

18th Sept, 2024

1. Relative Economic Performance of Indian States

GS 3 (Economy)

• Why in News:

- The Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM) recently released a working paper titled **'Relative Economic Performance of Indian States: 1960-61 to 2023-24.'**
- The analysis spans a long period, from 1960-61 to 2023- 24, providing insights into how individual states have performed in response to changes in national and state-specific policies.

• What is the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM)?

- It is a **non-constitutional, non-permanent and independent** body constituted to give economic advice to the Government of India, specifically the **Prime Minister**.
- It has been **constituted several times** since the **independence** of India. In **2017**, the body was **revived** and **currently** the PMEAC chairman post is held by **Bibek Debroy**.
- The council serves to highlight key economic issues facing the country to the government of India from a neutral viewpoint.
- It advises the PM on economic issues like **inflation, microfinance, and industrial output**.

• Indicators Used to Capture Relative Economic Performance of States:

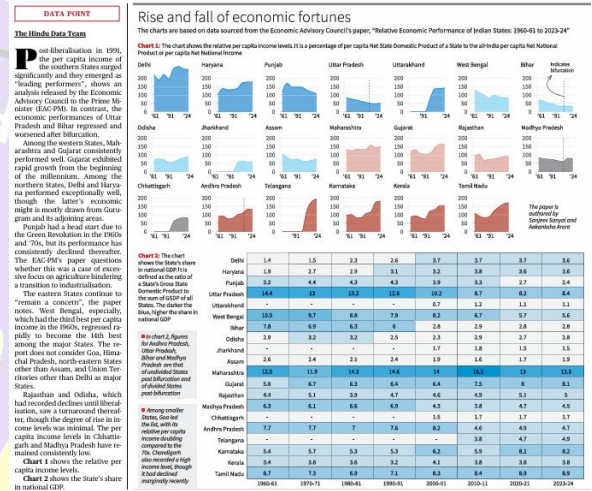
- **Two indicators:** The paper focuses exclusively on the relative performance of states, measured using two indicators- **(1) Share in India's GDP** and **(2) Relative per capita income**.
- **The state's share in India's GDP:** It is calculated by dividing the Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) of the state by the sum of GSDP of all states. This gives an idea of the relative economic importance of states.
- **Relative per capita income:**
 - It is calculated as the ratio of the per capita Net State Domestic Product (NSDP) of the state as a percentage of the all-India per capita Net National Product (or Net National Income in some years).
 - However, the per capita NSDP means that it **does not include remittances** which may be important for states like Kerala, Bihar and UP.

• Regional Analysis of Relative Economic Performance of States:

- **Southern states:**
 - **Before 1991**, southern states did not show expectational performance. However, **since the economic liberalisation of 1991**, the southern states have emerged as the leading performers.
 - **In 2023-24**, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Kerala and Tamil Nadu together accounted for approximately 30% of India's GDP.
 - **The per capita income** of all southern states became higher than the national average after 1991. **For instance**,
 - The relative per capita income in Telangana is now 193.6% of the national average.
 - While Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala have per capita incomes 181, 171, and 152.5% of the national average, respectively.
- **Western states:**
 - **Maharashtra** has maintained the highest share of India's GDP for almost all of the period.

Post-1991, southern states emerged as leaders: EAC-PM

Punjab and West Bengal have recorded sharp declines in per capita income after a head start



- **Gujarat's** share remained at broadly the same levels until 2000-01, before beginning to increase rapidly from 6.4% in 2000-01 to 8.1% in 2022-23.
- Both Gujarat and Maharashtra have had per capita incomes exceeding the national average since the 1960s.
- **By 2023-24**, Gujarat's per capita income has risen to 160.7% of national average, as compared to 150% for Maharashtra.
- In 2022-23, the per capita income of **Goa** was nearly three times the national average. With this, it is **second in terms of per capita income** after Sikkim.
- **Northern states:**
 - Among the northern states, **Delhi and Haryana** have performed notably well, while **Punjab's** economy has deteriorated after 1991.
 - Haryana's share of India's GDP now exceeds that of Punjab, and its relative per capita income has reached 176.8%, compared to Punjab's 106.7% in 2023-24.
- **Eastern states:**
 - **West Bengal**, which held the 3rd-largest share of national GDP at 10.5% in 1960-61, now accounts for only 5.6% in 2023-24.
 - **Its per capita income** was above the national average in 1960-61 at 127.5%, but its relative per capita income declined to 83.7% in 2023-24, falling below the states like Rajasthan and Odisha.
 - The relative per capita income of undivided **Bihar** was 70.3% in 1960-61. It started declining and has been roughly flat at around 33% since 2000-01.
 - In Bihar, the actual household incomes may be higher as the remittances are not captured here.
- **Central states:**
 - In the 1960s, undivided **UP** was the largest economic powerhouse in the country, with a share of 14.4% in India's GDP in 1960-61.
 - However, the share of UP (bifurcated) in national GDP was **8.4% in 2023-24**.
 - **MP's** relative per capita income increased from 60.1% in 2010-11 to 77.4% in 2023-24.
- **North-eastern states:**
 - In 1980-81, **Sikkim's** per capita income was below the national average. However, its per capita income surged from around 100% of the national average in 2000-01 to **320% in 2023-24**.
 - **Assam**, which initially had a per capita income slightly above the national average, experienced a decline in its relative per capita income and reached 73.7% in 2023-24.
- **What may be Inferred from the States' Relative Economic Performance?**
 - Overall, the **western and southern regions** of the country are **outperforming** others, with **notable success** also observed in parts of the **north**.
 - The stark contrast between **Haryana and Punjab** raises an interesting question: Did Punjab's focus on agriculture contribute to a form of '**Dutch disease**,' hindering its transition to industrialisation?
 - **The eastern part** of the country continues to be a **concern**. Although **Bihar's** relative position has stabilised in the last two decades, it remains significantly behind other states and requires much faster growth to catch up.
 - An interesting overall observation is that the **maritime states** have clearly outperformed the other states, with the exception of **West Bengal**.
 - Even the coastal state of **Odisha** which was traditionally a laggard state has seen improved performance in the last two decades.

