

# AROUND-U

GIST OF EDITORIALS

JUNE-2017

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## GS 1 History Culture Social issues and Geography

### Being smart

Any attempt to improve our cities depends on how data are compiled and shared.

**Mains** : GS 1 urbanization, their problems and their remedies.

### Background

The Centre has selected more cities to be part of smart cities mission taking the number of cities in the list to 90.

### The issues related to smart cities mission

1. Worsening quality of basic services in urban India. *Majority of cities selected under the mission sought funds for affordable housing, schools, hospitals and infrastructure.*
2. Whether government has collected data regarding cities capturing the evolving needs of their communities remain a question.
3. A managed urbanisation approach adopted by the centre giving powers of Municipal councils to SPVs is yet to be reviewed.

### The way forward

- Improving the quality of life in cities would depend on how governments approach data.
- Making data regarding flow of vehicles, pedestrians public.
- Creating smartphone applications for the public to report on a variety of parameters. Making such data open would enable citizens' groups to themselves come up with analyses to help city administrators make decisions, boost transparency and make officials accountable.
- Making street-level waste management data public would lead to a heat map of the worst sites, compelling managers to solve the problem.

### Conclusion

- The ideology that guides the plan should recognise that the vibrant life of cities depends on variety and enabling environments, rather than a mere technology-led vision.
- Pollution-free commons, walkability and easy mobility, with a base of reliable civic services, is the smart way to go.

### Mains Perspective

Model questions

Can smart cities be the answer to the problems posed by rapid urbanization? Give your opinion.

**Sources:** [The Hindu](#)

## GS 2 Indian Polity and International Relations

### **Gross misuse: on States using 'Goondas Act'**

The Supreme Court's caution against use of 'Goondas Act' for arbitrary detention is timely

**Mains** : GS 2 Indian Constitution- historical underpinnings, evolution, features, amendments, significant provisions and basic structure.

### **Background**

Several States have a law popularly known as the 'Goondas Act' aimed at preventing the dangerous activities of specified kinds of offenders. The Supreme Court has cautioned against use of 'Goondas Act' for arbitrary detention.

### **The issues**

1. Preventive detention laws in the country have come to be associated with frequent misuse
2. Preventive detention laws confer extraordinary discretionary powers on the executive to detain persons without bail
3. It is invoked even when sufficient provisions are available in the ordinary laws.
4. Though the Goondas Act is meant to be invoked against habitual offenders, in practice it is often used for a host of extraneous reasons.
5. The police use it to buy themselves more time to investigate offences and file a charge sheet.
6. Sometimes, it is used merely to send out a "tough message".
7. There are times when preventive detention is overtly political.

### **Mains Perspective**

Model questions

The prevention of crime needs an efficient system of investigation and trial, and not draconian laws and arbitrary detentions. Discuss in the light of misuse of preventive detention laws in the country.

**Sources:** [The Hindu](#)

### **Pragmatic step – Kerala government's liquor policy**

The Kerala government wisely cuts its losses by relaxing restrictions on bar licences

**Mains** : GS 2 Governance, Constitution, Polity, Social Justice and International relations.

### **Background**

- Kerala government unveiled new liquor policy under which hotels in the three- and four-star category will be given license to operate bars that serve Indian Made Foreign Liquor.
- The previous government had allowed only 5 star hotels to operate bars.

### **The issues**

- The restrictions on the sale of liquor had brought down tourism traffic, caused

job losses and led to a spike in drug abuse.

- The policy is bound to face opposition from influential religious groups.

### **The way forward**

- The Kerala government's new liquor policy is a pragmatic step that may help boost its revenue and retrieve lost ground in the tourism sector.
- The government does not favour prohibition and promotes voluntary abstinence.
- There is a case for a vigorous campaign about the ill-effects of being addicted to alcohol, as opposed to one that makes liquor scarce and encourages bootlegging.
- It will help in revitalising the tourism sector and the hotel industry, boosting employment and ending the brewing of hooch are actualised on the ground.

### **Challenges**

The big challenge lies in pursuing this policy without violating the Supreme Court's ban on having liquor outlets within 500 metres of national and State highways.

### **Mains Perspective**

Model questions

Prohibition as a policy has had a history of failure. While binge-drinking is undoubtedly a health hazard with serious social costs, bans of the sort adopted by courts and State governments such as Bihar are counterproductive. Good intentions do not guarantee good outcomes. Comment

**Sources:** [The Hindu](#)

### **Big data**

India needs to negotiate the world of big data technology with adequate safeguards

**Mains** : **GS 2** Governance, Constitution, Polity, Social Justice and International relations

### **Background**

- Corporations like google and facebook have collected large amount of data pertaining to information about billions of people.
- In addition to using this data to improve products or services that these corporations offer, the stored data is available also to highest bidders and governments of nations where these companies are based.

### **The dangers of big data**

1. The ability of owners of such data stores to violate the privacy of people.
2. The danger of such huge data falling in the hands unscrupulous elements or hostile foreign governments.
3. Potential drain of economic wealth of a nation. The advertising revenue that is currently earned by local newspapers or other media companies would eventually start to flow outside the country to overseas multinationals.

### **The way forward. - What India can do**

China has encouraged the formation of large Internet companies and deterred Google

and others from having major market share in China. India could encourage the Big data Technology in a different manner.

