



# **PLUTUS IAS Weekly**

## **CURRENT AFFAIRS**



**PLUTUS IAS WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS 21-06-2021 to 27-06-2021**

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# CURRENT AFFAIRS

## JUNE 2021

### The Comrades and their Divergent Perspectives (The Hindu, GS-2, International Relations)

#### CONTEXT:

Russian President Vladimir Putin has recently asserted that both India and China are “responsible” enough to solve issues between their countries. They debar any “extra-regional power” to interfere in the process.

#### WHY RUSSIA IS IMPORTANT TO INDIA:

- **The historical character** of the bilateral relationship i.e. India was close to USSR during cold war era and USSR too helped India in it's economic development.
- **Defense partnership:** Russia still dominates the Indian defense inventory to the tune of about 70 per cent even after diversifying defense trade partners.
- **Issue of Critical technology:** Russia remains the only partner that is willing to give India critical technologies, such as a nuclear submarine and other space capabilities.
- **Critical security issues:** The emerging Russia-China strategic relationship has important security consequences for India.
- **UNSC(UN Security Council):** Russia also reaffirmed its “unwavering support” to India for a permanent seat in an expanded UN Security Council.
- **Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG):** Russia expressed its support for India's membership of the Nuclear Suppliers Group.
- Both countries have mutual benefits in supporting struggle against terrorism, Afghanistan, issues in Syria, climate change; organizations like SCO, BRICS, G-20 and ASEAN.

### India and China Relations:- (History so Far)

#### ANCIENT AND MODERN:

- The Silk Road not only served as a major trade route between India and China.
- China was involved in a growing opium trade with the East India Company.
- According to the Shimla conference 1914, India and China had the Mac Mohan line which separated them.
- 1950:

- ▶ Formal establishment of India and China diplomatic relations
- ▶ India was the first non-socialist country to establish relations with China.
- ▶ The phrase Hindi Chini Bhai Bhai became famous.
- ▶ Bandung Conference :- Both countries attended and jointly advocated the Bandung Spirit of solidarity, friendship and cooperation.
- ▶ It has led to the decolonization of the whole of Asia and Africa.
- ▶ Formation of a Non-Aligned Movement.
- ▶ The First NAM Summit Conference took place in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, in September 1961.
- **1962:**
  - ▶ The border conflict led to a back seat in bilateral relations.
- **1976:**
  - ▶ China and India restored ambassadorial relations and bilateral ties improved gradually with main focus on trust building.
  - ▶ Since then Relations have improved and touched new heights in 2014 but the Doklam issue and other territorial issues led to setbacks in relation.

### WHAT ARE THE ISSUES BETWEEN INDIA AND CHINA:

- **Territorial dispute** between Eastern sector and western sector.
- China doesn't accept the **MacMohan** line as the boundary demarcation between India and China because the Shimla Agreement was negotiated by Tibet and Tibet was not a sovereign state. So Tibet has no power to negotiate any agreement.
- **Issue of access to market:** India pharma and agriculture companies don't have proper access to Chinese market.
- **Issue of Terrorism:** China doesn't support the Indian definition of terrorism of cross border rather china propagates its own.

**WHY LAC OFTEN FLARES UP** 23 “disputed and sensitive” areas along the unresolved 3,488-km-long LAC witness aggressive patrolling & face-offs between troops from the two sides

**FLASHPOINTS INCLUDE:**



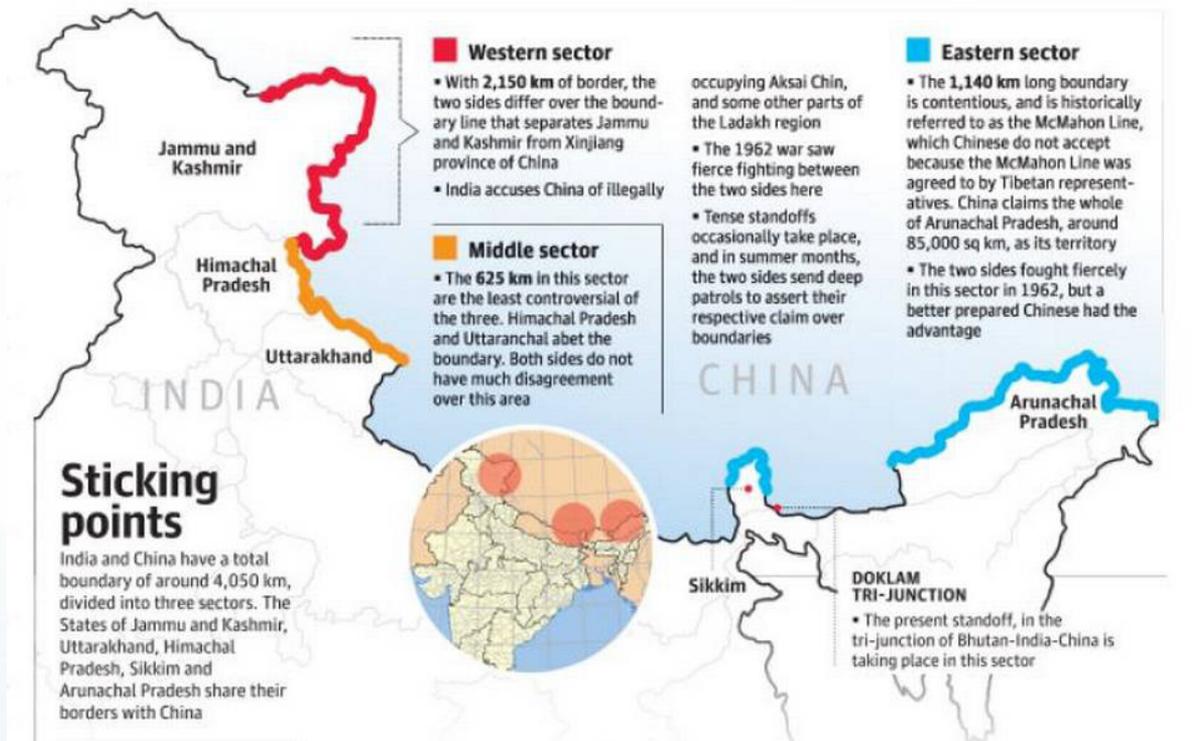
**Ladakh:** Demchok, Trig Heights, Dumchele, Pangong Tso, Chumar & Spanggur Gap

**Himachal:** Kaurik, Shipki La

**Arunachal:** Namkha Chu, Sumdorong Chu, Asaphila, Longju, Dichu, Yangtse, Fish Tail-1 & 2 in Dibang Valley

**Uttarakhand:** Barahoti & Pulan Sunda

India records **around 300 “transgressions”** by PLA troops every year. Number **shot up to 426 in 2017**, the year of the Doklam face-off



- **Issue of Masood Azhar:** India wanted Masood Azhar to be declared as a UN designated terrorist but China always has her veto.
- **NSG Membership:** China always blocks India's road to get NSG membership.
- **UNSC Membership:-** China, because of its veto power, always creates non-crossable hurdles.
- India has a huge trade deficit in the favor of China which makes India more dependent on china.

### WHAT IS THE TRIPARTITE ISSUE BETWEEN INDIA, CHINA AND RUSSIA:

- Because of recent border issues, India and China relations touched a new low.
- India went closer to the USA in order to tackle Chinese hegemony on the border.
- This closeness of India with the USA antagonizes China more.
- USA led QUAD group, India is also a part of it, seen by Russia and china as the threat.
- QUAD groups new dimensions worry China on the pretext that it is mainly to contain china.

### RUSSIAN ANGLE:

- Russian economy is an oil and gas dependent economy. A depression in the oil prices contracted the Russian economy.
- Russia got sanctions from the USA in 2014 because Russia annexed part of Ukraine.
- Russian economy became more dependent on China.
- So Russia did not speak a word about the issue of Ladakh rather asked to maintain the status quo which is nothing but in the favor of china.
- Russia is having issues with the USA that's why Russian and Chinese interest coincides.
- India doesn't give priority to Russian interests according to Russia.
- Russia became an early proponent of the 'strategic triangle' to bring together the three major powers.

## WHAT INDIA IS DOING IN THIS SCENARIO AND THE WAY FORWARD:

- In a virtual discussion with Australian and French counterparts recently Indian foreign minister asserted that no country can have a veto on India's participation in the Quad.
- India's attempt to reimagine a new geostrategic maritime role for itself.
- The incorporation of the Indo-Pacific concept in Indian diplomacy means that India can no longer be confined between the Malacca Strait and Gulf of Aden and just a counter weight rather.
- Russia's ability to influence the India China relationship has become doubtful.
- India has deepened its ties with Japan and Australia in a way that is close to soft balancing.
- Quad is being formalized into a functional strategic alignment.
- India is particularly interested in a normalization of relations between Washington and Moscow as it will help it steer ties among the great powers.

