



**CHROME IAS**

*Giving Wings To Your Dreams !!!*

# **EDITORIALS**

**Monthly Gist Compilation**

**AUGUST**

**2019**

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## Fortifying the Africa outreach

GS2 (International Relations)

830 words summarized to 180

Recently, Indian dignitaries began their respective visits to Africa.

### Economic links with Africa

- In 2015, India agreed to provide credit worth \$10 billion.
- By 2017, India had cumulatively extended 152 Lines of Credit .
- India has provided free access to its market for the exports..
- India was ranked the third largest trading partner of Africa..

### Issues in India-Africa relations

- India's economic relation with Africa dwarfed by China.
- Disconnect between Indian developmental assistance economic engagement.
- India's developmental footprint in Africa does not produce commensurate empathy.
- India's aid being unconditional, the recipients often take it as an entitlement.

### Way forward

- Need to take direct control of our development programme instead of handing our funds to intermediaries such as the African Union.
- India's development assistance should prefer the countries with its substantial interests.
- Prefer aiding countries which are willing to help us.
- The aided project selected should be compatible with local requirements.
- For greater transparency, India should prefer its public sector to implement the aid projects.

### Conclusion

India's aid to Africa should be reciprocated by acknowledgement and quid pro quo in terms of goodwill and institutional preference.

## Is banning cryptocurrencies the solution?

GS 3 ( Economy )

1800 words summarized to 250

Recently, the Garg panel has called for a complete ban on private cryptocurrencies in India.

### Recommendations of the Garg panel

- Fine of up to ₹25 crore and a jail term of up to 10 years for owning or handling private cryptocurrencies.
- Introduction of a single cryptocurrency for the whole country backed by RBI

### Reasons to ban cryptocurrency

- volatility of private cryptocurrencies
- not backed by a sovereign government
- due to anonymity, they can be used to finance criminal activities.

### Should crypto currency be banned?

- if cryptocurrencies are volatile, so are many other asset classes
- Banning will lead to formation of underground market.
- It is not essential that a currency needs to be backed by an institution
- monetary policy doesn't face any threat from cryptocurrencies

### Cryptocurrency vs blockchain

The cryptocurrency is just one application of the underlying blockchain technology.

### The EU regulations on cryptocurrency

- The EU is putting in regulations called AMLD-5 to tackle money laundering.
- It is a bunch of norms to make crypto transactions more secure.

### Should govts issue cryptocurrency?

- It would create a lot of problems in the form of contradictions in existing regulations.
- A digital currency issued by the RBI that gets misused by criminals can affect trust in the existing fiat currency protocol.

### Way forward

- Whether to invest in an asset or not should be left to the investor.

- Govt can come up with a regulatory framework.
- For exploration of the blockchain technology, cryptocurrencies should be allowed to operate.

### **Conclusion**

Regulations on cryptocurrencies could be the best way to go forward rather than putting a blanket ban.

## **Great expectations**

GS 2 (Health )

The Lok Sabha has recently passed the Surrogacy Bill, 2019.

### **Surrogacy in India**

- Violations of human rights of underprivileged woman.
- Plethora of unregulated assisted reproductive techniques (ART) clinics
- growing domestic demand for surrogacy services.

### **The Surrogacy Bill provisions**

- surrogate mother can only be a close relative
- payment to the surrogate for medical expenses and insurance
- exploiting the surrogate would attract imprisonment and fine
- advertising for surrogacy will also attract the same punishment.
- registration of surrogacy clinics
- regulatory boards to ensure compliance with the law

### **The concern with the Surrogacy Bill**

- Lack of specifics in definitions, for example 'close relative'
- Exclusion of various groups of people from access to surrogacy; and
- Seeks to regulate surrogacy before setting the ART house in order.

### **Way forward**

Govt needs to first set up a regulatory framework for ART clinics, which provide the basic technology for surrogacy.

### **Conclusion**

The Surrogacy law has the possibility of revolutionising the surrogacy sector.

## **A law for those who testify**

GS 2 ( Polity & Governance)

600 words summarized to 200

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

The Centre is yet to act on a Supreme Court directive to legislate on witness protection.

### **Recent instances of attacks on witnesses**

- witnesses of a rape survivor died in 'accident' in UP.
- A police official assigned to protect murder witness was killed.
- In Asaram Bapu case three witnesses were killed several attacked.

### **Supreme Court directive**

- It issued directions to frame laws for protection of witnesses.
- Following this, Maharashtra came out with a witness protection act.
- However, the Centre, and most other States, are yet to act.

### **Witness Protection Scheme**

- Witness Protection Scheme was drafted by the Centre last year on directives of Supreme Court.
- However, the scheme was meant to be a measure in force only till the government brought out its own law on the issue.

