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# Editorial Discussion & Analysis (EDA)

15th - 19th October 2021

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### Note -

- **The Newspaper clippings pasted in PDF are important from Mains point of view as it contains the fodder material for Mains Answer Writing.**
- **Also watch DND video lectures everyday @ 4 PM on Sleepy's YouTube channel in order to understand how to get the most out of everyday's Newspaper .**

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# 1. Polity & Governance

## 1.1. Speeding Up (Indian Express)

### PM GATI SHAKTI

- PM Gati Shakti is a digital platform that connects 16 ministries – including Roads and Highways, Railways, Shipping, Petroleum and Gas, Power, Telecom, Shipping, and Aviation.
- The portal will offer 200 layers of **geospatial data**, including on existing infrastructure such as roads, highways, railways, and toll plazas
- **Geographic information** about forests, rivers and district boundaries to aid in planning and obtaining clearances.
- Various government departments to track, **in real time and at one centralised place**, the progress of various projects, especially those with multi-sectoral and multi- regional impact.
- Objective is to ensure that each and every department now have visibility of each other's activities.
- It will also offer **satellite imagery** for monitoring of projects.
- Gati Shakti platform **aims to boosting last-mile connectivity** and bringing down logistics costs with integrated planning and reducing implementation overlaps.

### Context- Gati Shakti Scheme

### Highlights

- It will integrate road, railway, airport and multi-modal connectivity projects across the country
- **100 lakh crore national infrastructure master plan which will make a foundation for holistic infrastructure.**
- Help raise the global profile of local manufacturers and help them compete with their counterparts worldwide.
- **Promises to greatly enhance the national highway as well as the electricity transmission networks.**
- Considering the multiplier effects this could provide a notable boost to the economy.

### Ambition Vs Reality

- Public sector projects in India are marred by inordinate delays and cost overruns.
- Planning and execution of infrastructure connectivity programmes need to be done in a speedier way.

- **Logistical inefficiencies- Logistic costs amounted to only 8-10% of the GDP in the US and Europe and 9% in China as compared to 14% of India.**
- Multiplicity of approvals required from varied departments along with typical inter-ministerial delays.
- **Breaking down bureaucratic silos may prove to be harder than expected.**
- Critical to the success of some of these infrastructure projects will be the **participation of state governments.**

## 1.2.A Stronger & Wider Frame (Indian Express)

### Author - Srivatsa Krishna

- Context- Civil Services Reform

### Issue

- Like in every other profession, the bureaucracy has its share of the good, the bad and the ugly.
- Civil Servants sitting atop a prickly, unionised, rules-obsessed, obdurate lower bureaucracy.
- Thanks to the dedication & Commitment of civil services that the Nation is bonded together since last 75 years.
- **Bureaucracy, unlike the private sector, is a creature of the Constitution and is bound by multiple rules, laws, and procedures.**
- GOI has about 364 government servants for every 1,00,000 residents, with 45 per cent in the railways alone. Bureaucracy is highly understaffed
- **CVC, CBI, CAG - The Three C's are more intimidating rather than facilitating policy making.**
- Judicial Overreach, Media trials have made civil services inactive and more dependent on their political masters. There needs to be a greater risk taking appetite amongst civil servants.

### Way Forward

- Lateral entry needs to expand to up to 15 per cent of Joint/Additional and Secretary- level positions in GOI.
- **Renewable energy, electric vehicles, climate change, global trade negotiations and information technology** are certain areas where problem-solving professionals are needed.
- **Changes in recruitment procedures-** The interview group should spend considerable time with the candidates rather than deciding on a half-hour interview.

- After 15 years of service, all officers must undergo a thorough evaluation to enable them to move further.
- **Try to automate every major touchpoint between the government, citizens, and businesses.**
- India cannot hope to get to a \$5-trillion economy without a modern, progressive, **results-oriented bureaucracy**
- **Realign incentives institutionally- Move those who are honest yet don't perform & send home those who are non-performers.**

### 1.3.State, Siri & You (Indian Express)

Author - Menaka Guruswamy

- Context- You can switch off Siri, but not the state.