2. A Climate Crisis Agenda Remains Urgent GS (Environment)

• Why in News:

- India's climate action efforts are entering a critical phase as the country sets ambitious targets for 2030. Despite progress in **renewable energy**, coal dependence remains high, with clean energy constituting only **22% of the electricity mix**. Urgent environmental issues such as heat stress, air quality, waste management, and energy efficiency require immediate attention to align with rising energy demands.

• Mitigating Pollutants

- Vulnerability to Heat Stress:** India faces significant risks from heat stress, potentially encountering heat waves beyond human survivability limits. Mitigating CO₂ and short-lived climate pollutants like methane is essential, as these super pollutants have a much greater short-term warming impact.
- Targeted Approaches to Climate Change:** Addressing climate challenges through tailored treaties can enhance accountability under the Paris Agreement. Learning from the **Montreal Protocol's** success with the Kigali Amendment, a focus on reducing methane emissions could prevent nearly 0.3°C of warming by the 2040s.
- Comprehensive Air Quality Management:** Improving air quality requires five key actions: collective responsibility, investment in clean air initiatives, sustainable development integration, data-driven interventions, and recognizing air quality's economic benefits. Consistent efforts are necessary to tackle air pollution as a persistent issue.

• Importance of Carbon Markets

- Role of Carbon Markets:** Carbon markets can incentivize **greenhouse gas (GHG) reductions** by offering financial rewards for emission cuts. With the goal of limiting temperature rise to 1.5-2°C, a reduction of at least 43% in global GHG emissions is required, making these markets essential for achieving this target.
- India's Carbon Market Plans:** India aims to launch its '**India Carbon Market**' in 2026, potentially establishing the world's largest emissions trading system by 2030. This could help meet **Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)** and avoid \$35 trillion in climate-related costs over the next 50 years.
- Nuanced Approaches to Emission Metrics:** Current carbon trading metrics aggregate all pollutants into CO₂ equivalents, which can obscure the distinct impacts of different pollutants. Separating long-lived pollutants from short-lived climate pollutants in carbon markets could yield more effective climate action.

• Governance and Political Engagement

- Need for a Nodal Authority:** Establishing a constitutional nodal authority for climate action is essential for ensuring coordinated, pre-emptive measures with timelines across government tiers. This would facilitate accountability and effective governance in tackling climate issues.
- Political Will and Public Engagement:** The 2024 Lok Sabha elections showed a troubling neglect of climate issues, despite public demand. The absence of a strong political commitment to climate action exacerbates vulnerabilities, particularly for the economically disadvantaged, who prioritize immediate survival.
- Integrating Climate into Political Agendas:** For meaningful progress, climate action must become central to political agendas, moving beyond token gestures. Climate-progressive leadership is necessary to foster a sustainable and equitable future for India.

A climate crisis agenda remains urgent



Arun Joshi
Director of the India Program at the Center for Global Development

The next five years are critical for India's climate action efforts, given its ambitious 2030 targets. While significant advances in solar and renewable energy are under way, India's heavy reliance on coal remains a concern, with clean energy accounting for only 22% of the electricity mix. Key environmental issues that need urgent attention include reducing heat stress, improving air quality, managing waste, and enhancing energy efficiency. The growing demand for energy must be matched with comprehensive policies addressing these challenges in the near term. Encouraging businesses to view climate action as an opportunity rather than a challenge is essential, and acting swiftly on India's carbon market is a crucial step in this direction.