### **Lax implementation**

- Implementation of the Witness Protection Scheme on the ground leaves much to be desired.
- It is silent on the punishment to be given to policemen charged with providing security who threaten the witnesses.

### **Police-politician nexus**

- Criminals get support from the police.
- Policeman, for his career progression, does not take any action against political 'master'.

### **Way forward**

The Witness Protection Scheme calls for more elaborate and stricter laws to be incorporated.

### **Conclusion**

Legislation for witness protection is a must for India's criminal justice system.

## **Something special**

GS 2 ( International Relations)

450 words summarized to 150

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

Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently visited Bhutan.

### **India-Bhutan relationship features**

- traditional closeness
- Open borders
- Consultation on foreign policy
- Regular communications on strategic issues
- Bhutan's unequivocal support to India on strategic issues
- Bhutan opposing threats to India; for instance, ULFA issue, Doklam issue.
- India's assistance to Bhutan's economy,
- India's assistance to Bhutan's hydropower generation

### **Caution needed**

- Relationship with Bhutan cannot be taken for granted
- Ties came under a strain over India's sudden change in its power purchasing policy
- Bhutan's worry that too much trade, transport and tourism from India could put its environment at risk.
- India's plans for a Motor Vehicles Agreement (MVA) have been held up.
- Bhutanese proposal to levy entry charges on Indian tourists could cause differences with India.
- Bhutanese have shown a preference for education destinations other than India

### **Way forward**

India will have to remain alert to strategic powers which are courting Bhutan assiduously.

### **Conclusion**

It remains in India's and Bhutan's best interests to make each other's concerns a top priority.

## **Soldier Number One**

GS 3 ( Security )

500 words summarized to 150

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

The creation of the post of the Chief of the Defence Staff( CDS) has been announced.

### **What made formation of CDS urgent?**

- Pulwama and Balakot events,
- Repeated offers for mediation in Kashmir by the U.S.
- Imminent pull-out of American troops from Afghanistan
- The abrogation of Articles 370 and 35A

### **The origin of the CDS**

- During Kargil war, there were several lapses on the part of Army.
- Further, there was a lack of coordination between Army and Air Force
- Thus, the Kargil Review Committee strongly recommended setting up the CDS.

### **How would CDS help?**

- Bridge gaps between forces and reduce response time.
- Will keep the Defence Minister fully briefed and effectively advised.
- It will be part of the Cabinet Committee on Security Affairs.
- It will act as a better link the three services.
- It will certainly casue forces to act more efficiently.

### **Conclusion**

The government should use the opportunity to ramp up the intelligence apparatus that is concomitant to this office.



## **It takes many**

GS 2 ( International institutions)  
1200 words summarized to 250

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

US has blamed India and China of misusing the developing country tag at WTO and threatened to leave it..

### **Is WTO worth saving?**

One way to evaluate the question is to investigate its achievements.

- Overall trade in goods has nearly quadrupled since 1995.
- WTO members' import tariffs have declined by an average of 15 per cent.
- Over half of world trade is now tariff-free.
- Growth in trade has led to improved standards of living.
- Today, the WTO regulates more than 98 per cent of global trade.
- It has avoided trade wars at \$340 billion per year.

### **Unilateralism and WTO**

- A unilateral finding of unfair trading practices and subsequent action by the US places other countries on higher moral ground.
- Unilateral measures are prohibited by Article 23 of the Dispute Settlement Understanding (DSU).
- US claims that it is using its power to discipline the trading system for the benefit of all. However, there is no justification for subverting the multilateral process. .

### **Multilateralism and WTO**

- Multilateral process needs to be fortified and it cannot happen until the strongest member is vested in it.
- Multilateralism implies that every country agrees to bind itself to the same rules as other (smaller) countries.
- Multilateralism does make trade much more complex as to generate consensus is very hard.
- However, multilateral agreement is still the best, and solutions can be found.
- In the absence of pure multilateral negotiations, interested members could negotiate plurilaterally.

### **Conclusion**

The WTO may still emerge as the lynchpin of global trade governance.

## What India has to offer in the Gulf

GS 2 ( International Relations)

900 words summarized to 150

### Why has this issue cropped up?

Prime Minister recently visited to United Arab Emirates and Bahrain.

### India's new vision towards Gulf

- Before 2015, no prime minister of India had travelled to UAE for more than three decades.
- India has shed the tendency to see Gulf region through the prism of Pakistan.