#### Artificial Intelligence in our Lives

- **John McCarthy “Artificial intelligence is allowing a machine to behave in such a way that it would be called intelligent if a human being behaved in such a way”.**
- In the times to come, one trend is certain we will rely more and more on artificial intelligence to get through our day.
- Increasingly more and more citizens have vital information on themselves stored as part of state or private data platforms.
- **Private platforms like Facebook, Twitter and a host of others collect what makes us unique our opinions, our likes and dislikes.**
- Algorithms on **OTT platforms** recommend movies or serials we like based on our prior viewing.
- **For all the data which is being collected in India, citizens have no rights over their data or protection from its extraction and in general, against its misuse.**

#### Need for Data Protection

- **No data protection law in place**, even though a Bill is being discussed by the parliamentary committee on information technology.
- Only protection at present is the Supreme Court's judgment in **Puttaswamy (2017)**, where it ruled that citizens have rights to informational privacy.
- State has also given itself the ability to regulate private parties like Whatsapp, Facebook, Twitter. (**Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021**

#### Conclusion

- With Greater Deployment of AI in our daily lives, lack of any rights paradigm provided by law is deeply unsettling

- **Constitution Guarantees that citizens must have their speech, expression, intellectual property and liberty rights protected**

## 1.4. Alarming Hunger or statistical artefact? (The Hindu)

Author - Sunny Jose & MD Zakaria Siddqui

- Context- Global Hunger Index
- GHI ranks India 101 out of 116 countries for which reliable and comparable data exist.
- **Barring last year's rank of 94 out of 107 countries, India's rank has been between 100 and 103 since 2017.**
- Government has questioned the methodology and claimed that the ranking does not represent the ground reality.
- What are the Components in GHI?
  - ✓ Insufficient calorie intake
  - ✓ Wasting (low weight for height)
  - ✓ Stunting (low height for age)
  - ✓ Mortality – are confined to children under five years

### Problem with Calorie Intake

- Lower calorie intake, which **does not necessarily mean deficiency**, may also stem from reduced physical activity & better social infrastructure.
- **For a vast and diverse country like India, using a uniform calorie norm to arrive at deficiency prevalence means failing to recognize the huge regional imbalances**
- States that have a higher average level of calorie intake, such as Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, however their needs may even be higher than the earmarked level of required calories.
- Recent analysis establishes that '**physical disease environment**' at the State level also significantly influences the calorie intake.

### Concerns

- **India's wasting prevalence (17.3%) is one among the highest in the world**
- Its performance in stunting, when compared to wasting, is not that dismal, though.
- **Child stunting in India declined from 54.2% in 1998-2002 to 34.7% in 2016-2020, whereas child wasting remains around 17%**
- Stunting is a chronic, long-term measure of undernutrition, while wasting is an acute, short-term measure.
- Child wasting can manifest as a result of an immediate lack of nutritional intake and sudden exposure to an infectious atmosphere.

- **Monitoring regions that are more vulnerable to socioeconomic and environmental crises, can possibly improve wasting and stunting simultaneously.**
- **No short-cut way of improving stunting without addressing wasting**

### Positive Takeaways From GHI

- **India's child mortality rate has been lower compared to SubSaharan African countries despite it having higher levels of stunting**
- **Despite Inadequate Nutritional Security, India was able to save many lives due to the availability of and access to better health facilities**
- **Although, Studies suggest that child undernutrition and mortality are usually closely related.**
- **Nevertheless, India remains an exception to this fact.**

## 1.5.Powering the Energy Sector (The Hindu)

Author - T.V. Narendran

- **Context- Electricity Amendment Bill (2020)**

### Highlights

- **The distribution sector has for long been the bane of the power sector**
- **Discoms are making huge losses owing to problems such as expensive long- term power purchase agreements, poor infrastructure, inefficient operation**
- **Bill will set the process of de-licensing power distribution after the monopoly of the state is dismantled.**
- **This will provide Consumers with an option of choosing the service provider**
- **Consumers can switch their power supplier**
- **Entry of private companies in distribution**
- **Statistical analysis shows that privatization of discoms in Delhi has reduced AT&C losses significantly from 55% in 2002 to 9% in 2020**