–Swarn Singh

## Power Sector Reforms (GS PAPER-3, Industrial Policy, Industrial Growth Source- The Hindu)

### CONTEXT:

- Amid the Covid pandemic last year, the union government proposed a rescue package for the power sector under the Atma Nirbhar Bharat scheme.
- This complete rescue package was managed to prevent the entire power sector chain from suffering because of the DISCOM inefficiency to meet their obligations.
- This is not the first time (UDAY SCHEME) that the Centre government has come in to help DISCOM and tackle the problems plaguing the distribution segment.
- However, even after the government's repeated efforts, the result has been cash-strapped DISCOM looking for another management package.
- This shows the major structural problems happening in the power sector, which must be corrected for a sustainable power sector in India.

### UDAY SCHEME:

- The Ujwal Discom Assurance Yojana (UDAY) was launched by the Ministry of Power of the union government in November 2015 to help turn around the poor financial situation of state distribution companies
- Critical Components:
  - ▶ The takeover of 75% of DISCOM total debt by state governments,
  - ▶ Minimisation in AT&C losses,
  - ▶ Timely revisions of tariff and elimination of the gap between the Average Cost of Supply (ACS) and Average Revenue Realised (ARR) by the end of the financial year 2019.
- It also proposes the development of the renewable energy sector and the availability of 24\*7 Power For All at a very affordable price.

- Several other operational efficiencies have set targets under UDAY, such as feeder metering, smart metering and feeder segregation, etc.
- The Scheme will fetch up in March 2020.

### **ASSOCIATED CHALLENGES:**

- **AT&C Losses:** Aggregate technical and commercial (AT&C) losses emerge from poor or inadequate infrastructure or on account of theft or bills not being generated or honored on time. The UDAY scheme had envisioned bringing down these losses to 15 percent by the year 2019. However, as per data on the UDAY control panel, the AT&C losses currently stand at 21.7 percent at the all-India level.
- **Cost-Revenue Gap:** The difference between DISCOM costs (average cost of supply) and revenues (average revenue realized) is still very high. This is because of the absence of regular and revision in electricity tariffs.
- **Magnifying Effect:** It's contradictory, the government's push for ensuring electrification of all has contributed to greater impotence. As household connections are increasing, to support higher levels of electrification, cost structures need to be revamped, and the distribution network (transformers, wires, etc) would need to be amplified. In the absence of all this, losses are bound to increase.
- **Economic Fallout of the Pandemic:** Amid pandemic, with demand from industrial and commercial users falling, revenue from this stream, which is used to cross-subsidize other consumers, are decreasing, exacerbating the stress on DISCOM finances.
- **Low Investment:** Owing to the poor financial health of these companies, there are fewer new investments in the electricity sector (particularly in the private sector).
- **Fossil Fuel Dominated Energy Generation:** Thermal power based on fossil fuels such as coal, natural gas, and diesel accounts for 80% of the country's electricity generation. Furthermore, the majority of plants in India are old and inefficient.

### **WAY FORWARD:**

- **Eliminate Cross Subsidization:** High industrial/commercial tariff and the cross-subsidy regime have grandiose the competitiveness of the industrial and commercial sectors. Thus, there is an urgency to ensure effective fulfillment of rationalization of cross-subsidy.
- **Covering up AT&C Losses:** To administer the power demand, it is necessary to introduce 100% metering-net metering, smart meters, and metering of electricity supplied to agriculture. There is also a need to institute performance-based incentives in the tariff structure.
- **Greening The Grid:** The KUSUM SCHEME provides an acceptable alternative to the power subsidy model in agriculture. The scheme proposes to promote the use of solar pumps for agriculture and equip local DISCOM to buy surplus power from the farmer.

### **PM-KUSUM:**

- The farmer focus of Budget 2018 has given a fillip to the farmer-focussed scheme involving decentralized solar power production up to 28,250 MW, known as Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthan Mahabhiyan (KUSUM) scheme.
- The KUSUM scheme would facilitate additional income to farmers, by providing them the option to sell additional power to the grid, through solar power projects set up on their barren lands.
- If implemented properly, the PM-KUSUM scheme can be the ultimate revolter for energy security and the rural economy in India.

## COMPONENT OF THE PM-KUSUM:

PM-KUSUM has three components and aims to add a solar capacity of 30.8 GW by 2022:

- **Component-A:** 10,000 MW of decentralized ground-ascend grid-connected renewable power plants.
- **Component-B:** Accession of two million standalone solar-powered agriculture pumps.
- **Component-C:** Solarisation of 1.5 million grid-link solar-powered agriculture pumps.
- **Cross-Border Trade:** The government requires to actively promote cross-border electricity trade to utilize existing/upcoming generation assets. The SAARC Electricity grid is a step in the CORRECT direction.

## DID YOU KNOW:

India has been providing power to Bangladesh and Nepal and has been a torchbearer of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) electricity grid minus Pakistan to felicitous electricity demand in the region.

## CONCLUSION:

- A solution that has now been furlled forward to deal with the infirm DISCOM, is the creation of a national powerdistribution company.
- However, it is difficult to see how a sustainableflip-flop in the financial and operational position of DISCOM can beengineered without solving the systemic challenges.



-Khyati Khare

# Indian Progress on Sustainable Development (Gs Paper-3, Sustainable Development Source- Pib)

## CONTEXT:

- Energy is the golden thread that connects economic growth, social equity, and environmental sustainability.
- It generates a consistent stream of power to meet basic human needs, maintain and improve social functioning, and advance living standards.
- Validating the same, SDG-7 commits affordable and clean energy for all.

## MEANS TO ACHIEVE THE GOAL:

- To expand energy access, it is crucial to enhance energy efficiency and to invest in renewable energy.
- The energy produced should be as sustainable as possible
- India has a vast renewable energy potential through wind, solar, biomass, and small hydro which is concentrated in certain parts of the country. But to tap on these endowments, India's renewable energy sector requires significant financing.



## STEPS WERE TAKEN BY INDIA:

- India intends to achieve 40% cumulative electric power installed capacity from non-fossil fuel-based energy resources by 2030, as one of the ways to curb global temperature increase.
- Indian Government has also focussed its attention on the rural clean energy sector by supporting distributed generation in the form of community-based, self-sufficient biomass and solar power.

- National Solar Mission also has an ambitious goal of providing 2 crore solar lighting systems in place of kerosene lamps to rural communities.
- Installations of solar power systems, particularly on rooftops, all over the country. The target of 40 GW rooftop solar by 2022 will result in the abatement of about 6 crore tonnes of carbon dioxide per year.

### **WAY FORWARD:**

- Access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy is integral to global development in the twenty-first century.
- But, there are challenges that require a pragmatic, multi-faceted approach. Solutions need to be developed at both local and global scales, where Governments and agencies must work together.

–Khyati Khare

## **The State of India's Poor must be Acknowledged (The Hindu, GS-2, Poverty)**

### **CONTEXT:**

There are reports which say many Indian went again in the clutches of poverty because of Pandemic COVID-19.

### **WHAT IS POVERTY:**

- Poverty is a state of deprivation. This deprivation may be social, political, economic etc. Deprivation further manifests into hunger, unemployment, illiteracy, loss of human capital etc.

### **EXAMPLES OF POVERTY:**

- Economic poverty, social poverty etc.

### **TYPES OF POVERTY:- TWO TYPES.**

- **Absolute Poverty:**
  - ▶ A condition where household or a person income is below a necessary level to maintain basic living standards. Because it is absolute it is possible to compare between different countries and also over time.
  - ▶ It was first introduced in 1990. According to the World Bank if a person don't earn \$1.90 a day on purchasing power parity basis then he is poor.
- **Relative Poverty:**
  - ▶ It is defined from the social perspective which compares living standards to the economic standards of the population living in surroundings. It is one of the measures of income inequality.
  - ▶ Generally relative poverty is measured as the percentage of the population with income less than some fixed proportion of median income. It measures head counts ratio.

### **MEASURE OF POVERTY ESTIMATION IN INDIA:**

- First-ever Poverty estimation was done by **Dadabhai Naoroji** in 1901 which was published in his book "Poverty and Un-British Rule in India"



- The **National Planning Committee of 1936** has estimated poverty in India during the Colonial rule. It calculated poverty linking nutrition, clothing, and housing
- The **Planning Commission constituted a working group** for the first time in 1962 to estimate poverty nationally. This group was given a task about separate poverty lines for rural and urban areas. It has made Rs 20 and Rs 25 per capita per year respectively for rural and urban areas.
- **VM Dandekar and N Rath** committee made the first systematic assessment of poverty in India in 1971. This was based on National Sample Survey (NSS) data from 1960-61.
  - ▶ This committee fixed the poverty line based on expenditure that was adequate to provide 2250 calories per day in both rural and urban areas.
  - ▶ After this committee's recommendation a debate on minimum calorie consumption norms was generated..
- In 1979 **Alagh Committee (1979)** constructed a poverty line for rural and urban areas on the basis of nutritional requirements. This was the first committee which made a separate poverty line for Urban and rural areas.
  - ▶ This committee formulates the line by adjusting the price level for inflation.
- In 2009 the **Tendulkar Committee** was formed to review methodology for poverty estimation and to address the following shortcomings of the previous methods. This committee changed the poverty line baskets (PLBs) **Consumption patterns** which were linked to the 1973-74 because of significant changes in the consumption patterns of the poor since that time, which were not reflected in the poverty estimates.