1. Provide appropriate subsidies such as cheap power, real estate, and cheap network bandwidth to build large data centres
2. Encourage Indian industries to build and retain data within the boundaries.
3. In the short term, create a policy framework that encourages overseas multinationals such as Google and Amazon to build large data centres in India and to retain the bulk of raw data collected in India within India's geographical boundaries.
4. Build research and development activities in Big Data Science and data centre technology

### **Mains Perspective**

Similar questions

Digital economy : A leveller or source of economic inequality [**UPSC 2016 mains essay question**]

Sources: [The Hindu](#)

### **No time to work: On Child Labour Act**

With ratification of conventions on child labour, we must have assessment of violations.

**Mains : GS 2** Issues relating to poverty and hunger.

### **Background**

India has ratified two key global conventions meant to keep children away from work, decades since they were originally adopted by the International Labour Organisation.

### **the issues**

1. The conventions ratified by india leave it to the member-states to determine what constitutes acceptable or unacceptable work for children at different ages. The flexibility the law provides may be misused.
2. The Child labour Prohibition and Regulation Amendment Act contains the controversial provision that allows employment of children below 14 years in family enterprises and the declassification of several industries as hazardous occupations.
3. With roughly 90% of the workforce continuing to remain outside the ambit of the organised sector, protecting vulnerable children from exploitation is difficult.
4. Though there are stipulations and safeguards in the rules notified by the Ministry regarding employing children the effective enforcement will pose a challenge
5. India's ratification of the two conventions, after more than 165 countries have legally bound themselves to their obligations, is itself a sad commentary on the priorities of successive governments, cutting across party lines. *The ILO's Minimum Age Convention of 1973 entered into force in 1976 – and the instrument pertaining to the elimination of the worst forms of child labour in*

2000.

6. Any genuine enforcement of a minimum age at work requires ensuring a universal minimum wage of subsistence for the adult workforce.

### **Mains Perspective**

Model Questions

Examine the main provisions of the National Child Policy and throw light on the status of its implementation. [UPSC mains 2016]

Sources: [The Hindu pib](#)

### **Muzzling freedom of expression – Cattle Sale**

Unless a trade is prohibited by law or taken over by the state, restrictions of the kind imposed by the rules regarding sale of cattle are constitutionally suspect

**Mains : GS 2 GS3** Issues related to rights, food processing industry agriculture

### **Background**

The restrictions imposed regarding sale of cattle is against fundamental rights guaranteed under the constitution.

### **Legal issues with regard to the notification**

- The freedom to consume food of one's choice is a part of freedom of expression unless prohibited by law.
- The rules notified by the ministry are beyond the scope of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960.
- Unless a trade is prohibited by law or taken over by the state, restrictions of the kind imposed by the Rules regarding sale of cattle are constitutionally suspect.
- The decision to allow non-milch cattle not to be traded for slaughter affects a number of farmers' right to livelihood.

### **Other issues**

- Maintenance of uneconomic cattle costs a farmer a huge amount
- After the new definition of cattle, 28% of the meat trade will be affected.

*In 2014, India toppled Brazil and became the highest beef exporter globally with a volume of \$4 billion.*

- The leather industry will be badly hit.

*India's leather industry accounts for around more than 12% of the world's leather production of hides and skins.*

- Other industries where Hides and bones of slaughtered cattle are used will also be affected.
- the 'mixed crop-livestock farming' system will be under threat.
- Livestock supplement farm incomes by providing employment, draught animals and manure and the additional income of farmers will be affected

### **Mains Perspective**

Model questions

Examine the social, political and economic impact of the ban on cattle slaughter in

India. Give your suggestions

**Sources:** [The Hindu](#)

### **The Issues with elderly**

Evidence shows that health systems must be recast to accommodate the needs of chronic disease prevention.

**Mains : GS 3** Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

### **Background**

The National Health Policy (NHP), 2017 fails to say something about the rapid rise in the share of the old – i.e. 60 years or more – and associated morbidities, especially sharply rising non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and disabilities.

Even though life expectancy has rose the key question of whether longer lives have translated into healthier lives remains.

### **General issues faced by the elderly**

- Declining family support
- Limited old-age income security
- Infectious diseases and NCDs

### **Health issues faced by the elderly as per analysis of IHDS data from 2005-2012**

1. The prevalence of high blood pressure, diabetes, heart disease and cancer increased over the period 2005-12
2. Multi-morbidity (i.e. co-occurrence of two or more NCDs) also rose over this period. Often multi-morbidities occur non-randomly or systematically.
3. The burden of NCDs shifted from the most affluent to the least affluent over this period. The rises were faster among the least wealthy.
4. As NCDs are associated with a large majority of deaths among the old – about 93% of the total deaths among 70 years or more in 2013 – they are now more vulnerable to mortality risk. In fact, the least wealthy have become more susceptible to this risk.
5. Co-occurrence of disability and NCDs poses a higher risk of mortality.

As per WHO By age 60, the major burdens of disability and death arise from age-related losses in hearing, seeing or moving, and NCDs

- Sharp rise in disabilities such as disabilities in activities of daily living such as walking, feeding, difficulty in using toilet facilities, dressing ...

### **What needs to be done - the way forward**

- Expansion of old age pension and health insurance
- Public spending on programmes targeted to the health care of the old
- Reorient health systems to accommodate the needs of chronic disease prevention and control



- Enhancing the skills of health-care providers
- Equipping health-care facilities to provide services related to health promotion, risk detection, and risk reduction.