### Gulf's new approach to India

- Some Gulf countries have expanded counter-terror cooperation with Delhi.
- Gulf kingdoms have begun to address many of the long-standing Indian concerns regarding the diaspora.
- Oil rich Gulf has begun to see India as a major economic partner.
- PM Modi has been honoured with the Zayed Medal, the highest civilian honour in the UAE.

### Way forward for India

- India should now put emphasis on what it can do for the Gulf.
- It should offer strong support to moderate Islam reform in the Gulf region.
- It should unclog bureaucratic and policy obstacles to investments from the Gulf.
- It should take initiative to develop a more pro-active strategy for defence cooperation in the region.

### Conclusion

The question for India is no longer about taking sides; it is about contributing to the regional security in whatever manner it can.

## Bad Prescription

Category: GS 2 (Health)

600 words summarized to 100

### Why has this issue cropped up ?

The National Medical Commission (NMC) Bill 2019 has been passed by the Parliament.

### Issues with the NMC Act

- The nomination of important functionaries of the NMC will rest exclusively with the Centre.
- Creation of a cadre of Community Health Providers will promote quackery.
- National Exit Test (NEXT) to evaluate an MBBS student through MCQs is not a good idea.
- The Act appears to heavily favour private medical colleges.

### Conclusion

The NMC Act fails to incorporate a culture of democratic practice in the medical field.

## Code Red for labour

Category: GS 3 ( Welfare)

500 words summarized to 100

### Why has this issue cropped up?

The Centre has proposed to replace 44 labour laws with four codes.

### Antithetical to protection of labour

- Proposal to fix the national minimum floor wage at ₹178.
- 95% of the workforce employed in informal units excluded.
- Ambiguity maintained on wording and definitions..
- ‘Apprentices’ be no longer considered employees.
- A provision on “employees below fifteen years of age”,
- The code promotes further contractualisation of labour.
- Brings back the draconian provision of “recoverable advances”.
- Provisions of increased overtime work have been inserted.
- Ample alibis to employers to evade bonus payments.
- Non-payment of wages will now not be a criminal offence.
- Restrictions, on forming or registering unions, calling a strike, etc.

## Conclusion

The proposed laws resemble 'employer codes' rather than 'labour law'.

## Rooting AI in ethics

Category: GS 4 (Ethics)

750 words summarized to 150

A technology should be evaluated both on the basis of its utility and the intention of its creator.

### The flawed facial recognition system

- Most commercially available AI systems are optimised using the teleological perspectives and not the deontological perspective.
- An AI system in the U.S. failed to recognise faces of African Americans with the same accuracy as those of Caucasian Americans.
- From a teleological perspective, this flawed AI system gets a go ahead.
- From a deontological perspective, it should have been rejected as its intention probably was not to identify people from all races.

### High risks

- These systems are increasingly being used for law enforcement.
- Implications of being labelled a threat to public safety just because of low accuracy of the system are huge.

### Biased data

- The bias is in the data used to train the algorithm.
- It stems from our own flawed historical and cultural perspectives..

### Way forward .

- An ethical basis resting on both teleological and deontological perspectives gives us more faith in a system.
- Understanding and discussing the ethical basis of AI is important for India as the transformative capability of AI in India is huge.

## Conclusion

Any institutional framework for AI should have an explicit focus on the ethical basis.

## **Deliberate, don't disrupt**

Category: GS 2 (Polity)

400 words summarized to 100

### **Disruption**

- Lawmakers often take to organised disruption of legislative business
- Some bills have taken long time to be enacted or were not enacted.
- Many sessions of Parliament saw little business being done due to disruption.

### **Parliamentary Committees**

- Useful in expert discussion over laws.
- Facilitated enhanced cross-party coordination over issues.
- Their importance have been undermined over the last few years.
- In 16th Lok Sabha, only a fourth of all bills referred to committees.

### **Parliamentary Debates**

Time spent on debates in the current session was barely a third of the overall business.

### **Way forward**

- Code of conduct for legislators.
- Proper utilization of Parliamentary Committees
- More time allocation on debates

### **Conclusion**

Deliberation is an important component of parliamentary democracy apart from legislation.

## **Increasing investment to stimulate growth**

Category: GS 3 (Economy)

900 words summarized to 150

### **Reasons for India's current economic slowdown**

India's current economic slowdown is due to a combination of two underlying trends.

- short-run cyclical slowdown
- long-term fall in investment and savings rates.