- ▶ According to the Tendulkar committee 21.9 percent people in India are poor.
- ▶ Rs. 816 per capita per month for rural India and Rs. 1,000 per capita per month for urban India
- **Rangrajan committee was formed:** This committee formed a poverty line based on estimated Monthly Per Capita Expenditure of Rs. 1407 in urban areas and Rs. 972 in rural areas.

## Causes of Poverty in India:

### HISTORICAL CAUSES:

- **Colonial Exploitation:** The British ruled over India for about two centuries. This led to de-industrialization and realization of India ruining its traditional handicrafts and textile industries. Colonial Policies transformed India to a mere raw-material producer for European industries.
- Lack of science and technology expansion since the medieval times.
- **Population Explosion:** India's population has increased rapidly in the past 45 years. The rate of 2.2% per year, This also increases the demand for consumption goods tremendously.

### ECONOMIC CAUSES:

- **Inefficient Resource utilization:** This inefficient resource allocation led to underemployment and disguised unemployment in the country especially in the farming sector.
- **Low Rate of Economic Development:** Economic development has been low in India especially in the first 40 years. We have also missed the bus of economic boom in the world economy before the LPG reforms in 1991.
- **Low Agricultural Productivity:** Almost 50 percent people are working in the agricultural sector. One of the important reason for poverty in the low productivity in the agriculture sector. Productivity issues are related to fragmented and subdivided land holdings, lack of capital, illiteracy about new technologies in farming, the use of traditional methods of cultivation, wastage during storage, etc.

### PRICE RISE:

- A general price rise increased the burden the poor and the middle class.

### UNEMPLOYMENT:

- A continuous increase in unemployment is one of another factor causing poverty in India. The ever-increasing population and increase in education with low skill development led to a higher number of job-seekers.

### LACK OF CAPITAL AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP:

- The shortage of capital and entrepreneurship results in low level of investment and job creation in the economy.

### SOCIAL FACTORS:

- Laws of inheritance, caste system, certain traditions, prejudice against women led to deprivation of marginalized and pushed these sections into a clutch of poverty.

### **CLIMATIC FACTORS:**

- Most of India's poor belong to the states of Bihar, UP, MP, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Jharkhand, etc, There are more natural calamities such as frequent floods, disasters, earthquake and cyclone cause heavy damage to agriculture in these states.

### **LACK OF SKILLED LABOR:**

- Lack of human capital formation assets became liabilities.

### **CORRUPTION:**

- Many measures have been taken by the government to eliminate poverty. However, there is still a lack of political will. The corruption by those in power also contributes to poverty.

### **EFFECT OF PANDEMIC ON POVERTY SITUATION IN INDIA:**

- There is a fall in the monthly per capita consumption expenditure of 201718 for the first time since 1972-73.
- fall of India in the Global Hunger Index to 'serious hunger' category
- NFHS5 survey depicts a worrying picture of increased malnutrition, infant mortality and maternal health.
- **According to World Bank data:** The number of poor in India has more than doubled to 134 million from 60 million in just a year which is based on income of \$2 per day or less in purchasing power parity.
- Only India contributed 57.3% of the growth of the global poor In 2020.
- India is again depicted as a country of mass poverty after 45 years.
- **According to the Multi poverty Index:** India lifted 271 million citizens out of poverty between 2006 and 2016 but the pandemic has reversed it again.
- The poverty rate in India may increase to 9.7% in 2020, up sharply from the January 2020 forecast of 4.3%.
- **Middle Class:** One of the estimates said the middle class in India has shrunk by 3.2 crores in 2020.

### **WHY COUNTING OR MEASURING THE POVERTY IS MORE IMPORTANT:**

- Knowing the numbers and making them available to the public makes it possible to get public opinion to support massive and urgent cash transfers.
- All policies can be honestly evaluated on the basis of effects on majority and further improvement if needs of the majority
- Government data were to honestly account for the exact numbers of the poor, providing the availability of data can create a climate that demands accountability from public representatives.
- India has clocked a massive rise in the market capitalization and the fortunes of the richest Indian corporates.

### **WAY FORWARD:**

- Skill development supported by industrial development
- Creation of a robust manufacturing sector.

- Increase the penetration of Loan or capital to the needed section.
- Social exclusion needs to be evaluated so that marginalized section gets their due share.
- Agriculture mechanization with taking people out from agriculture towards manufacturing sector.

–Swarn Singh

## **Nutrient Loss (GS PAPER- 3, Issues Related to Development, Health Source- The Hindu)**

### **CONTEXT:**

- Researchers from various institutes under the Indian Council of Agriculture and Research and Bidhan Chandra Krishi Viswavidyalaya found decreasing trends in grain density of zinc and iron in rice and wheat cultivated in India Recently.
- The researchers composed seeds of rice (16 varieties) and wheat (18 varieties) from the gene bank perpetuated at the ICAR's Cultivar repositories.

### **INDIAN COUNCIL OF AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH:**

- It is an autonomous set up under the Department of Agricultural Research and Education (DARE) and Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare.
- It is the supreme body for coordinating, guiding, and managing research and education in agriculture encompassing horticulture, fisheries, and animal sciences in the entire country.
- It was framed on 16th July 1929 as a registered society under the Societies Registration Act, 1860.
- It is headquartered in New Delhi. With 102 ICAR institutes and 71 agricultural universities spread in the country, this is one of the largest national agricultural systems in the globalized world.
- Cultivar repositories are nodal institutes that persist and archive the old cultivars or varieties from our country.

## **Key Highlights:**

### **CONCENTRATIONS IN RICE:**

- Zinc and iron attentiveness in grains of rice cultivars released within the 1960s were 27.1 mg/kg and 59.8 mg/kg. This reduced to 20.6 mg/kg and 43.1 mg/kg, respectively within the 2000s.

### **CONCENTRATIONS IN WHEAT:**

- The concentrations of zinc and iron were 33.3 mg/kg and about 57.6 mg/kg in cultivars of the 1960s, dropped to 23.5 mg/kg and 46.4 mg/kg, respectively in cultivars released during the 2010s.

### **REASON FOR THE REDUCTION:**

- 'Dilution effect' is caused by reducing nutrient concentration in response to higher grain yield. This means the rate of yield increase is not remunerated by the rate of nutrient take-up by the plants. Also,

the soils helping plants could be low in plant-available nutrients.

### **SUGGESTIONS BY EXPERTS:**

- Growing newer-released (the 1990s and later) cultivars of rice and wheat cannot be a viable option to alleviate zinc and iron malnutrition in the Indian population.
- Zinc and iron scarcity affects billions of people globally and the countries with this deficiency have diets composed mainly of rice, wheat, corn, and barley.
- The negative effects need to be bypassed by improving the grain ionome (that is, nutritional make-up) while releasing cultivars in future breeding programs.
- There is a need to put focus on other options like biofortification, where we breed food crops that are rich in micronutrients.

### **BIOFORTIFICATION:**

- Biofortification is the process by which the nutritional quality of food crops is elevated through agronomic practices, conventional plant breeding, or modern technology



### **INITIATIVES TAKEN BY INDIA:**

- Recently, the Prime Minister devoted nearly 17 biofortified varieties of 8 crops to the nation. Some examples are as follows:
  - ▶ Rice- CR DHAN 315 has an excess amount of zinc.
  - ▶ Wheat- HI 1633 rich in protein, iron, and zinc, etc.
- Maize- Hybrid varieties 1, 2, and 3 are value-added with lysine and tryptophan.
- Madhuban Gajar, a biofortified carrot diversity, is benefitting more than 150 local farmers in Junagadh, Gujarat. It has higher  $\beta$ -carotene and iron-rich materials

- ICAR has initiated a Nutri-Sensitive Agricultural Resources and Innovations (NARI) program for encouraging family farming linking agriculture to nutrition, Nutri-smart villages for enhancing nutritional security and location-specific nutrition garden models are being evolved to ensure access to locally available, healthy, and diversified diet with adequate macro and micronutrients.
- The production of biofortified crop varieties will be value rich and linked with government programs of mid-day meals, Anganwadi, etc. to minimize malnutrition.

### **IMPORTANCE OF BIOFORTIFICATION:**

- **Improved Health:** Biofortified staple crops, when devoured regularly, will generate quantifiable improvements in human health and nutrition.
- **Higher Resilience:** Biofortified crops are also often more irrepressible to pests, diseases, higher temperatures, drought and provide a high yield.
- **Greater Reach:** Biofortification puts an important gap as it facilitates a food-based, sustainable and low-dose alternative to iron supplementation. It does not need behavior change, can reach the poorest sections of the society, and reinforce local farmers.
- **Cost-Effective:** After the beginning investment to develop the biofortified seed, it can be replicated and distributed without any subtraction in the micronutrient concentration. This makes it cost-effective and sustainable for the nation.