### Why will this bill be a Game Changer?

- **Discoms and regulators should be brought on board for proper implementation of open access**
- **Provide more options to consumers to choose their discom just as they are able to choose telecom providers**
- **Granting autonomy to the discoms & letting them decide/revise their tariffs without any interference from the states.**

- Electrical energy should be **covered under GST**, with a lower rate of GST
- This will make it possible for power distribution utilities to get a refund of input credit, which in turn will reduce the cost of power.
- **The impetus to renewal energy**, which will help us mitigate the impact of climate change, is much needed.
- Penalty for non-compliance with the renewable energy purchase obligations. **(Penalty to be levied from States & Power Discoms)**



## 2. Internal Security

### 2.1. Tackling Terror (The Hindu)

- Context- Role of Civil Society to promote communal harmony in Kashmir

#### Issue

- Terror attacks recently in Kashmir is a major setback
- Number of violent incidents in the Kashmir Valley was the lowest in 5 years.
- **Orchestrated allegedly by a shadowy force calling itself The Resistance Front (TRF), termed by security forces as being set up by the LeT.**
- **Many Kashmiri Pandit and Sikh employees abstained from work or took leave temporarily, worried about their security.**
- A chilling recall to the exodus of Kashmiri Pandits due to terror attacks in the early 1990s.

#### Way Forward

- Civil society in such situations must take the initiative to foster communal amity and to mobilise people across communities against hatred.
- **Recent appeals by some masjids in Srinagar requesting the public to show solidarity with the victims is welcoming.**
- UT administration has followed up with a strong crackdown on the insurgency seeking to isolate and quell the militant network.
- **Immediate renewal of political dialogue to address this along with the restoration of Statehood.**
- Restoring political and press freedom in the valley.

### 2.2. Securing The States (Indian Express)

#### Author - Prakash Singh

- Context- No Politics on BSF

#### Issue

- MHA recently issued a notification extending the jurisdiction of the Border Security Force from 15 km to a depth of 50 km along the international borders in three states – Punjab, Assam and West Bengal.
- **This caused a lot of political upheaval in Non BJP ruled states of Punjab & West Bengal**
- Previous Notification of MHA in 2014 had defined the jurisdiction of the BSF- Force could operate in the entire states of Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura and Meghalaya without any restrictions.

- In Gujarat, it had jurisdiction up to a depth of 80 km and in Rajasthan up to 50 km.
- In Punjab, Assam and West Bengal, the BSF jurisdiction was up to a depth of 15 km only
- **Under the New Notification (October 11, 2021) there is no change in the jurisdiction of North East states and in Gujarat the jurisdiction has reduced from 80 km to 50 km.**

### Why is this Move by MHA Justified?

- The threat perception from across the international borders has undergone a sea change in the context of recent developments in the **Af-Pak region**.
- Determined attempt to **destabilise Punjab**, where there have been several attempts to drop weapons from drones.
- LeT & JeM will almost certainly renew their onslaught in the border states.
- Recent seizure of 3000 kg of heroin found on the coast of Gujarat and upsurge in violence in Kashmir Valley makes these additional deployments of BSF more vital
- **Assam faces multiple problems of ethnic insurgencies, smuggling, counterfeit currency, drug trafficking, etc**
- Police across India need the assistance of central armed police forces even for maintaining normal law and order.
- Jurisdiction of the state police has neither been curtailed nor its powers reduced in any manner.
- **The power to register FIR and investigate the case remains with the state police.**

### Federal vs Unitary Stance

- Indian Constitution, though quasi federal, yet indicates leaning towards a strong Centre.
- Sir Ivor Jennings, **"India has a federation with a strong centralising tendency"**.
- National security is a paramount consideration.
- For the Sake of National Security, the Union through legislation, may **override the exclusive autonomy of the states in respect of law and order and policy.**