### **The economy data**

- Significant fall in Gross Fixed Capital Formation (GFCF) since 2011-12.
- Significant fall in the household sector's investment rate till 2015-16.
- Private sector investment rate showed only little fall after 2015-16.
- Public sector investment rate fell only little after 2015-16.
- Significant fall in Gross Domestic Savings Rate after 2011-12

### **Way forward**

- A countercyclical policy should increase growth rate to its current potential of 7%-7.5%.
- Next, structural reforms should raise the potential growth itself to above 8.5%.
- Fiscal stimulus, in the form of additional public sector investment, may prove to be more effective.
- Central & State governments and non-government public sector enterprises should increase capital expenditures.
- Financial system must be activated to lend more.
- Re-look at the FRBM Act is needed.

### **Conclusion**

Raising growth requires that attention be paid to both cyclical and structural dimensions of the problem.

## **Taking a 'Far East' turn**

Category: GS 2 (International Relations)  
900 words summarized to 300

### **Introduction**

PM Modi is to visit Vladivostok, Russia.

### **Special importance of Vladivostok**

When the U.S. and British Navies tried to threaten Indian security during the India-Pakistan war in 1971, the Soviet Union dispatched nuclear-armed flotilla from Vladivostok in support of India.

### **The Far East of Russia**

- The Far East lies is less developed than the country's European areas.
- Putin is inviting foreign countries to invest in this region.

### **Russia's outreach to Asia**

- Russian outreach to Asian nations gained momentum after Crimea crisis spoiled its relations with the West.
- At the same time, the idea of an 'Indo-Pacific region' has also left Russia concerned.
- Russia is apprehensive that it could lose India India, a friendly country and one of the biggest buyers of Russian military hardware.

### **India-Russia relations improving**

- India has maintained that Indo-Pacific is not targeted against any country.
- Two countries are now working for a multipolar Indo-Pacific.
- India has convinced Russia that its engagement with U.S. is not against Russian interests.
- Russia also doesn't want China to become a hegemon and is hence deepening cooperation with countries like India.
- Indian States are being encouraged to develop relations with Russia.

### **India and the Far East**

- Russia simplified electronic visas for India to encourage tourism in the Far East.
- India will also provide an annual grant of \$10,000 to fund the study of Indology at Far Eastern Federal University.
- Far East lacks manpower. Thus, Indian professionals can help in the region's development.
- India, one of the largest importers of timber, can find ample resources in the region.
- The two countries are also looking at the feasibility of Chennai-Vladivostok sea route.
- The Far East has the potential to become an anchor in deepening India-Russia cooperation; more so considering that
- India has expanded the scope of its 'Act East policy' to include Russia and Far East can play important role.

### **Conclusion**

India and Russia should increase their areas of cooperation and trade in order to hedge against disruptive forces and make their ties sustainable.

## **An intervention that leads to more questions**

Category: GS 3 (Security)

1000 words summarized to 150

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

Recently, Defence Minister appears to have altered a key pillar of India's nuclear doctrine-No First Use .

### **India's nuclear doctrine**

India's nuclear doctrine consists of two pillars:

- "a credible minimum deterrent" and
- "No First Use".

### **Restraint as a pivotal point**

- Restraint has served India well in Kargil war 20 years ago.
- Raising the nuclear threshold gave India sympathy in foreign capitals.
- India's restraint has formed the basis for its claims to belong to the nuclear mainstream —Nuclear Suppliers Group, Missile Technology Control Regime, Wassenaar Arrangement and the Australia Group. .

### **Is revoking the commitment to NFU policy justified?**

- Revoking NFU leave India's doctrine more ambiguous.
- Ambiguity, in turn, can lead to miscalculations, by enemy country.
- Adhering to the NFU does not symbolise weakness as India is committed to a devastating response to nuclear first use.
- However, revoking NFU has led to a more muscular nuclear policy for India.

## **Privacy no longer supreme**

Category: GS 2 (Polity)

800 words summarized to 150

### **Introduction**

In K.S. Puttaswamy case, the Supreme Court held that Indians have a fundamental right to privacy.

### **Three tests to be passed by the state**

The judgment held that the right may be restricted only by state action that passes each of the three tests:

- First, such state action must have a legislative mandate;
- Second, it must be pursuing a legitimate state purpose; and



- Third, it must be proportionate.

### **Judgment not followed by the govt.**

- The govt. continued to commission and execute mass surveillance programmes.
- The Ministry of Home Affairs, in December last year, authorised 10 Central agencies for mass surveillance.
- In July last year, Ministry of Information Broadcasting had floated a tender for 'Social Media Monitoring Hub'.
- A request for similar social media surveillance programme was floated in August last year by the UIDAI.
- The Income-Tax department has its 'Project Insight' which also has similar mass surveillance ends.
- The government has shunned a rights-oriented approach in personal data. This approach is evident in Justice Srikrishna committee.

### **Conclusion**

A rights-oriented data protection legislation which prohibits mass surveillance is still possible.