### **CHALLENGES FOR BIOFORTIFICATION IN INDIA:**

- **Lack of Acceptance:** Lack of consumer affirmation due to color changes and last-mile reach of fortified food remains a big challenge for countrymen.
- **Cost:** Adoption by farmers and cost involved in the method of fortification.
- **Slow Process:** Though biofortification can be done by using a non-genetically-modified procedure it is a slower process than genetic modification.

### **WAY FORWARD:**

- Because of the pervasiveness of diverse food practices in the country, biofortification will need to achieve high rates of adoption and consumption in geographically distinct territories.
- The master plan for the delivery of biofortified crops must be tailored to the local context for each crop-nutrient pair.
- The government should ease public-private partnerships. Private sector arrangements can leverage technological solutions for scaling up food fortification initiatives, and accompany the government's outreach efforts through mass awareness and education campaigns in communities.
- The Absence of nutrition is not only a contradiction of a fundamental human right, but it is also poor economics.
- Biofortification is a limited solution, which must go hand in hand with efforts to decrease poverty, food insecurity, disease, poor sanitation, social and gender inequality in the country.

– Khyati Khare

## Countering a Political act that has a Legal Garb (The Hindu, GS-2, Polity)

### CONTEXT:

A film-maker from Lakshadweep named Aisha Sultana was recently booked for the alleged offences of sedition and statements prejudicial to national integrity. Ms. Aisha then moved the Kerala High Court for pre-arrest bail and further the court allowed interim bail to her on June 17. Thus got temporary relief from incarceration.

### WHAT IS SEDITION:

- The word sedition is defined in IPC section 124A.
- An offence committed when “any person by words, either spoken or written, or by signs, or by visible representation, or otherwise, brings or attempts to bring into hatred or contempt, or excites or attempts to excite disaffection towards the government established by law in India”.



### HISTORY OF SEDITION LAW IN INDIA:

- It was 1st enacted in England.
- The law was drafted in 1837 by Thomas Macaulay.
- Indian Penal Code (IPC) was enacted in 1860.
- In 1870 a Section 124A was inserted. This amendment was introduced by James Stephen.

### PUNISHMENT FOR THE OFFENCE OF SEDITION:

- Sedition is a non-bailable offence.
- Punishment may range from imprisonment up to three years to a life term, to which fine may be added.
- A person charged under this law is barred from a government office or a job.
- They have to live without their passport.
- They must produce themselves in the court at all times as and when required.

## **ACTION HISTORY OF SEDITION LAW IN INDIA BEFORE THE INDEPENDENCE:**

- In 1891, J.C. Bose, who was the editor of bangobasi, tried under IPC section 124 A for the first time.
- Prosecution of Bal Gangadhar Tilak in 1897 on the pretext of creating disaffection among the British subjects.
- M.K. Gandhi was tried in 1922 under sedition law.
- Mahatma Gandhi wrote an editorial in Young India for a countrywide agitation during civil disobedience movement by demanding the repeal of Section 124A In 1929.

## **WHAT IS THE CURRENT DEBATE AROUND SEDITION LAW:**

- The law creates a conflict with the right to freedom of speech and expression guaranteed by Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution.
- Sedition law is not even part of the “reasonable restrictions” on free speech under Article 19(2).
- Centre and the States both have the power to invoke the section against activists, writers etc.
- Sedition law mainly applies to silence political dissent by accusing dissenters of promoting disaffection now a days.
- According to the National Crime Records Bureau, 35 cases of sedition were reported in 2016.
- National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), between 2016 and 2019 there was a 160% increase in the registration of sedition cases at the same time the conviction rate during this period fell from 33.3% to 3.3%.

## **INDIAN FREEDOM FIGHTERS WERE TOTALLY AGAINST THIS SECTION DURING INDIAN NATIONAL MOVEMENT THEN WHY DID THEY RETAIN IT AFTER INDEPENDENCE?**

- Right-wing extremism as well as by left-wing extremism were on the rise
- Scarcity of food which would have caused havoc in society if unwanted elements would not have been tackled.
- The challenge of settling millions of Partition refugees because of partition.
- The conflict with Pakistan over Kashmir.

## **HOW IS THE SEDITION LAW BEING MISUSED:**

- lower courts have routinely failed to apply these parameters which are set out by the higher judiciary.
- There is a complete lack of percolation of settled judicial opinion to lower levels of the judiciary so we need that Judiciary should address this systemic lapse.
- Magistrates have the power to order a police investigation into cognisable offences.
- We have seen for example, in Lalita Kumari vs. Uttar Pradesh (2013), the Supreme Court has specifically laid down that registration of an FIR is mandatory if information received by the police discloses a cognisable offence but from recent cases, it is unclear how the court or the police could conclude that the contents were seditious.
- State can use section 124 A to chase those who challenge the government power so trying someone under sedition charges ends up acting as a deterrent against any voice of dissent or criticism.

## MAJOR SUPREME COURT DECISIONS ON SEDITION LAW:

- Brij Bhushan vs the State of Delhi.
- Romesh Thappar vs the State of Madras.
  - ▶ The Supreme court specifically said that a law which restricted speech on the ground that it would disturb public order was unconstitutional.
  - ▶ Disturbing the public order will mean nothing less than endangering the foundations of the State or threatening its overthrow there by application of sedition.
  - ▶ Article 19 was amended and there clause (2) was added or rewritten to replace “undermining the security of the State” with “in the interest of public order”.
- **Kedar Nath Singh vs State of Bihar.**
  - ▶ It upheld the constitutionality of sedition.
  - ▶ It also limited its application to “acts involving intention or tendency to create disorder, or disturbance of law and order, or incitement to violence” so the supreme court created a bar on the application of this act..
  - ▶ It distinguished these from “very strong speech” or the use of “vigorous words” strongly critical of the government.
- **Balwant Singh vs State of Punjab:**
  - ▶ The Supreme Court held that mere sloganeering which evoked no public response can not be tantamount to sedition.

## WHY THE SEDITION ACT SHOULD BE ABOLISHED:

- Word Sedition is not mentioned in the Constitution and during the Constituent Assembly debate the opinion was for free speech so that people can make their voices felt by the Government. The essence of democracy is a criticism of the Government.
- The United Kingdom who is the mother of such laws has abolished sedition laws ten years back.
- Law Commission of India has pointed out that the definition of sedition does not take into consideration disaffection towards (a) the Constitution, (b) the legislatures, and (c) administration of justice.
- The court in Navtej Singh Jauhar case found that pre-constitutional legislation has no legal presumption of constitutionality. So the pre-constitutional sedition law can also be challenged on this basis.
- India ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in 1976 which binds India to promote free speech.

## WHY IS THE SEDITION LAW NOT ABOLISHED?:

- There is a need to retain the provision to combat anti-national, secessionist and terrorist elements there by upholding sovereignty, integrity of India.
- This power was required by the state to protect itself according to the supreme court.
- The Law Commission had already rejected the idea of repealing the section.
- The Commission opined that “Section 124A should be invoked only in a few cases with rigorous scrutiny but not for political dissent.

## LAW COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:

- Dissent and criticism of the government are essential ingredients of a constructive and robust public debate in a vibrant democracy.

- So there lies little difference between the pre- and post-Independence eras if the country is not open to positive criticism.
- Right to criticize one's own history and the right to offend are rights protected under free speech under Article 19 of the Constitution which lies with constitutional remedy. It should not be misused as a tool to curb free speech.
- Every restriction on free speech and expression must be carefully scrutinized to avoid unwarranted restrictions thereby people's confidence in democracy.

### WAY FORWARD:

- Sedition law must be applied to the specific cases, a general criticism can not attract the charges of sedition law.
- We must understand that, sedition law is for integrity, sovereignty of India not for the political party.
- Political dissent must not attract this law.
- Either parliament or judiciary should draw the boundary of application of law.
- Appropriate penalties for law enforcement agencies if misused.
- Definition should be narrowed down.

–Swarn Singh

## The Gender Technology gap has to end (The Hindu, GS-2, GS-1, Social issues and social Justice)

### CONTEXT:

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, existing inequalities have come to light. These inequalities are clearly visible in the gender gap report and access to digital technology. Access to technology has never been so crucial to ensuring public health and safety as it is right now.

- **Digital Gender Gap:**
  - ▶ There is a differential access to digital technology.
  - ▶ According to (GSMA) estimates over 390 million women in low and middle income countries do not have Internet access.
  - ▶ Only 14.9% of women were reported to be using the Internet in India.
  - ▶ According to current data with the government nearly 17% more men than women have been vaccinated.
  - ▶ **For an example:** when families share a digital device then it will be more likely that the father or sons will be allowed to use it exclusively.
  - ▶ Patriarchal mindset thinks that women's access to technology will motivate them to challenge patriarchal societies.
  - ▶ In our society there is also a belief that women need to be protected.
  - ▶ Most technologies that are currently available to the common man are created by men, for men, and do not necessarily meet everyone's requirements.