### **Mains Perspective**

Model questions

While we flaunt India's demographic dividend we are forgetting the fact that India is home to the second largest population of elderly in the world. We may be a young nation, but we need to gear up to meet the needs of the elderly. Discuss

**Sources:** [The Hindu](#)

### **Jailing a judge Justice Karnan's imprisonment**

Justice Karnan's imprisonment should have been avoided to keep the judiciary's dignity

**Mains : GS 2** Structure, organization and functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary

#### **Background**

- The Supreme Court has ordered to send sitting Calcutta High Court Judge to jail for his recalcitrant behaviour.
- The court ordered six month long prison term for contempt of court.
- It is an extraordinarily low moment for the institution that a man who the Supreme Court felt needed his mental health evaluated should be sentenced for contempt of court, arrested and sent to jail.

#### **Significance- Issues faced by the judiciary**

1. The collegium system's effectiveness in dealing with appointments is exposed following the arrest of Judge C S Karnan
2. The absence of a mechanism to discipline recalcitrant judges is a glaring lacuna in the existing system.

*Non-allotment of judicial work and transfer to another High Court are measures available for the purpose.*

3. It is disappointing that a case of proven misbehaviour did not led to impeachment

### **Mains Perspective**

Model questions

Maintaining internal discipline in the judiciary is an equally vexing issue as appointments to the higher judiciary. Discuss

**Sources:** [The Hindu](#)

### **Cricket administration reforms**

The failure to make a visible impact on how cricket is governed in India is extremely worrying.

**Mains : GS 2** Government policies and interventions for development in various

sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability, citizens charters, transparency & accountability and institutional and other measures.

### **Background**

The Supreme Court's move to appoint a committee of administrators (CoA) to govern and reform cricket was expected to salvage a sport, but right now it is riddled with controversies. This has implications on sports administration in India.

### **The issues**

- The controversy between the coach and the captain of Indian cricket team.
- Resignation of one of its administrators, Ramachandra Guha
- The objective of the Justice R.M. Lodha Committee's recommendations tackle the breakdown in ethics caused by potentially compromising conflicts of interest, remains unaddressed.
- Open defiance by state bodies against CoA
- Superstar culture in Indian cricket.

### **Significance and impact of CoA's success or failure**

1. The future of reform in sports governance and administration in India is dependent on the outcome of cricket's overhaul.
2. The Supreme Court is already mulling a petition across numerous sports, asking for the Lodha Committee reforms to be adopted across federations.
3. The failure of may inhibit future reform in any Indian sport.
4. Delays and ineffectiveness will also stall the momentum of an imminent, revised national sports code and a vital national sports law.

### **The way forward**

Instead of ambiguity about its mandate and role, the CoA needs clarity of thought and resolve, and must focus on its prime objectives – the universal adoption of the Lodha Committee's recommendations, making cricket transparent and protected from potentially harmful conflicts, and restoring cricket to its players and fans. With a finite specified tenure and mandate, and a clear path to eligible elections, much can be salvaged.

### **Mains Perspective**

Model questions

India's sports administration reforms has been long overdue. Evaluate

**Sources:** [The Hindu](#)

### **Paid news**

An M.P. Minister's disqualification underlines need to make paid news an electoral offence

**Prelims :** Indian Polity and Governance - Constitution, Political System, Panchayati

Raj, Public Policy, Rights Issues, etc.

**Mains : GS 2** Salient features of the Representation of People's Act.

### **Background**

- The Election Commission has disqualified a Madhya Pradesh Minister for three years for suppressing expenditure incurred in the publication of paid news.
- An Uttar Pradesh MLA,, was disqualified in 2011 on the same ground.
- Though the minister and media houses denied reports about the paid news the election commission did not buy their argument and went on to disqualify the Minister

### **The issues**

- Paid news is not an electoral offence yet, but there is a case to make it one.
- The contestants who use paid news can only be hauled up for failing to include the expenses involved in their campaign accounts.
- Enormous delay in adjudicating questions relating to disqualification of candidates due to candidates approaching the courts to stall inquiries.

*The case in question pertains to the 2008 election, and by the time the Commission has given its verdict the minister have been re-elected in 2013.*

### **The way forward**

- As the elections commission has recommended the Representation of the People Act, 1951, should be amended to make paid news an electoral offence.
- A legal framework in which electoral issues are expeditiously adjudicated must also be put in place if election law is to be enforced in both letter and spirit.

### **Mains Perspective**

Model questions

Examine the impact of paid news on influencing the outcome of an election. Is there a case to make paid news an electoral offence? Discuss

**Sources:** [The Hindu](#)

## **GS 2 International Relations**

### **European variation – India Europe relations**

With global politics in a flux, India must make a careful choice of coalitions it forges

**Mains : GS 2** International Relations

### **Background**

India and Europe shares a similar dilemma with America's shifting policies. With the disappointment over US India-Europe cooperation has its merits as well as issues.

### **Why Europe is disappointed over Trump's policies?**

- German chancellor had announced that Europe could no longer depend on traditional partners.
- US has refused to reaffirm NATO's Article 5 on 'collective defence';
- Donald Trump had warned on the trade deficit with Europe.

- Trump's decision to exit from commitments in the Paris Agreement on climate change.

### **India's disappointment over Trump's policies.**

- U.S. has forged closer ties with China
- U.S. has targeted Indian professionals and businesses to protect American jobs.
- Trump's comments on the Paris Accord as he blamed India and China for what he called an unfair deal.