Mitigating pollutants India is highly vulnerable to heat stress and may soon face heat waves beyond human survivability limits. Mitigating both CO₂ emissions and short-lived super pollutants such as methane, black carbon, and hydrofluorocarbons is crucial. These super pollutants, especially methane, contribute significantly to global warming and trap much more heat than CO₂ over short periods. Reducing them can prevent more near-term warming than cutting CO₂ alone. Breaking down the climate problem into manageable pieces by pollutants, risks, or sectors can make solutions more effective. Tailor-made treaties, like the Paris Agreement, can be integrated into the Paris Agreement for accountability. The Montreal Protocol provides a successful blueprint. With its Kigali Amendment and more away from super potent fluorinated gases, it is expected to avoid 0.5°C of warming by the end of this century. The next target should be methane, with the potential to avoid nearly 0.3°C of warming by the 2040s. A new treaty led by the U.S., European Union, and China

could lock in corporate commitments to reduce methane emissions to near zero by 2030. Reducing methane emissions through technically feasible gas capture and storage projects can tackle one of the most potent greenhouse gases (GHGs) while improving other sanitation. Reducing short-lived climate pollutants (SLCPs) such as black carbon and enhancing the National Clean Air Programme can significantly improve air quality and public health. However, society must recognize that air pollution is a year-round problem requiring sustained action. Cleaning the air will require free critical changes fostering collective responsibility, proactively investing in clean air initiatives, integrating sustainable development, leveraging data-driven interventions for precise actions, and recognizing clean air as a driver of economic growth. Effective solutions require coordinated efforts, better monitoring, and regulatory reforms, highlighting the economic and health benefits of clean air for all stakeholders. But improving energy efficiency, faster decarbonization and adoption of low global warming potential refrigerants, as per the Kigali Amendment, are crucial steps towards reducing GHG emissions.

Importance of carbon markets Carbon markets will help incentivize reductions in GHGs by offering financial rewards for emission cuts. To keep global temperatures from rising above 1.5°C, global GHG emissions need to be reduced by at least 43%. Carbon markets will play a critical role in driving these reductions. India aims to launch the 'India Carbon Market' in 2026. This could help it achieve its Nationally Determined Contributions goal and potentially become the world's largest emissions trading system by 2030. A well-developed carbon market in India could avoid \$35 trillion in climate-related costs over the next 50 years.

A missed opportunity The 2024 Lok Sabha election largely ignored the escalating climate crisis, despite its inclusion in voter demands. Party commitments to climate action were grossly inadequate. This neglect at a time when temperatures across the country are at an all-time high. Low voter turnout was attributed to rising unemployment, farming distress, and inflation, keeping the poor focused on survival, deepening inequality. Unlike the West, India lacks a 'green party' and the climate crisis has been disconnected from ordinary citizens' reality. Climate progressive leadership will need to relentlessly work for an environmentally better India. This means pushing beyond mere rhetoric and integrating climate action into the core of political agendas.

Despite its inclusion in voter demands, the climate crisis was ignored during the Lok Sabha election campaign

3. Demographic advantage, Indian economy's sweet spot GS 3 (Economy)

- **Why in News:** India's economic growth is drawing attention as it becomes the **world's fastest-growing large economy**, with a **median age of 28** and 63% of the population in the **working age group**. However, the **labour force participation rate is low at 55.2%**, indicating that while **growth is not "jobless,"** significant reforms are necessary to harness the demographic dividend effectively.
- **Economic Reforms and Growth**
 - **Need for Ongoing Reforms:** To sustain and accelerate growth, India must continue its reform agenda, focusing on **improving productivity and efficiency in markets**.
 - **Sectoral Growth Challenges:** The **Economic Survey 2023-24** highlights that technological advancements are changing the **capital-to-labour ratio**, suggesting an imbalance in **capital-led growth versus labor utilization**. Economists argue that India should leverage its **abundant labor force** rather than focusing solely on **capital-intensive sectors**.
 - **Impact of Labour Laws:** The reluctance of **Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs)** to scale up, alongside large businesses avoiding **labour-intensive sectors**, stems from compliance burdens of outdated labour laws. The impasse over new labour codes is deterring potential investors and needs resolution, especially in States with established manufacturing ecosystems.
 - **Employment Sectors and Skilling**
 - **Agricultural Workforce Dynamics:** With 45% of the workforce in agriculture, contributing only **18% to GDP**, there is an urgent need to enhance agricultural productivity and transition workers to other sectors. 19% of the workforce is engaged in fragmented, low-productivity non-agricultural sectors.
 - **Focus on High-Growth Sectors:** Targeting high-growth, labour-intensive sectors such as toys, apparel, tourism, and logistics can address aspirations of the workforce. As skills improve, there is potential for job enhancement and increased wages, helping to uplift the economy.
 - **Lifelong Skilling Initiatives:** Only **4% of the 15-29 age cohort is formally skilled**. Effective skilling requires public-private partnerships for curriculum development, recognizing that skill development must be a continuous process to adapt to market needs.
- **Education, AI, and Future Outlook**
 - **Educational Policy Relevance:** The **New Education Policy (NEP) 2020** emphasizes **foundational and higher-order cognitive skills**, but it requires periodic reviews to remain relevant in a rapidly changing world. Continuous adaptation of educational frameworks is essential for preparing a skilled workforce.
 - **AI and Job Market Dynamics:** In the context of **artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML)**, low-skill, repetitive jobs are at risk, yet human oversight remains vital. India has the second-largest talent pool in AI, but a projected 51% gap between demand and supply needs addressing to capitalize on this opportunity.
 - **Demographic Dividend Potential:** India's young and aspirational population presents a unique challenge that is preferable to an ageing demographic. A holistic approach to skill development and job creation is crucial to harness the demographic dividend and position India as a global economic leader.