## **SOLUTIONS TO GENDER TECHNOLOGICAL INEQUALITY IN INDIA:**

- **For Digital Gender Gap:**

- ▶ Companies should not look at gender equal technology rather from a pragmatic one.
- ▶ Closing the gender gap in mobile Internet usage in low and middle income countries would increase GDP by U.S.\$700 billion.
- ▶ Bringing an end to the gender technology gap will save lives and make livelihoods more secure.



## **Gender Inequality in India:**

### **FACTS ABOUT GENDER INEQUALITY:**

- According to the Global Gender Gap Report released by the World Economic Forum (WEF), India is ranked 140.
- India also scored badly on overall female to male literacy and health rankings.
- UNDP's Gender Inequality Index- India is at 122 out of 162 countries. Neighbors China (39), Sri Lanka (86), Bhutan (99), Myanmar (106) were placed above India.
- India is ranked 95th among 129 countries in the SDG gender index.
- According to ILO female labor force participation in India was 23.5%.

### **WHY GENDER INEQUALITY IN INDIA:**

- **Cultural Institutions:**

- ▶ Patrilineality (inheritance through male descendants) and patrilocality (married couples living with or near the husband's parents) plays a significant role in making male authority on men.

- **Social issues:**
  - ▶ **Preference for sons:** Parental preference for sons because they inherit the property and through production they ensure further lineage.
  - ▶ **Son met preference:** According to Economic survey 2017-18 there are more than 2 cr girls which are unwanted i.e. they took birth because parents wants a boy child.
  - ▶ **Dowry system:** This system involves a cash or in-kind payment from the bride's family to the groom's at the time of marriage sometimes by the will or sometimes by force. So parents don't want any girl in their family..
  - ▶ The incidence of dowry has been steadily rising over time across all region and socioeconomic classes, particularly in north India
  - ▶ **Patriarchal mindsets:** This is a social system of privilege in which men are the primary authority figures, occupying roles of political leadership, moral authority, control of prosperity and authority over women and children.
- **Poverty and lack of Education:**
  - ▶ Extreme poverty and lack of education are also some of the reasons for women's low status in society.
  - ▶ Poverty and lack of education derives countless women to work in low paying domestic service, organized prostitution or as migrant laborers.
- **Economic Issues:**
  - ▶ **Unpaid Labor:**
    - ▶ Women spend 2.4 times more hours per day than men on unpaid care and domestic work.
    - ▶ Women are paid less for the same work as their male counterparts.
- **Discriminative Policies:**
  - ▶ Economic vulnerability imposed on women also comes from policy and political decisions.
  - ▶ Less job avenues and more informal types of jobs have persistently deprived them of compensation in the form of equal pay, paid maternity leave, universal health, unemployment and care benefits.
- **Political issues:**
  - ▶ A reservation bill for women in parliament is still pending.
  - ▶ Women don't have equal access to political institution
  - ▶ Lack democratic institutions in the political parties.
  - ▶ Even at the lower level women don't have right access for example Pradhan pati concept where even after the women elected representative, their authority is being practiced by the male members.

### **WHAT ARE THE CONSTITUTIONAL SAFEGUARDS FOR FEMALE:**

- Indian Constitution provides for positive affirmations to eliminate gender inequality in India.
- The Preamble with the goals of achieving social, economic and political justice to each and everyone.
- Preamble also provides equality of status and of opportunity to all its citizens.
- Article 14 talks about equality to all.
- In Constitution, Article 15 of the provides for prohibition of discrimination on grounds of gender and on other grounds also

- In the Constitution, Article 15(3) authorizes the State or government to make any special provision for women and children thereby treating them for equity.
- Article 16 gives reservation to women in case of public employment.
- Women are given 33% reservation in panchayat and local self governance.
- Article 23 provide safeguard against prostitution, flesh trade etc.
- Article 25 gives equality in the matter of religion. Recently parliament has passed a law which criminalizes the 3 talq.
- The Directive Principles of State Policy also provides various provisions which are exclusively for benefit of women such as article 43 and provides safeguards against discrimination.

### **LEGAL SAFEGUARDS:**

Various protective Legislations have also been passed by the Parliament and state legislature particularly to eliminate exploitation of women and to give them equal status in society.

- **The Sati (Prevention) Act, 1987:**
  - ▶ To abolish, omission, commission of Sati and make punishable the inhuman custom of Sati.
- **The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961:**
  - ▶ To eliminate the practice of dowry in Indian marriages.
- **The Special Marriage Act, 1954:-**
  - ▶ To give rightful status and to facilitate the married couples who marry inter-caste or inter-religion
- **Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Regulation and Prevention of Misuse) act:**
  - ▶ To stop female infanticide by prohibiting the sex selection, investigation technique.
- **SHE Act:**
  - ▶ To prevent the women's sexual harassment at work place.
- **Domestic violence act 2005:**
  - ▶ To save married women from any kind of husband or family violence on the pretext of dowry or any other purpose.
  - ▶ Section 304-B was added to the Indian Penal Code, 1860:-
  - ▶ To make dowry-death or bride-burning a specific offence punishable with maximum punishment of life imprisonment there by saving women from a clutch of greedy people.
  - ▶ 33% Reservation to women for parliament seat, bill is pending in parliament.

### **CURRENT CHALLENGES FOR GENDER INEQUALITY:**

- Cultural values limit the role of a woman as a homemaker with status of mother, sister and wife.
- Partnership and industry do not consider women capable enough to handle the issues which emerge in the meantime.
- Gender equality studied in isolation means the crime against boys and men go unreported.
- The laws which are made by state legislature or parliament, are gender biased rather than gender neutral laws.
- Hardly any steps for political representation of women
- Gender exploitation in the unorganized sector goes unreported.

## WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES IN THE WORKPLACE?

- Women employees in India are still fighting for an equal pay for equal work as compared with the developed world where equality exists.
- Sexual harassment exists at workplace.
- Indian companies are reluctant to employ women for reasons of brake/reliefs after marriage and motherhood.
- Inadequate infrastructure affects women entrepreneurs more than men, because women often bear a larger share of the time and responsibility for household activities.
- Women face greater constraints in geographic mobility imposed by safety concerns and social norms.

## RELATED INITIATIVES OF OTHER COUNTRIES:

- **Philippines:** Expanded Breastfeeding Promotion Act, 2009.
- **Mexico:** Social Security Law allowing men to access childcare services.
- **Cape Verde, North Macedonia and Trinidad and Tobago:** These countries have enabled employees with care responsibilities to perform their work remotely.

## WAY FORWARD:

- Need for policy initiatives which empower women along with increase in sensitization of men, as gender disparities in India persist even against the backdrop of economic growth.
- Improvements in labor market prospects especially in the unorganized or informal sector.
- Female Labor force participation will increase in marriage age and school enrolment of younger girls.
- Feminism could be a powerful tool that lets children, especially girl children, shed stereotypes that they may hold and question those of others.
- Introduction of feminism in schools both in terms of curriculum and practice.
- Education will remain a single potent toll by which we can change the social aspect.

–Swarn Singh

## Reforms in 90s & Crisis in 21<sup>st</sup> Century (GS PAPER-3, Mobilization of Resources Source- The Hindu)

### CONTEXT:

- Thirty years ago, the liberalization regime launched in 1991 completed its 30 years in 2021.
- 1991 was a landmark moment in India's post-independence history that changed the character of the economy in fundamental ways.
- A drastic balance of payments problem triggered an acute depression in 1991.
- To counter it, India's economic establishment launched a multipronged reforms agenda to repair India's macroeconomic record and ignite growth.
- Three decades later, the country faces another big test thanks to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- While the 2 crises are distinctly different in content and structure, they're completely comparable in

their respective severities.

## **INDIA'S POST-1990 ECONOMIC STRATEGY**

- It dismantled the huge network of controls and permits that dominated the financial system.
- It reintroduced the role of the state as a facilitator of economic transactions and as a neutral regulator instead of the first provider of products and services.
- It led to moving away from a regime of import substitution and to integrate fully with the worldwide trading system.

## **THE OUTCOME OF REFORMS:**

- By the primary decade of the 21st century, India began to be seen as the fastest-growing emerging market.
- The 1991 reforms unleashed the energies of Indian entrepreneurs, gave untold options to consumers, and altered the face of the Indian economy.
- Far from poverty increasing, for the primary time, there was a considerable reduction in it.

## **COMPARING 1991 CRISIS WITH 2021:**

- Highest Fiscal Deficit and Macroeconomic Situation

### **1991 CRISIS:**

- The 1991 crisis was caused by excess domestic demand sucking in imports and widening the present account deficit (CAD).
- A reduction in confidence triggered an outflow of funds and financing CAD forced a pointy drawdown in reserves.
- India had to pledge tonnes of gold to debar a default sovereign debt. Then, we had almost moved out of the exchange to buy critical imports.