### **Issues between India and European Union**

- Europe - China relationship is growing and European leaders praised President Xi Jinping's leadership on connectivity and climate change.
- Europe perceives its single largest threat to be from Moscow, not Beijing and India's participation in the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum to unveil a new India-Russia vision statement for the 21st century along with President Vladimir Putin could cause similar discomfort in European capitals.
- India formalising its membership of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, seen as a counter-NATO coalition of Russia, China and Central Asian states.

### **The way forward**

- European leader and Indian Prime Minister are exploring new ways to cooperate on multilateral issues.
- India will have to consider its options carefully as it decides which coalitions to forge as the U.S. overturns traditional ties in favour of transactionalism

### **Mains Perspective**

Model questions

With US policies remaining uncertain it is important for India as well as European nations to find new partners in the international arena to cooperate on various issues.

Discuss

**Sources:** [The Hindu](#)

### **Clouded coherence – India's membership in SCO**

India will be admitted as a full member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation at Astana Kazakhstan. Given India's recent foreign policy fluidity, the sustainability of its SCO membership is in doubt

**Mains : GS 2** Important International institutions, agencies and fora- their structure, mandate.

### **Background**

India will be admitted as a full member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation at Astana Kazakhstan. Given India's recent foreign policy fluidity, the sustainability of its SCO membership is in doubt

### **Merits**

The membership will make India part of a major security coalition in Asia, with easy access to the energy-rich 'stans', Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. It is an important forum on counter-terrorism cooperation, connectivity, and on resolving the situation in Afghanistan.

### **The contradictions**

Though membership may have seemed a good idea previously in 2017 so much has changed in India's foreign policy posture that the sustainability of its SCO membership is in doubt.

1. There is a basic contradiction between India's stand last month on China's Belt and Road Initiative (B&R) and the SCO's. All SCO members are a part of B&R and endorse it.
2. The SCO is a security alliance, and its charter specifies confidence-building in "military fields". Subsequent statements of the SCO, including at Astana in 2005, commit them to "jointly preserving regional peace, security and stability; and establishing a democratic, fair and rational new international political and economic order".
3. The SCO has been often called the "Anti-NATO", meant to counterbalance U.S. and Europe power structures. Membership would affect India's relations with Europe and US.
4. The SCO executive speaks of counter-terror cooperation as a part of its Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS), with joint exercises among member states. This would square badly with India's objective of "exposing" Pakistan's cross-border terror policy.

### **Issues with India's foreign policy in recent times**

- After years of encouraging "middle-power" coalitions in the Indo-Pacific, the government made an about-turn recently, rejecting Australia's request to join Malabar naval exercises
- India's West Asia policy of "engaging all" included inviting the leaders of arch-rivals Cyprus and Turkey but when Mr. Modi heads to Israel, he will reportedly not visit the Palestinian side.
- After making the Nuclear Suppliers Group membership a singular goal last year, the MEA appears to have put its membership bid on a slow burner

### **Mains perspective**

Model questions

Uncertainty surrounding US policies, West Asia's internal combustion, China's aggression and Russian inscrutability, India is certainly well poised to be a democratic, dependable leader of an alternative global coalition. The government must, however, be more sure-footed and clear of its own principles of engagement. Discuss

**Sources:** [The Hindu](#)

### **The road from St. Petersburg - India - Russia**

Nostalgia may be useful, but it cannot make up for a lack of substantive drivers in India-Russia ties

**Mains : GS 2** International relations.

#### **Background**

There has been a certain depressing pattern in India-Russia relations over the past decade. Annual summit-level meetings have been marked by expressions of nostalgia for the glory days of Indo-Soviet friendship, declarations of solemn intent to take contemporary relations to new heights and highlighting common perspectives even as the two countries mostly go their respective ways.

#### **India Russia relations**

India and Russia shares some common concerns, shared interests as well as divergent views. However, these shared interests must be balanced against divergences that are inherent in the very dramatic transformations which have taken place in the two countries themselves, and in the regional and global situation since the end of the Cold War, which have inevitably altered the overall context of our relations.

#### **The way forward in India Russia relations**

1. Shared China concerns : In the long term Russia doesnot want China to emerge as the world leader. India and Russia prefers multipolar world and this is a common concern on which India Russia relations should be built
2. Russia may welcome a higher-profile role by India in Eastern Europe and Central Asia.
3. India should pursue the proposed Free Trade Agreement with the Eurasian Economic Union and seek to play a more active role in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation as a member.
4. It is in India's interest to see an improvement in relations between Russia and the U.S. and Western Europe. In an increasingly fluid international situation, an India which has strong relations with the U.S., Western Europe and Russia is in a unique position to play a larger geopolitical role. It can use its enhanced relations with each to upgrade its relations with the other major powers.
5. India and Russia should focus on maintaining and expanding their already considerable cooperation in the defence hardware and nuclear energy sector.
6. Establishment of strong, long-term energy partnership with Russia will do good to both the nations.

#### **Conclusion**

This 18th annual India-Russia summit appears to have been more substantive than the previous ones. India should pursue relations with Russia keeping in mind Russia's foreign policy that is - its current closeness to China is tactical and its long-term interest both globally and in its neighbourhood are not aligned with China.

### **Mains Perspective**

Similar questions

Ties between India and Russia are still far below their potential. Elucidate the constraints which are inhibiting India Russia ties.

**Sources:** [The Hindu](#)

### **India -USA**

India US diplomatic relations scaled up during 2016, but Trump's presidency has led to unpredictability to India US relations.