## **Giving wings to better air connectivity**

Category: GS 3 (Infrastructure)  
1000 words summarized to 150

### **Introduction**

Civil aviation is a Central subject that barely got significant attention from the States until recently.

### **Changing role of states**

- Now, the cooperation of States is seen as a major factor in the growth of the civil aviation sector.
- The Regional Connectivity Scheme, UDAN, involves State governments in the growth of the aviation sector.
- The policies of States and Centre are now being interlinked to make flying accessible and affordable.

### **Suggestions to jump-start the aviation market**

- States have very high rates of VAT on ATF. Relief on ATF is a major incentive for airlines to augment their operations.
- There are many regional airports which can be developed by States.

- States and the Central government can support airlines to develop air services in the remote regions.
- States may converge their relevant schemes relating to tourism, health, and insurance for supporting air connectivity.
- States need to facilitate burgeoning Indian middle class to fly at least once a year.

### **Conclusion**

Pooling resources of both the Union and State governments can accelerate the harmonised growth of the Indian civil aviation sector.

## **Talking trade with the EU**

Category: GS 3 ( International relations)

**500 words summarized to 100**

### **Introduction**

Amid U.S.-China trade war, India needs to pursue a FTA with EU.

### **Time to engage with EU**

- Without preferential FTA tariffs or GSP+ status, India will struggle to keep exports competitive for Europe.
- Beyond mere economic cost-benefit analysis, India must also approach an EU FTA from a geo-strategic perspective.
- India should leverage upon the collapse of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership and EU concerns about excessive economic reliance on China.
- India's governance framework shares the European norms of democratic transparency in technological domains such as AI.

### **Conclusion**

India must go beyond security and begin with the business of trade and technology with EU.

## **Rediscovering development banks**

Category: GS 3 ( Economy )

**1000 words summarized to 170**

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

Recently, the govt. announced setting up a development bank.

### **Purpose of development bank**

The purpose is to improve access to long-term finance for infrastructure and housing projects.

### **What are development banks?**

- These are financial institutions that provide long-term credit for capital-intensive investments and yielding low rates of return.
- Development banks are often supported by governments or international institutions.
- Development banks are different from commercial banks which mobilise short- to medium-term deposits.

### **India's development banks**

- IFCI, set up in 1949, was India's first development bank for financing industrial investments.
- In 1955, the World Bank prompted the ICICI Bank.
- In 1964, IDBI was set up as an apex body of all development finance institutions.
- However, development banks got discredited for mounting non-performing assets.
- After 1991, development finance institutions were disbanded and got converted to commercial banks.

### **Development banks in other countries**

- China's development banks have been at the forefront of financing its industrial prowess.
- Germany's development bank, KfW, has been spearheading long-term investment in green technologies.

### **Conclusion**

The govt. should carefully weigh in the past lessons to lay a firm foundation for the new institution.

## **Spelling out the government's RBI windfall**

**Category: GS 3 (Economy)**

**1100 words summarized to 130**

RBI has announced a huge transfer of its surplus of ₹1.76 lakh crore to the Central government.

### Surplus transfer

- The transfer of RBI surplus to the government occurs every year.
- This augments the non-tax revenue of the Central government.
- But this year is an exception as RBI has announced a huge transfer of ₹1.76 lakh crore.

### Arguments against the surplus

- If the economy faces a crisis, the RBI may not have adequate money to protect it.
- It denotes an erosion of the RBI's independence.

### Arguments in favour of surplus

- With transfer, the idle cash with RBI can be utilised more productively.
- Transfer occurred after following due process and after accepting the recommendations of the Jalan Committee.
- Transfer could enable the government to go in for bank recapitalisation in a big way.

The transfer could enable the government to stimulate the economy while maintaining budget discipline.

## The Last Window

Category: GS 3 (Environment)

700 words summarized to 130

### Introduction

Like other countries, India too must act quickly and decisively on the IPCC report.

### The IPCC report

The latest IPCC report states that the land surface air temperature has risen by nearly twice the global average temperature, at about 1.3°C.

### What should India do?

- planting cover crops, improvements in grazing management, greater use of agroforestry.
- maintaining and extending forest cover.
- compatibility between industrial development and environmental protection
- consulting indigenous people to integrate local knowledge with scientific knowledge.

- need to manage water better both in the short and in the long run.
- drip irrigation, sprinkler irrigation, use of water efficient agricultural practices,
- traditional rainwater harvesting practices to be scaled up across the nation.
- shift towards a more plant-based based diet.
- Livestock sector management with crop management

### **Conclusion**

It is hoped that the well-being of the masses will take precedence over short-term economic gains for a few.