### **2021 CRISIS:**

- The pandemic-induced lockdown brought the wheels of economic activity to a grinding halt, triggering a pointy economic contraction.
- This has resulted in a collapse in production following the disruption caused by the pandemic, which, in turn, has caused a fall in demand.
- Faced with a collapse in demand, it's appropriate to extend the fiscal deficit.
- The government allowed the fiscal deficit to expand to 9.6% last year.
- Today, the economy is shrinking at a rapid pace, with the central government defaulting on its revenue commitments to the states.
- Today, we've run out of jobs for our hordes of unemployed; poverty is increasing after decades of decline.

## **Criticism of the Reform:**

### **1991 REFORMS:**

- The 1991 reforms package faced heavy criticism as being dictated by the International fund (IMF) and

International Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

- Further, a number of the reforms were criticized as an agent to capitalists.

### **2021 REFORMS:**

- Such a centralized approach to reforms might not work now.
- It is often seen within the protest emanating from three farm laws.

## **Way Forward:**

### **SUSTAINING PUBLIC EXPENDITURE:**

- In the short term, sustaining public expenditure may be a key to reviving growth.
- Currently, public expenditure is very advantageous for providing more funds for vaccination and to hide expanded demand for the MGNREGA which is proving to be a valuable safety net.
- Also, there's a requirement to undertake a reputable path for deficit reduction over the subsequent three years and revising revenue targets to a more realistic level.

### **MUTUALLY SUPPORTIVE REFORMS:**

- The 1991 reforms elevated because they were structured around a core package of mutually supportive reforms.
- Thus, the necessity is to maneuver far away from an extended list of reforms towards a more strategic approach, focussing on the foremost critical reforms needed immediately.
- In this context, the facility sector, the economic system, governance structures, and even agricultural marketing need reforms.

### **IMPROVING INVESTMENT CLIMATE:**

- Investment may be a key source of aggregate demand and economic process, during this context:
- Perceptions regarding growth prospects are key.
- The policy framework must be supportive of new investments in order that entrepreneurs are encouraged to require risks.
- Non-economic factors like a peaceful and sustainable environment and social cohesion also are relevant.
- The government must begin to act on these fronts.

### **MARUTI MODEL OF DISINVESTMENT:**

- The government should reduce its ownership to 26% in each undertaking, including banks, to strategic partners, recommending it under the Maruti disinvestment following 1991 reforms.
- In this context, PSUs like Air India, BPCL, and Concor are often sold within subsequent six months, with the commitment that twenty-four PSUs would be divested at the 'Maruti model' per annum for the subsequent five years.
- This will help in generating billions of rupees of investible surplus for the government.

### **MULTI-STAKEHOLDERS APPROACH:**

- Today's reforms also require far more discussion and consensus-building.

- The central government must work in tandem with state governments and consult different stakeholders impacted by reform decisions.

### **CONCLUSION:**

- The 1991 reforms helped the economy debar a crisis then bloom.
- It's time to stipulate a reputable new reform agenda that will not just bring GDP back to pre-crisis levels, but also ensure growth rates above it had when it entered the pandemic

-Khyati Khare

## **Artificial Intelligence: Promises & Menace (Gs Paper-3, Robotics, Artificial Intelligence Source- Indian Express)**

### **CONTEXT:**

- Historically, Technology competition has been a prime aspect of geopolitics. In this day and age, it can be growing reflected in geopolitical battles between the US and China.
- One such technological competition can be easily seen in the field of Artificial Intelligence.

### **WHAT IS ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE:**

- Artificial intelligence is that activity dedicated to making machines intelligent or to make them think and behave like humans. AI is emerging as one technology of particular significance because of its role as an accelerator, its changeability, and its huge applicability.
- However, AI can also be used for a host of enviable purposes — generating misinformation, criminal activity, and encroaching upon individual privacy, or inducing technological unemployment.
- Therefore, as the global community looks to leverage the promises of AI, they should also tackle similar challenges when it comes to the development and deployment of AI and develop a human-centric approach to AI.

### **PROMISES OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE(AI):**

#### **1. Some Primary advantages of AI are as follows:**

- ▶ AI urges down the time taken to perform a task.
- ▶ It facilitates multitasking and eases the workload for existing resources.
- ▶ AI enables the implementation of hitherto complex tasks without significant cost outlays.
- ▶ AI operates 24×7 without obstruction or breaks and has no downtime.
- ▶ AI supplements the capabilities of differently-abled individuals.
- ▶ AI has huge market potential, it can be used across industries.
- ▶ AI facilitates decision-making by pushing the process faster and smarter.

#### **2. 360-degree Effect:**

- Based on these benefits, AI can be used in many other positive ways — to foster innovation, increase efficiency, improve development, facilitate growth and enhance the consumer experience.
- For India, AI deployment will be fastened closely to inclusive growth and its growth trajectory, with

potentially positive implications for agriculture, health, and education, and various other sectors.

- Driven by recent breakthroughs in machine learning, Big data, etc AI is a good trendsetter for the possibilities and challenges of international cooperation and coexistence on emerging technologies.

## **MENACE ASSOCIATED WITH AI**

### **1. Promoting Prejudices and Inequalities:**

- It shouldn't be buried that AI systems are created by humans, who can be prejudiced and judgemental.
- Thus, AI can promote biases and inequalities, if the initial training of the AI algorithms is biased.
- For example, it can create AI facial recognition and surveillance technology to discriminate against people of color and minorities.

### **2. Comprising Privacy:**

- AI systems learn by properly analyzing huge volumes of data and they keep adapting by continuous modeling of interaction data and user feedback.
- Thus, with the rapidly growing use of AI, the right to privacy can be under threat due to unauthorized access to one's activity data.

### **3. Disproportionate Power and Control:**

- Technology giants are infusing heavily with respect to artificial intelligence, both at the scientific/engineering and also at the commercial and product development and growth level.
- These big players have an unparalleled advantage when compared to any aspiring competitor out there which is a symptom of a data-oligarchic society.

### **4. Technological Unemployment:**

- AI companies are manufacturing intelligent machines that perform tasks typically carried out by low-income workers.
- For example self-service kiosks to displace cashiers, fruit-picking robots to replace field workers, etc.
- These days, the day is not far when many desk jobs will also be fringe out by AI, such as accountants, financial traders, and middle managers, etc.

## **WAY FORWARD:**

- **International Collaboration:** Given that various governments have only recently settled AI policies, and in some cases are still preparing them, international cooperation is still very much a work in progress. in the setting of benchmarks at the multilateral level.
- **Building flexible Supply Chains:** Beyond talent and intelligence, additional challenges like securing the necessary and important infrastructure; ensuring resilient supply chains, alignment on standards, good governance, ensuring critical minerals and other raw materials required for the development and growth of the necessary physical infrastructure, needs to be addressed.
- **Right Steps Taken:** AI technological revolution is bringing great opportunities and juncture for prosperity and growth—but it has to be ensured that the technology will be made and used in the right direction. In this scenario, some steps are already being put in place in different parts of the world, like Explainable AI (XAI) and the European Union GDPR -General Data Protection Regulation.

## CONCLUSION:

- The critical decisions and solutions made in the coming future could have transformative effects and consequences for international cooperation on AI, which, in turn, could decisively shape and figure the contours of what some have described and discussed as the Fourth Industrial Revolution 4.0.

-Khyati Khare

## Staging a Comeback, re-energising India's Africa Policy (The Hindu, GS-2, International relations)

### CONTEXT:

The Government of India has designed a forward looking strategy to deepen relations with African countries. This policy has invested a political will in expanding the multifaceted engagement. During these Hard times each corner of the world is experiencing a huge burnt of Virus on one hand and Africa, which is a natural resource rich country is burning in the virus because of lack of health facilities.



### INDIA AND AFRICA RELATION SO FAR:

- India's relations with Africa date back to ancient Indus valley civilization which had the relation with the Egyptian civilization and with Mesopotamian civilization.
- 'Periplus of the Erythraean Sea' or Guidebook describe the presence of Indians in East Africa.
- Africa was a prime target of India's diplomatic initiatives to promote the non aligned movement.
- The geographical proximity associated with easy navigability in Indian Ocean resulted in a well-established trade network between India and the Swahili Coast.

- More concrete relations between India and Africa began to emerge during the medieval era. This can be evident through the accounts of Venetian traveler Marco Polo.
- South Africa became colonized and M.K. Gandhi established Indian Natal Congress in 1894.
- Political connection during the colonial era was linked through Gandhi who began to protest in South Africa around the issues of registration of certificates etc.
- Learning by Gandhi during Africa helped in the movement's achievements.
- After India got independent we have raised a voice for African liberation taking their case to the international forums.
- India has raised the voice to end of racial struggle, Apartheid and decolonization.
- India was a forerunner and the leader with the experience as a champion of the interests of the developing countries from Africa, particularly through the Non Aligned Movement (NAM).
- India's policy of NAM provided the world with the third front in general and developing world in particular at the time of heightened cold war rivalry between US and USSR, where African nations acted as the strengthening factor.
- A large chunk of Indian diaspora continues to live in African countries such as Kenya, Uganda, Mauritius, and Nigeria.
- It is this sense of solidarity, mutual trust and confidence born in the difficult days of the Cold War which continues to drive India-Africa cooperation to this day.