## 3. Environment

### 3.1. Weakening the Forest Shield (Indian Express)

Author - Arpitha Codiveri

#### Proposed Amendments to Forest Conservation Act, 1980

- All land acquired by the Railways and Roads Ministries prior to 1980 be exempted from the Act. Lands had been acquired for expansion, but subsequently forests have grown in these areas
- Since, government is unable to use the land for expansion, if the amendment is brought in then Ministries will no longer need clearance for their projects
- Defence projects near international borders will be exempted from forest clearance
- Oil and natural gas extraction from forested lands will be permitted, but only if technologies such as Extended Reach Drilling are used.

#### T N Godavarman Thirumulpad v Union of India (1996)

- Supreme Court had **expanded the definition and scope of forest land** to include all areas recorded as forest in any government record irrespective of ownership, recognition and classification
- **The court also expanded the definition of forests to encompass the “dictionary meaning of forests”**
- Even a forested patch would automatically become a “deemed forest” even if it is not notified as protected.

#### Concerns Arising

- The ease of doing business has signified a pathway towards deregulation
- Deregulation in this context refers to undoing environmental safeguards and remaking laws in ways that constrain their ability to scrutinise anti- environmental decisions
- The proposed amendments aims to implicitly define what does not constitute forests by creating a set of exceptions to the Act. **(Nullifying the 1996 Judgement)**
- Reducing scrutiny over certain decisions to deforest like the use of extended oil drilling for the extraction of oil and gas, which the ministry claims to be environment friendly
- **No Scientific evidence yet to prove that Extended Reach drilling is Eco friendly. Proposed provide a very short window of 15 days to providing comments.**
- The changes being proposed to the FCA need to be done in **consultation with forest-dwelling communities whose livelihoods and rights are likely to be affected by the remaking of this law.**
- Limiting deforestation should guide regulatory decision-making, not compensating with plantations.

## 3.2.Slippy Slopes (The Hindu)

- Context- Restore Ecology Amidst Heavy Monsoons

### Issue

- **As the Southwest monsoon retreats it is leaving a trail of destruction in several districts.**
- Significant loss of life has occurred in Kerala.
- **Kerala, which hosts a vast stretch of the Western Ghats, is having to contend with these changes with almost no respite between severe spells.**
- This year's torrential rain in the state is causing alarm as large reservoirs in mountainous reaches start filling up fast, while the Northeast monsoon lies ahead.
- **Indian monsoon is an invaluable resource that sustains hundreds of millions of people.**
- Variations in its patterns and intensity pose a rising challenge

### Way Forward

- **Governments should do more to reduce the risk to life and property.**
- Nurturing the health of rivers and keeping them free of encroachments.
- Protecting the integrity of mountain slopes by ending mining, deforestation and incompatible construction hold the key.
- **Expanding extractive economic activity to montane forests is certain to cause incalculable losses.**
- In 2017, the Quarrying area in Kerala was at over 7,157 hectares, and much of it in central districts that were hit later by mudslides in 2018.
- **Unconscionable to allow the pursuit of short-term profits at the cost of helpless communities.**

## 4. Economy

### 4.1. The Pursuit of Tax Justice (Indian Express)

#### Author - Upendra Baxi

- Context- Global Tax Justice

#### Issue

- Pandora papers reveals the secrets of **“wealthy elites from more than 200 countries and territories”** and data about **“tax and secrecy havens”**.
- Spectre of the global economy as a supersystem for wealth maximization run amok.
- The global movements for tax justice take people’s suffering and civic lamentation seriously as a way of taking human rights seriously

#### Suggestions By OECD

- 100 of the biggest and most profitable MNEs must **re-allocate part of their profit to the countries** where they sell their products and provide their services.
- Any company with over EUR 750 million of annual revenue would now be subject to an **effective corporate minimum rate of 15%**.