**Mains : GS 2** Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests

#### **How recent US policies affected India?**

1. Though during campaign US had strained relations with China the moment the North Korea crisis became critical, Trump embraced China.
2. Though US president imposed travel ban against designated countries citing terrorism the worst exporters of terrorism, like Pakistan, were excluded.
3. US provide support to F to Pakistan in the name of fighting terror in Afghanistan. India's concerns regarding cross border terrorism is unheard.
4. Mr. Trump's 'America first' approach may well contradict Mr. Modi's 'Make in India' and 'Digital India' initiatives.
5. The restrictions on H-1B visa
6. While disowning Paris agreement on climate change India was accused of demanding billions of dollars to implement the pact.
7. The remarks were unwarranted as India has always been sensitive to the views of developed countries during climate negotiations.

#### **The way forward**

At this moment of a thorough reshaping of international relations, conflicting trends in recent elections in France and the U.K. and a decline of the post-Second World War dispensation, India simply cannot afford to lose out. Together with German and Chinese, India should also prevail on the international stage.

### **Mains Perspective**

Model questions

Examine the effect of Trump's policies on India US relations.

**Sources:** [The Hindu](#)

### **For a stronger India-U.S. bond**

India US relations so far and the way ahead

**Mains : GS 2** International relations.

**India US relations so far**

## SELFLEARN'S GIST OF HINDU EDITORIALS – JUNE 2017

- The U.S.-India partnership has witnessed successes in defence, security and civil nuclear cooperation over the last two decades.
- U.S. is India's second-largest trading partner and the fifth-largest source for foreign direct investments.
- U.S. is India's second-largest source of imports, following China.
- Tariffs on major U.S. products are lower in India than in other countries.
- Liberalisation of FDI policies in multiple sectors such as defence production, real estate and insurance, created new opportunities for U.S. firms.
- The U.S. already ranks fifth in India's FDI profile.
- The U.S. remains a favourite destination for Indian companies.
- Indian companies created 91,000 jobs in the U.S. as per CII survey.
- The U.S.-India Defence Technology and Trade Initiative are helping create jobs in the U.S. while the partnership in defence is helping address the shared concerns about terrorism and other regional security issues
- Social security payments by Indian firms contribute to the local economy.
- Indian Companies assist in funding training (especially in Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) for U.S. veterans and students.

### **Recent concerns**

- With Mr Trump assuming the presidency of US Trade deficit and labour mobility threaten to overshadow the otherwise positive trajectory of the relationship.
- Focus by the U.S. on high-skill labour mobility. *Indian firms firmly support weeding out the abuse of the visa system.*

### **The way forward**

- Many Indian firms have committed to local hiring
- It is critical that both sides acknowledge the mutual benefits of our economic relationship, as companies from both nations deserve a non-discriminatory and level-playing field.
- Early negotiation and conclusion of a Bilateral Investment Treaty
- Make progress on a Totalisation Agreement to help avoid double taxation for short-term workers.
- The gains from a sound trade and investment partnership should go beyond profits for businesses to strategic and geopolitical outcomes.

### **Mains Perspective**

Model questions

Discuss the advantages of having improved ties with U.S in defence sector. also explain how it will benefit India's make in India initiative. Give your suggestions

**Sources:** The Hindu

### **Warm in Washington: Modi in U.S.**

Highlights of Indian Prime Minister's visit to US - PM Modi and President Trump





exceed the muted expectations for their first meeting

**Mains : GS 2** International relations.

### **India US relations - The concerns**

- Future course of the bilateral relationship following Trump's presidency
- Trump's stand on trade tariffs, immigrants and climate change

### **India US Joint statement- Highlights**

The India-U.S. joint statement has exceeded expectations and had the following factors incorporated in it

1. Emphasis on the need for Pakistan to stop attacks on India
2. China should forge its Belt and Road Initiative taking into account India's concerns on territorial and sovereignty issues.
3. Continuity in the India-U.S. strategic partnership goals, albeit with a softening of the tone on China's actions in the South China Sea.
4. Mentioning North Korea, West Asia and Afghanistan, the statement talks of a "growing strategic convergence" between the two countries and a shared vision on world affairs.
5. An entire section titled "Increasing Free and Fair Trade" is a veiled attempt at putting the Trump administration's concerns on bilateral trade on the front burner

### **Issues remaining**

- India's concerns on the immigration process and H1B visa curbs
- Mr. Trump's withdrawal from the Paris climate accord

### **Conclusion**

It is to be hoped that the bilateral issues will be raised in the near future. All things considered, a good beginning appears to have been made during Mr. Modi's maiden meeting with Mr. Trump. It is now for them to tackle the more substantive bilateral issues.

### **Mains Perspective**

Model questions

Examine the impact of trade policies of US on India.

**Sources:** [The Hindu](#)

## **GS 3 Indian Economy**

### **Farm crisis**

Reforms that de-risk agriculture are required for a long-term solution to agrarian distress

**Mains : GS 3** Major crops cropping patterns in various parts of the country,, transport and marketing of agricultural produce and issues and related constraints.

### Background

- A strike by farmers in Maharashtra continues to affect normal life. The farmers, demands include full waiver of farm loans, hikes in the minimum support price and writing off of pending electricity bills.
- The Maharashtra chief minister has promised waiver of farm loans, increase power subsidies and making buying agricultural produce below their MSP a criminal offence.

### The issue

- The reason for farm distress is the steep fall in agricultural goods which, has come against the backdrop of a good monsoon that led to a bumper crop. The price slump, The production of tur dal, for instance, increased five-fold from last year to over 20 lakh tonnes in 2016-17.
- Procurement of crops at MSP by the government has traditionally been low for most crops, except a few staples such as rice and wheat.
- Waiving of farm loans, criminalising buying of produce below MSP are taking the attention away from real issues.