### **INDIA'S DEVELOPMENTAL EFFORTS IN AFRICA:**

- **Indian help in fighting Against Covid-19:** India has shared Covid-19 management strategies through the e-ITEC initiative by providing Africans training, webinars exclusively aimed at training health-care professionals from Africa by Indian health experts.
- **Medical Supplies:** India is also sending consignments of essential medicinal supplies such as hydroxychloroquine (HCQ) and paracetamol to many African countries in addition to doctors and paramedics.
- **Increasing Political and Economic Engagement:** In the last few years, Africa has been the focus of India's development assistance and also diplomatic outreach, as evident in plans to open 18 new embassies.
  - ▶ Focusing on commercial issues as a priority by the Indian missions in the African countries.
  - ▶ Review of trade and related issues with the 24 African countries through institutional mechanisms such as the Joint Trade Committee.
  - ▶ Increased interaction among business houses and communities through joint business councils, joint business groups and CEO forums.
  - ▶ Additional lines of credit to African countries.
  - ▶ Fixing/upgrading the credit rating of African countries by the Export Credit Guarantee Corporation of India.
  - ▶ Special project-oriented activities funded under the Market Access Initiative scheme.
  - ▶ Disseminating information about procurement of tenders and investment opportunities in African countries by the Indian missions among the Indian exporters/importers/investors through export-promotion councils.
  - ▶ Follow-up by Indian missions to simplify the procedure for registration and certification in the importing country.

- ▶ Finalizing memoranda of understanding between appropriate authorities on technical assistance and cooperation in several sectors.
- ▶ India-Africa trade reached \$62 billion in 2018 when compared to \$39 billion during 2009-10.
- **Duty-free quota free access to African Countries:** India's duty-free quota free tariff preference scheme for Least Developed Nation (LDCs) launched in 2008 has benefited 33 African states.
- **Grants in Aid:** Africa is the second-largest recipient of Indian overseas assistance with Lines of Credit (LOC) worth nearly \$10 billion spread over 100 projects in 41 countries after South Asia .
- **Capacity Building via E-governance Initiative:** India is investing in the capacity building of African people across all the sectors by providing more than \$1 billion in technical assistance and training to personnel under the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) program.
- **Security Cooperation:** In many UN peacekeeping forces India has deployed approximately 6,000 Indian soldiers in conflict zones in Africa.
- **Cooperation on Multiple Fronts:** Bilateral cooperation includes solar energy development through Cooperation in International Solar Alliance , information technology, cybersecurity, maritime security, disaster relief, counter-terrorism and military training.
- **Engagement of India with African countries:** Engagement of India with African countries has increased in the last two decades with a large number of public and private sector companies from India investing in Africa.
  - ▶ India's engagement with African nations remains at three levels mainly in Bilateral, Regional and Multilateral relations.
  - ▶ Multilateral engagement was launched with the first India Africa Forum Summit (IAFS) in 2008.
- **Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC):** India is investing in capacity building providing more than \$1 billion in technical assistance with training to professionals under the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) program.
- **African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF):** India has pledged \$1 million towards ACBF's sustainable development for removal of poverty alleviation, and capacity building initiative.
- **Pan-African E-Network:** India has invested \$100 million in the Pan-African E-Network to bridge the digital divide in Africa, this will help African in leveraging its strengths in information technology.
- Indian military academies offer training to military officers from a number of African states.
- **Asian Africa Growth Corridor:** India has also unveiled the Vision Document of the Asian Africa Growth Corridor which is jointly prepared by Indian and Japanese think tanks. This corridor will prosper Africa and there by countering Chines Belt Road Initiative.
  - ▶ The corridor will focus on Developing Cooperation Projects, Quality Infrastructure and Institutional Connectivity, skill enhancement, and People-to-People Partnership.

### **OPPORTUNITIES IN INDIA-AFRICA RELATIONS:**

- **Addressing Food security:**
  - ▶ Agriculture and food security can also be a game changer for deepening ties where India has the expertise.
  - ▶ Africa has a major chunk of the world's arable land but the issue remains that it produces a very small percentage of the global agri-output.

- **Becoming Voice of Developing World:**

- ▶ Just as India and Africa fought colonialism together in the past and in future India and Africa can collaborate on representative and democratic global order that has a voice for around one-third of humanity that lives in Africa and India.

- **Combating Neo-Colonialism:**

- ▶ China's Chequebook diplomacy where China is Extracting the African resources at the fullest and and donation diplomacy in Africa will remain a challenge for India and opportunity for African countries to move towards India.
- ▶ Chinese investment is seen as neo-colonial in nature as it focuses on money, political influence, hard-infrastructure projects and resource extraction but on the other hand India provides for capacity Building.

- **Enabling Strategic Convergence:**

- ▶ Under the recent Quad Plus initiative whereby the countries (US, India, Japan and Australia have recently engaged other countries such as South Korea, Vietnam, New Zealand, Israel and Brazil) exchanged views and proposed cooperation with select African countries about the Indian Ocean.

- **Preventing Global Rivalries:**

- ▶ Several global economic players have strengthened their engagement with African states for economic opportunities such as energy, mining, infrastructure and connectivity where India too collaborates with them.

## **INDIA AND AFRICA RELATION DURING THE PANDEMIC:**

- India's exports to \$27.7 billion goods and services with a reduction of 4.4% the previous year.
- India imports from Africa around \$28.2 billion, a reduction 25% over the previous year.
- India's investments in Africa saw a decline from \$3.2 billion in 2019 to \$2.9 billion in 2020
- In the first two decades of the 21st century Africa experienced a sharpened international competition which is known as 'the third scramble'.
- A mix of competition and contestation involving traditional and new players, especially the United States, the European Union (EU), China, Japan and India

## **WAY FORWARD:**

- higher priority. Industry representatives should be consulted about their grievances and challenges in the COVID19.
- increased cooperation between India and its international allies, rates priority
- India-Africa forum summit on priority basis.
- India has to engage with the other friendly countries in Africa in order to take on China.

## **EXTRA FOR PRELIMS:**

- **India Africa Forum Summit:**

- ▶ It is an official platform for the African-Indian relations.
- ▶ It is held once every three years beginning from 2008.
- ▶ Journey has started from New Delhi (2008), Addis Ababa (2011) and New Delhi (2015 where India has increased the ties with the 54 African states through the African Union (AU)).

- **India's top five markets today are:**
  - ▶ South Africa
  - ▶ Nigeria
  - ▶ Egypt
  - ▶ Kenya and Togo.
- **The countries from which India imports the most are:**
  - ▶ South Africa
  - ▶ Nigeria
  - ▶ Egypt
  - ▶ Angola
  - ▶ Guinea.
- **India's top three exports to Africa are:**
  - ▶ Mineral fuels and oils (processed petroleum products),
  - ▶ Pharmaceutical products
  - ▶ Vehicles.

Swarn Singh

## **Relevant Advice for Health care-givers, Mothers-to-be (The Hindu, GS-2, Social Justice, Health)**

### **CONTEXT:**

As of Now Today, the number of new cases of COVID-19 per day and the number of daily COVID-19 deaths in India are among the highest in the world. Maternity services in India, already overburdened with large numbers even in pre-COVID-19 times. It is true for both , both public and private, which face a crisis situation with the conditions caused by the pandemic.

### **EFFECT OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON PREGNANT WOMEN:**

- **According to Journal of the American Medical Association:**
  - ▶ Maternal mortality is much higher in COVID19 positive pregnant mothers than in non-COVID19 pregnant women.
- **The problems faced by pregnant women who contract COVID19 and their newborn are:**
  - ▶ Preeclampsia
  - ▶ Preterm
  - ▶ Labour maternal infections
  - ▶ Increased caesarean section rates
  - ▶ Fetal growth restriction due to placental insufficiency
  - ▶ Neonatal infections and respiratory distress.
  - ▶ Maternal obesity and diabetes in pregnancy creates maternal and neonatal complications and these are common in pregnant women in India.

## **WAY FORWARD:**

- Professional bodies should come forward on the urgent basis to avert a serious calamity.
- The Government should consult with Professional bodies on an immediate basis to facilitate counselling and care for women in the reproductive age group.
- Government must provide resources to health care professionals involved in their care.
- Matter regarding pregnant women should be taken up on a war footing.