#### Why Elimination of global tax havens stands for justice to humanity?

- The losses due to **“tax abuse”** have been estimated by the Tax Justice Institute at nearly \$427 billion annually.
- \$245 billion is lost to multinational corporations shifting profit into tax havens in order to **underreport their profit**.
- The remaining \$182 billion is lost to wealthy individuals hiding undeclared assets and incomes offshore, beyond the reach of the law.
- **Lower-income countries lose much larger equivalent proportions than higher-income countries.**
- **Higher-income countries are responsible for facilitating 98 per cent of all global tax losses**
- **Equivalent of over 34 million nurses’ annual salaries is lost to tax havens each year globally**

#### Suggestions

- Global Alliance for Tax Justice calls for establishment of a universal, intergovernmental UN tax commission.
- **UN Tax Convention to comprehensively address tax havens, tax abuse by multinational corporations and other illicit finance.**



- UN Human Rights Council can be a pivotal agency performing leadership tasks.
- One must take the world system as one may find it, without ever **abandoning the dreams of a just world order.**

## 4.2.Lessons From The Shortage (Indian Express)

Author - Madan Sabnavis

- Context- Coal Crisis

### Highlights

- This is Similar seems similar to what happens when there is a shortage of sugar or onions.
- While shortage of farm products is normally due to crop failure while the reasons for coal shortage are more human-made.
- India has the world's fifth-largest coal reserves.
- Having this strength Coal India, must invest more money in coal production to tap out the benefits from the abundant sources.
- Demand surges and disruption in supplies can exacerbate the issue.
- Power generating companies maintain around 30 days of inventory, but, currently, this has come down to 3 days.
- Since less investment is being made to mine more coal, the increase in supplies will be gradual.

### Import Substitution?

- **Government is asking companies to meet 10% of their requirement through imports.**
- Global coal crisis has led to higher prices and there is a resurgence in demand coming towards pre pandemic levels as demand is picking up.
- At the global level, as power companies are not getting coal easily, they have switched over to oil, **pushing up the price of Brent.**
- **Coal dependency in India came down over time, which also coincided with a lower phase of economic growth.**
- China has taken greening concept seriously and asked coal producers to control production and power generators and move over to other greener fuels.
- **If power companies import excess coal that would increase the cost of power production and power tariffs cannot be revised easily.**

### Conclusion

- **If India wishes to achieve 8% GDP growth successively in the next couple of years consistently, then we need to have a strong power generation edifice for the same.**

- The coal shortage problem is very serious as it affects power supply, which is the backbone of all economic activity
- **If power companies start revising their tariffs, inflation will shoot up.**
- We need to Invest More in Renewable sources of Generating Power.

## 5. International Relations

### 5.1.A New Quad in West Asia (Indian Express)

Author - C Raja Mohan

- Context- New Alliances in West Asia

#### Highlights

- First-ever meeting between the foreign ministers of India, Israel, the United Arab Emirates, and the United States.
- This marks an important turning point in Delhi's engagement with the Middle East
- India is now ready to move from bilateral relations conducted in separate silos towards an integrated regional policy.
- The idea of an Indo-Abrahamic Accord between India, the UAE and Israel was first suggested by Mohammed Soliman, an Egyptian scholar based in Washington
- This widens the possibilities for Delhi's strategic cooperation with Washington.

#### Difficulty of Maintaining a fine balance

- **Important gains of India's recent foreign policy was in the simultaneous expansion of Delhi's cooperation with Israel and the Arab world.**
- India's new foreign policy pragmatism demonstrated the feasibility of a non-ideological engagement with the Middle East.
- For long, India defined the US, and more broadly the West, as part of the problem in the Middle East.
- **Expanding cooperation with the US to the east of India (Indo Pacific) does not mean Delhi Can't work with Washington to the West of the Subcontinent (Middle East & Greater Middle East)**
- At present US wants to downsize & not leave, its expansive role in the Middle East developed since the 1970s.
- Many regional powers were quick to see this change, **however yet it is not too late for Delhi to realize this transition.**
- There is potential for **India, UAE and Israel to collaborate on many areas – from semiconductor design and fabrication to space technology.**