### The way ahead

- Any long-term, wide-scale procurement of crops at MSPs looks unlikely; even a one-time full loan waiver is considered unrealistic, given the State's finances.
- The possible ban on buying produce below the MSP would just worsen the crisis by making it hard for farmers to sell their produce even at the market price.
- The only long-term solution is to gradually align crop production with genuine price signals, while moving ahead with reforms to de-risk agriculture, especially by increasing the crop insurance cover.
- Expediting steps to reform the Agricultural Produce Market Committee system and introduce the model contract farming law would go a long way to free farmers from MSP-driven crop planning.

### Mains Perspective

Model questions

What are the different types of agriculture subsidies given to farmers at the national and at state levels? Critically analyse the agricultural subsidy regime with reference to the distortions created by it. **[UPSC Mains 2013]**

Sources: [The Hindu](#)

### The best of times, the worst of times - Farm crisis

Without government support, farmers pay the price for a bumper crop they labour so hard to produce

**Mains : GS 3** Major crops cropping patterns in various parts of the country,, transport and marketing of agricultural produce and issues and related constraints.

### Background

- Agricultural distress has become a permanent feature even years after the institution of minimum support price, procurement and distribution through FCI.

#### **The issues with agrarian sector**

- Demonetisation has caused liquidity crunch so that traders did not have requisite cash to buy the farmers' produce.
- Farmers feel that persisting with imports, even after clear signs of a bumper harvest, further depressed prices.

#### **Green revolution and after effects**

1. Indian agriculture is still stuck in the Green Revolution of 1970s which increased the production of wheat and rice, but failed to increase the production of other crops.
2. It has caused a deep crisis of sustainability, economic and ecological.
3. It led to deterioration of water quality, a serious water crisis, with both water tables and water quality falling rapidly.
4. Increased cost of cultivation due to increase in application of fertilizers

#### **The way forward**

1. Transition to a more ecologically resilient agriculture. This becomes even more urgent in the context of climate change.
2. Policy initiatives to give a green direction to the nature of subsidies in the sector.
3. Reform management of both surface and groundwater to ensure proper irrigation and sustainable management of groundwater.
4. Continued diversification to other forms of livelihood, such as livestock and fisheries, among the fastest-growing segments of the rural economy, which could be hurt by recent policy changes and shifting focus away from water-intensive rice and wheat.
5. Aggressive and extensive procurement of crops such as millets and pulses by FCI and Inclusion of millets and pulses in the massive anganwadi and mid-day meal programmes.
6. Investments in agro-processing infrastructure that will enhance farmers income.
7. Ensure access to credit and crop insurance,
8. Establishment of strong Farmer Producer Organisations, to overcome massive handicaps faced by isolated farmers and enable them to really benefit from market participation.

#### **Mains Perspective**

Model questions

Agricultural distress has become a permanent feature of Indian economy. In your opinion what is the long term solution to the issues faced by agrarian sector in India.

**Sources:** [The Hindu](#)

### **Loan Waivers**

The rush to hand out farm loan waivers raises the broader issue of adherence by States to fiscal obligations

**Mains : GS 3** Effects of liberalization on the economy, changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth. Money-laundering and its prevention

#### **Why farm loan waivers are not advisable?**

Debt is considered sustainable if debt-GDP ratio is stable or on a declining path. This is a necessary condition for solvency of any government's finances.

#### **The Present Scenario:**

- According to the 14th finance commission: In a bonanza, the 14th Finance Commission has recommended a record 10% increase in the states' share in the Union taxes to 42%, which has been accepted by the Centre and will give the states an additional Rs 1.78 lakh crore.
- The total State expenditure (as a percentage of GSDP) is higher than even the Centre's. State finances have increasingly become a crucial lynchpin of India's fiscal framework.
- The recent report of the Reserve Bank, *State Finances: A Study of Budgets 2016-17*, states that the combined deficit of the States reached 3.6% of GDP in FY16, significantly higher than 2.6% in the previous year. This significantly breaches the 3% fiscal deficit stipulated by the States themselves in their FRBMs.

#### **What menace does the farm loan waiver bring?**

Borrowings by States are likely to increase sharply due to interest of UDAY bonds, and more importantly, the viral of farm loans waivers. With little compensatory action, this will seriously undercut the hard-won battle to secure fiscal prudence for the country as a whole.

#### **What can be done?**

1. A more stringent criterion in approving borrowings for States which deviate from stipulated fiscal norms is urgently needed. The criteria must be transparent and apolitical in character.
2. Whenever the Central government breaches the fiscal norms, it secures parliamentary approval. State governments must be encouraged to adopt a similar practice by securing the approval of the State Legislature.
3. Regulatory measures can be devised to enable bond yields to be responsive to market signals and bridge the information asymmetry between markets and State finances of the concerned State governments.

**Sources :** The Hindu

### **Farmer's agitation, Issues faced by farmers, MSP**

Reforms that de-risk agriculture are required for a long-term solution to agrarian

distress

**Mains : GS 3** Major crops cropping patterns in various parts of the country,, transport and marketing of agricultural produce and issues and related constraints.