## **TWO IMPORTANT STEPS MUST BE TAKEN NOW:**

- Advise all women to postpone pregnancy till both partners are vaccinated.
- Offer vaccination to all unvaccinated pregnant women to save them from tyranny of this virus.
- Temporary and reversible contraception during COVID19 times is a simple and effective way.
- Reduction in the number of antenatal visits assisted with online consultations, protocols for ultrasonography, glucose tolerance test and antepartum fetal evaluation.
- Dedicated and safe ultrasound scan centers for pregnant women as ultrasound scans are routinely done during pregnancy. These centers must be manned exclusively by immunized personnel.
- Pregnant women with fever should be considered to have COVID19 unless proven otherwise and be taken care in the requisite ward with full facilities.
- COVID19 pregnancies and non-COVID19 pregnancies are handled in different arrangements to prevent infecting susceptible mothers.
- Firstly we have to prevent infections in health care personnel and the second to prevent infections in susceptible mothers.
- Unvaccinated healthcare workers providing care for pregnant women should be vaccinated at earliest.
- Pregnancy and the immediate postpartum period are prothrombotic states and they favour the formation of blood clots in veins, so we must take care of this period so that MMR can be decreased.
- Inactivated virus vaccines are safe during pregnancy as according to the World Health Organization, which has given a nod to the use of the inactivated Synovac vaccine.
- The availability and advantages of the vaccine for pregnant women should be publicized and an awareness programme should be created among the public.

## **A BIG PICTURE ABOUT COVID-19 AND ITS IMPACT:**

### **What is COVID-19:**

- Covid-19 is a Zoonotic disease. This is transmitted through the Virus. The origin of this disease is still unknown.
- This is a respiratory disease which spreads from person to person.

## **EFFECTS OF COVID-19 ON INDIAN SOCIETY AND ECONOMY:**

### **On society:**

- **Issue of Migrant Labor:**
  - ▶ Migration of labour from cities to villages in a haphazard manner. Migrant workers depend on daily earnings so they barely have savings which they could spend during any emergency.
  - ▶ Gig workers have gone through a similar issue as migrant workers had faced.
- Impact of Covid-19 on education has been pathetic and its repercussions will be seen in the near future.

- ▶ There shall be a lifelong impact of school closures on the productivity of this generation of students.
- Psychological trauma faced by both women and men.
- Lockdowns due to the Covid pandemic that leads to social distancing seems to be hitting people even more than the fear of the deadly virus.
- People are getting **highly restive and agitated** in spite of social media connectivity.
- Domestic violence has increased about more than doubled in the country during this period.
- Humans have evolved to be social creatures and are wired to live in **interactive groups and communities**. Lockdown and rules issued to contain COVID-19 led to isolation from family, friends and colleagues can be unbalancing and traumatic for most people and can result in short or even long-term psychological and physical health problems.
- An increase in levels of anxiety, aggression, depression, forgetfulness and hallucinations are possible psychological effects of isolation which, in many cases, leads to suicide.

### **ECONOMIC IMPACT:**

- The Indian economy was going through a sluggish phase since demonetization and GST and now Lockdowns act like a full stop to it.
- The country's growth dipped below 7 percent for FY 2019-20 and it will not improve in the near future due to the second wave.
- Informal economy, which employed around 400 million workers, is at risk of falling deeper into poverty during this crisis, as per a report by the International Labor Organization.
- Bombay Stock Exchange Sensex has seen a sharp fall.

### **SECTOR WISE IMPACT ON INDIAN ECONOMY:**

#### **Agriculture:**

- ▶ The nationwide lockdown has left farmers across the country bereft of agricultural labor just before harvesting season.
- ▶ Farmers also worry about government procurement and their ability to sell their crops, given that many agricultural markets are still closed, despite orders from the home ministry to exempt all farming activities from the shutdown.

#### **Textile:**

- ▶ A Production halt in China and lockdown in India have had an impact which puts this growing sector into gallows due to lesser demand. This happens mainly because of dependence on China for textile raw materials including synthetic yarn, synthetic fabric, buttons, zippers, and hangers.

#### **Automotive:**

- ▶ The sector was already witnessing a sluggish demand for the last one year due to GST and demonetization. The present situation has further aggravated the problem and compounded the situation with an acute liquidity crunch.

#### **Aviation:**

- ▶ With suspension of global travel, The airlines are looking at bankruptcy.

#### **Hotels and restaurants:**

- ▶ Due to lockdowns demand has declined substantially with owners struggling to recover the fixed costs.

- **Chemicals:**
  - ▶ India's dependence on China for active ingredients and shortage of essential chemicals amidst the lockdown has resulted in a reduced production of organic and inorganic chemicals across India.
- **Pharmaceuticals:**
  - ▶ As per Trade Promotion Council of India, the country imports around 85 percent of its total requirement of active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs) from China. Dependencies on China have impacted manufacturing operations in India. However, demand for essential medicines and safety equipment has gone up. Government has restricted the export of certain medicines and pharma products and is monitoring the overall inventory on regular basis.
- **E-commerce:**
  - ▶ Several e-commerce players are unable to service existing orders and are not accepting new orders, even when there is a surge in demand for home delivery. However, companies are trying to service essential items on a priority basis.
- **IT and ITes:**
  - ▶ Slowdown in markets have reduced the influx of IT projects from international markets. Remote working has given rise in demand for communication tools, conference platforms, and cyber security apps, among others. These software tools are being used across sectors such as education, finance, and HR to ensure business continuity.

Swarn Singh

## Sedition Law (Gs Paper-2, Fundamental Rights) Source- The Hindu

### CONTEXT:

- Recently, the Apex Court decision quashed the sedition charges against a senior journalist.
- Civil society applauded this as a heartening development, especially in the respect of the increasing number of sedition cases filed.
- Increasing number of sedition cases reflects the repressive approach to dissension and criticism of the government.
- Moreover, a report published by Freedom House Freedom in the report Democracy under Siege demoted India's status from a free country to a partly free country.
- One of the reasons for the drop is the rise in sedition cases for adjacent dissenters.
- Therefore, as the sedition law is often used to stifle democracy, it should be unfastened from the statutes.

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF SEDITION LAW:

- Sedition laws were constituted in 17<sup>th</sup> century England when lawmakers believed that only good opinions of the government should survive, as bad opinions were inimical to the government and monarchy.
- This sentiment (and law) was borrowed and installed into the Section 124A of IPC in 1870, by the British.



- British used Sedition law to jailbird and sentence freedom fighters. It was first applied to prosecute Bal Gangadhar Tilak in 1897.
- Mahatma Gandhi, too, was later secured for sedition for his articles in Young India.

#### **RELEVANCE OF SEDITION LAW:**

- **Reasonable Restrictions:** The constitution of India prescribes reasonable restrictions (under Article 19(2)) that can always be imposed on this right in order to assure its responsible exercise and to ensure that it is coequally available to all citizens.
- **Maintaining Unity & Integrity:** Sedition law benefits the government in combating anti-national, secessionist and terrorist elements.
- **Maintaining Stability of State:** It helps in preserving the elected government from pursuit to overthrow the government with violence and illegal means. The continued occurrence of the government established by law is an essential condition of the stability of the State.

#### **NOTE:**

- Rational restrictions are mentioned under Article 19(2) Constitution of India i.e. notice of the sovereignty and integrity of India, the security of the State, friendly relations with foreign States, public order, decorum or morality or in relation to contempt of court, defamation or incitement to an offence.

#### **ASSOCIATED ISSUES WITH SEDITION LAW:**

- **Relic of Colonial Era:** Colonial administrators used sedition to keep out people who criticised the British policies. Stalwarts of the freedom movement such as Lokmanya Tilak, Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Bhagat Singh, etc were condemned for their “seditious” speeches, writings and activities under British rule. Thus, uncontrolled use of the sedition law recalls the colonial era.
- **Stand of Constituent Assembly:** The Constituent Assembly did not acknowledge to include sedition in the Constitution. The members convinced it would curtail freedom of speech and expression. They contend that the sedition law can be turned into a weapon to suppress people’s legitimate and constitutionally approved right to protest.

- **Disregarding Supreme Court's Judgement:** Supreme Court in Kedar Nath Singh vs State of Bihar case 1962, limited application of sedition to "acts involving motive or tendency to create disorder, or disturbance of state law and order, or incitement to violence". Thus, conjuring sedition charges against academicians, lawyers, socio-political activists and students is in disregard of the Supreme Court's order.
- **Repressing Democratic Values:** Increasingly, India is being narrated as an elected autocracy mostly because of the callous and calculated use of sedition law.

### **WAY FORWARD:**

- **Scrapping Sedition Law:** There are sufficient laws in our country to deal with external and internal threats to India and there is no need to endure the sedition law. Thus, it is essential to nullify the sedition law on the ground that it is used to infringe freedom of expression and speech.
- **Role of Judiciary:** Until the sedition law is grazed by the parliament, the higher judiciary should use its supervisory powers to stimulate the magistracy and police to the constitutional provisions protecting free speech. Further, to avoid the burden of sedition law, the higher judiciary can stimulate the definition of sedition, to include only the issues prevailing to the territorial integrity of India as well as the sovereignty of the country.
- **Raising Civil Society Awareness:** Civil society must get hold of the command to raise awareness about the arbitrary use of Sedition law.

### **CONCLUSION:**

- Now that the Supreme Court has quashed sedition charges put on a journalist, we as the citizens of the Indian Nation should demand the quashing of the sedition law in its absoluteness to fulfil the vision of the Constituent Assembly, which denied sedition while framing the Constitution.

**Khyati Khare**