister put thrust on zero budget farming in her Budget speech.

#### **What is Zero budget natural farming (ZBNF)?**

- ZBNF is a method of chemical-free agriculture.
- It promotes the application of jeevamrutha — a mixture of cow dung, cow urine, jaggery, pulse flour, water and soil — on farmland.
- A similar mixture, called bijamrita, is used to treat seeds and insect and pest management.
- ZBNF is against vermicomposting.

#### **What are the benefits of ZBNF ?**

- It will protect environment and fertility.
- Cost of production could be drastically reduced.
- It promotes soil aeration, minimal watering, intercropping, etc.

#### **Why does ZBNF matter?**

- There is a high level of indebtedness of farm households.
- Central government's promise to double farmers income by 2022.

#### **Is ZBNF effective ?**

- Sharp decline in input costs and improvement in yields have been found.
- However, ZBNF returns drop after a few years.
- Sikkim has seen decline in yields due to organic farming.

#### **Promotion of ZBNF**

- No new funding announced to promote it.
- RKVY-RAFTAAR scheme and Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana allow States to use their funds to promote the ZBNF.

#### **What lies ahead?**

- NITI Aayog has been a promoter of the ZBNF method.
- Multi-location studies are needed to validate the long-term impact and viability.
- Indian Council of Agricultural Research is studying the ZBNF methods practised by farmers in several states.
- An institutional mechanism could be set up to promote this technology.

### Fixed Fate, Free Will

Category: GS 3 (Economy)

NITI Aayog has called upon the state governments to undertake structural transformations of the Indian agricultural sector

#### Reforming the ECA

Relaxation of ECA(Essential Commodities Act) will help farmers get the right price for their produce, while increase in availability will give (price) relief to consumers.

#### The concern with reforms of ECA

- Will the commoner lose protection against irrational spikes in food prices?
- Even with the ECA, governments have not been able to control price volatility effectively..

#### Can ECA reforms be successful?

- Amending the ECA is a contagious issue, especially for such crops with fixed administered price.
- Once the government commits an assured price to the growers, an essential corollary is that it must ensure the offtake of whatever is produced.
- In the case of crops such as sugar cane, there is a political clout within the sugar milling industry that would resist any relaxation of control

#### Govt. purpose of modifying the act

The purpose of modifying the act is to encourage the much-needed investments in agricultural marketing.

### **Conclusion**

Agricultural reforms will stand the test of time only if it can create an “enabling environment” for making these reforms work.

## **Education and the Idea of Common Good**

### **GS 2 (Social sector)**

The idea of good and education have been symbiotically linked..

#### **Moral good and education**

- Moral good has basically two dimensions: common good and individual good.
- The common good involves human values.
- These values are integral to the Constitution and find their mention in the draft National Education Policy (NEP) of 2019.
- These values need to be promoted through education..

#### **The problem**

- The passage to dissemination of such values does not seem to be safe.
- This is because we are less concerned about restoring the public schools and institutions.
- This is evident in the case of parents moving to private schools and coaching centres.

#### **Way forward**

- We need to eliminate the social distance in the social relations.
- The elimination of structural inequality is required.
- The expansion of infrastructure for accessibility is important..

- Ethics is crucial for orienting those in the education system towards the realisation of these proclaimed values.

## **Labour in the Indian Economy**

### **GS 3 (Economy)**

Thus age-old social institutions continue to have a grip on the labour market

#### **Segmentation of labour market**

- In India, labour markets are deeply segmented along caste and gender lines.
- There are frequent instances in which workers belonging to oppressed castes are discriminated against.

#### **Capital favoured over labour**

- Globally, economic changes have favoured capital over labour.
- The inability of present-day capitalism to absorb labour is the reason for the continuing expansion of the informal sector in developing countries.

#### **Informal Work**

- More than 82% of employment in the Indian economy is in the informal sector.
- Emergence of strong linkages between the formal and informal sectors can benefit the economy as a whole..
- However, the relation between the formal and informal sectors has been rather weak .
- Increasing employment of contract workers in place of regular workers reduce plant productivity .

#### **Female labour**

- There has been low rate of female labour force participation in India

- Lack of education, lack of facilities such as child care are responsible for this.
- Further, the society and the economy undervalue the work performed by women within their own households.

### Way forward

- “Demographic dividend” requires investments in education and human development.
- Creating institutions for improving women’s education.
- Providing facilities such as childcare to ease the burden of domestic work
- Creating more employment opportunities in the economy will be crucial to boosting demand for women’s work.
- Emergence of strong linkages between the formal and informal sectors can benefit the economy as a whole.

### Conclusion

It is clear that in a country like India studies on labour will remain central to any attempt to understand the economy. Economists need take up research on questions of labour and employment growth in the Indian context.

## Financing Disaster Management

### GS 3 (Disaster Management)

#### Introduction

Heavy rainfall in Kerala led to catastrophic floods which caused substantial loss of life, property, and infrastructure.

#### The Present Framework for Funding Disaster Management

- Disaster mitigation to cushion the impact of a disaster much before its onset.
- Disaster relief includes steps taken immediately before and after the disaster strikes.
- Disaster reconstruction includes rebuilding destroyed infrastructure.

#### Funding of disaster management

- Both GoI and state governments fund disaster management.

- GoI supports in three ways- budget, grants, and support from foreign countries.
- State governments have two avenues for support- budget, and private contributions.

### **The Disaster Management Act (DMA), 2005**

- The act establishes three authorities to manage disasters: NDMA, SDMA, and DDMA.
- The NDMA is chaired by the Prime Minister, SDMA, and DDMA by the district collector.

### **Three concerns**

- NDMA has no role in sanctioning funds from the NDRF.
- Procedure for release of NDRF is subjective and cumbersome.
- None of the three mitigation funds- NDMF, SDMF and DDMF-have been notified and activated
- In the wake of the Kerala floods, some countries offered financial support. But the GoI reportedly declined these offers..

### **Way forward**

- A national consensus is required on how to fund all the three components of disaster management—mitigation, response and reconstruction.
- The option of empowering the NDMA to manage both the response and mitigation funds at the national level needs to be explored.
- The option for permitting foreign contributions for disaster management needs to be considered.
- It may not be desirable to complicate the GST structure by levying a cess on funding of disaster relief.