### **Background**

- Farmers from different states across India is demanding waiver of farm loans, hikes in the minimum support price and more support from the government.
- Agricultural distress has become a permanent feature due to the failure governments and local institutions such as community or social networks in the country.
- Finance Minister has said States must generate their own resources to fund farm loan waivers and the Reserve Bank of India has warned of inflationary risks from fiscal slippages caused by large farm loan waivers.

### **The issues faced by the farmers and rural households**

- Price discovery -Deflation in prices of pulses and vegetables.

*Price discovery refers to the act of determining the proper price of a security, commodity, or good or service by studying market supply and demand and other factors associated with transactions.*

- Cattle trade rules : The new cattle trade rules threaten the viability of livestock and dairy farming.
- Prices of fuel used by rural households have surged for three successive months.
- Several resource poor farmers are forced to sell produce to local private traders and input dealers due to tie-up with credit.
- Over 40% of farmers still rely on non-institutional lenders, who mostly happen to be moneylenders-cum-traders and input dealers.
- Out of total advances to agriculture, the share of indirect finance has increased substantially over time, while that of direct finance to farmers has declined.
- Most of the increased credit flow to agricultural sector accrues to agro-business firms/corporations and not directly to the farmers.
- Bureaucratic delays regarding procurement of farm produce.
- Income from crop cultivation is not growing to meet expectation while input costs have rose substantially.
- The promotion of traditional farming will slow down the sector in the medium term.

### **The issues with Minimum support price**

- MSP is always mistakes as a remunerative price while actually it is an insurance price,
- A vast majority of the farming population is unaware MSP.

*According to the National Sample Survey's (NSS) Situation Assessment Survey of Agricultural Households 2013, even for paddy and wheat, less than one-third of farmers were aware of the MSP; for other crops, such awareness was negligible.*

- Though government has an MSP for 23 crops, the official procurement at the MSP is effectively limited to rice and wheat
- The procurement is limited to few states only
- Awareness about the MSP is limited to States such as Punjab, Haryana and Andhra Pradesh where such procurement takes place.

### **The way forward**

- Farm policy needs to recognise farmer requirements for state support.
- Farmers should have the freedom to sell their produce where and when they want – with a predictable policy framework
- Labour and land reforms need to be revisited to create more opportunities beyond farming,
- Speeding up of irrigation and other infrastructure projects to boost farm productivity.
- Institutional credit and social safety net during calamities are necessary to protect farmers.

### **Mains Perspective**

Model questions

Agricultural distress has become a permanent feature of Indian economy. What factors can be attributed to this? Give your suggestions

**Sources:** [The Hindu](#) [The Hindu](#)

### **A welcome sale: Air India disinvestment**

The Centre should sell its entire stake in Air India, even if in stages

**Mains : GS 3** Effects of liberalization on the economy, changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth.

### **Background**

The Union Cabinet approved the sale of Air India and five of its subsidiaries

### **Why disinvestment is a good option?**

1. The rationale for the government pumping in more money to save airline was weakening year after year.
2. Competing private airlines already cater to well over 85% of the air travel demand in the country.
3. Government money that support Air India can be used for much better causes.

### **The way forward**

1. The government would do well to go for the sale of its entire stake, even if it is done in a gradual manner.
2. The aim of the sale should be to get the best price for the airline. Policy measures needed for allowing participation of foreign airlines in the stake sale should be taken.

### **Concluding remarks**

If the stake sale goes relatively smoothly, that would make the task of moving forward on the disinvestment of other public sector units much easier.

### **Mains Perspective**

Model questions

Examine the impact of liberalization on companies owned by Indians. Are they competing with the MNCs satisfactorily? Discuss. [UPSC Mains 2013]

Sources: [The Hindu](#)

## GS 3 Science and Technology

### **In a new orbit: On the launch of GSLV Mark-III, India's heaviest rocket**

ISRO lifts India into the elite group capable of putting heavier satellites into a precise orbit

**Mains** : GS 2 Achievements of Indians in science & technology; indigenization of technology and developing new technology.

### **Background**

The Indian Space Research Organisation has crossed a significant milestone with the successful developmental flight of the country's heaviest Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle, the GSLV Mark-III.

### **Significance of the launch**

1. With communication satellites becoming heavier (up to six tonnes), the capability for larger payloads is vital.
2. India has successfully tested an indigenously developed cryogenic stage, which uses liquid oxygen and liquid hydrogen; the 2010 GSLV launch using an indigenous cryogenic stage ended in failure.

*India belongs to the elite club of countries that have mastered cryogenic technology.*

3. One more successful launch of the Mark-III will make India self-reliant in launching heavier satellites.
4. It is likely that other countries will soon turn to ISRO for the launch of heavier satellites at a lower cost.
5. The Mk-III is far more reliable than the GSLV and the PSLV.
6. Combined with its ability to carry eight to 10 tonnes into a low Earth orbit, the Mk-III can be considered for human-rating certification (to transport humans) once some design changes are made
7. Compared with the two-member crew capacity of the GSLV, the Mk-III can carry three astronauts and have more space to carry out experiments.

### **Mains perspective.**

- Discuss India's achievements in the field of Space Science and Technology. How the application of this technology has helped India in its Socio-economic development? [UPSC Mains 2016]

Sources: [The Hindu](#)

### **Nuclear power: Expensive, hazardous and inequitable**

The government's recent approval to ten new nuclear reactors deserves to be carefully appraised.

**Mains : GS 3** Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc.

#### **Background**

- Two major nuclear power companies - Westinghouse and Areva - in the world has filed for bankruptcy recently
- Presidents of France and Korea promised to cut share of nuclear energy.
- Both Areva and Westinghouse had entered into agreements with the Indian government to develop nuclear plants.
- In this backdrop India's effort to build 10 new indigenous reactors needs to be carefully appraised.

#### **The issues**

1. If projects proposed by Westinghouse and Areva had gone ahead, Indian taxpayers would have been left with billions of dollars of debt, and incomplete projects.
2. Although the 700 MW PHWRs are cheaper than imported reactors, their electricity is likely to be costly. Almost all currently operating Indian coal, natural gas and hydroelectric power plants produce cheaper electricity.
3. Prices for solar power have dropped below those of nuclear power.
4. Though creation of Nuclear power plants will result in large scale employment the ratio of the jobs produced to the capital invested is low for nuclear power.

*A widely cited study found that nuclear power created only 0.14 job-years per gigawatt-hour of electricity produced. Compared to solar photovoltaic creating about 0.87 job-years per gigawatt-hour of electricity.*

5. All nuclear reactors produce radioactive waste materials which remain radioactive for hundreds of thousands of years.
6. Nuclear reactors are also capable of catastrophic accidents, as witnessed in Fukushima and Chernobyl.
7. Local communities are keenly aware of the hazardous nature of nuclear power and every new site chosen for a nuclear plant has been greeted with a protest movement leading to cancellation of project
8. The establishment of nuclear power plants affects poor rural communities who are in several instances are displaced due to large projects.

#### **Mains Perspective**

Model questions

Across the world nuclear power plants has faced issues related to safety and cost overruns. Along with this the fall in prices of renewable energy should be seen as an



opportunity to have a serious rethink on the proposed nuclear power plants. Discuss

**Sources:** [The Hindu](#)

### **WHO's antibiotics classification**

The revision of antibiotics classes by the WHO is a welcome step to prevent drug resistance

**Mains : GS 3** Science and Technology- developments and their applications and effects in everyday life .

#### **Background**

- The World Health Organization (WHO) has divided the drugs into three categories – access, watch and reserve – specifying which are to be used for common ailments and which are to be kept for complicated diseases.
- Commonly used antibiotics will be under the 'access' category; the second line of antibiotics, slightly more potent, have been categorised under "watch" and potent drugs to be used only as a "last resort" fall under the 'reserve' category.

#### **The merits of WHO's decision**

It is a welcome step in the global initiative to push back against antimicrobial resistance, The WHO list can stop misuse of antibiotics as broad-spectrum treatments.

The revised WHO classification can mitigate the problem if the many issues associated with use of the drugs can be monitored and regulated.

#### **The issues**

- A study by Indian Council of Medical Research found that antibiotic resistance in 50 % of the patients in hospitals.
- A large number of infants were dying due to infections that did not respond to treatment.
- The prescription of antibiotics is often guided by such factors as patient demand, competing alternative treatment systems, and even financial incentives
- Widespread use of antibiotics on farm animals, and their role in building resistance.

#### **The way ahead**

- Access to speedy and accurate diagnosis is important in order to deploy the correct antibiotic early.
- Medical community should be sensitized to its responsibility to prevent antimicrobial resistance
- Enlightened policies on housing, sanitation and hygiene education to prevent new infections and the spread of disease-causing organisms

#### **Conclusion**

India has severe asymmetries in the delivery of health care: rural-vs-urban, and poor-vs-affluent patients, to name just two. It will take good public health policies, sufficient

funding and determined leadership to overcome antibiotic resistance.

### **Mains Perspective**

Model questions [*UPSC Mains 2014*]

Can overuse and free availability of antibiotics without Doctor's prescription, be contributors to the emergence of drug-resistant diseases in India? What are the available mechanisms for monitoring and control? Critically discuss the various issues involved.

**Sources:** [The Hindu](#)

### **The neutrino opportunity**

Setbacks to the Neutrino Observatory show the need to garner public support for scientific research

**Mains : GS 3** Indigenization of technology and developing new technology.

Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.

### **Background - The INO project**

- The proposed INO project aims to study atmospheric neutrinos in a 1,300-m deep cavern in the Bodi West Hills in Theni district, Tamil Nadu.
- If completed, the INO would house the largest magnet in the world

*Neutrinos are tiny particles, almost massless, that travel at near light speeds. Born from violent astrophysical events such as exploding stars and gamma ray bursts, they are abundant in the universe, and can move as easily through matter as we move through air.*

### **The Issues**

- Recently INO's environmental clearance was suspended.
- Several procedural lapses have caused inordinate delays in the project.
- Many argue that the project will have adverse impact on ecology. INO involves constructing an underground lab accessed by a 2 km-long horizontal access tunnel, and such tunnels have been built extensively in India and the relevant studies show that the environmental impacts have been managed.
- Allegations such as neutrinos being radioactive particles and that the INO will double up the storage of nuclear waste have resulted in people being skeptical about the project.
- Any further delays could defeat the purpose of the project because similar projects elsewhere could undermine India's efforts

### **The way forward**

While public apprehensions in such projects are understandable, they also demonstrate that communication between the scientific community and the public needs to be more basic and democratic. For a country of young minds, we should generate sufficient

public support for such high technology and science projects.

**Mains Perspective**

Model questions

Since India is making advancements in Science and technology, an aspirant is expected to be aware of these developments. Questions from the topic vary in number in 2013, 2014 and 2015 papers. To see how questions are asked from this topic visit our [IAS preparation page](#)

**Sources:** [The Hindu](#) [NGT](#) [Wikipedia](#)