Demographic advantage, Indian economy's sweet spot

Much has been written about India's emergence as an economic giant – it is the world's fastest growing big economy, and is currently the fifth largest. Demographics is a major factor in propelling this rise given that the median age is around 28 years and 63% of the population is of working age. However, the labour force participation rate stood at 55.2% in 2022, according to a recent report released by the International Labour Organization (ILO), which goes on to state that falling labour intensity is likely due to growth being led by the services sector rather than manufacturing. Therefore, while we are certainly not experiencing "jobless growth", more steps are needed to harness the demographic dividend.

Continue with the reforms agenda
First and foremost, there is a need to press ahead with the ongoing reforms agenda to maintain, if not accelerate, India's growth trajectory as that by itself will create opportunities galore. There was a welcome reference to this in Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's Budget speech to initiate and incentivise improvements in productivity and to facilitate markets and sectors to become more efficient. While there is much that the Centre has done to enhance ease of doing business, much of what needs to be done next, especially in the context of production, concerns the States (which is where the action is now). Hence, both need to walk in lockstep to broaden and deepen reforms.

The Economic Survey for 2023-24 states that technological advancements have led to a declining capital-to-labour ratio and an increasing capital-to-labour ratio. It was perhaps in this context that Arvind Panagariya, economist and Chairman of the 98th Finance Commission, while speaking at a recent event in the Federation Of Indian Chambers Of Commerce and Industry



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said capital-led economic growth is not ideal as the country has an abundance of labour. The reluctance of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, the backbone of employment, to grow in size and scale as well as that of large business houses to foray into labour-intensive sectors can be attributed to the compliance burden and costs imposed by outdated labour laws.

The impasse over implementing the new labour codes approved by Parliament is sending a wrong signal to existing and prospective investors alike. It is important that one or two States with an evolved manufacturing ecosystem break the logjam by taking the lead.

The Centre's efforts to give a boost to the manufacturing sector is generally viewed from the angle that it is unattractive for 45% of the workforce to be employed in the agricultural sector which accounts for only 18% of GDP. While taking steps to enhance agricultural productivity, we must not forget those who are engaged in the unorganised and non-agricultural sectors – about 19% of the workforce – which are highly fragmented and suffer from low productivity. It is important to address their aspirations by focusing on high growth potential sectors such as toys, apparel, tourism, and logistics which are also labour intensive. Then, as skills get upgraded, there will be an opportunity to move up the value chain and provide even better and higher paying jobs.

Skilling is a continuous process
Skilling is an important aspect of making future generations productive members of society. The Economic Survey highlighted that only 4.4% of the workforce in the age cohort of 15-29 years is formally skilled. This is a huge concern, and the dichotomy of labour surplus and skills shortage must be addressed through meaningful

public-private partnerships wherein industry plays an integral role in devising the curriculum and imparting 'on the job training'. Moreover, skilling is not a one-time intervention but a lifelong process which requires flexibility in institutional mechanisms as well as learning agility.

The emphasis of the New Education Policy (NEP) 2020 on foundational skills as well as higher order cognitive skills and critical thinking is a good step but, in a constantly changing world, the document must be reviewed periodically and updated.

Impact of AI/ML
Finally, in an era of artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML), repetitive tasks with low skills are most at risk but there will always be a need for human intervention and oversight. While we must not underestimate the impact of AI/ML, neither should it be demonised. The key is to have appropriate regulations govern its use while harnessing what it has to offer. In addition to the opportunities offered by various emerging sectors, AI/ML itself is estimated by Statista to grow by nearly nine times to become a \$82.73 billion worldwide market by 2030. Further, according to NASDAQ, India already has the second largest talent pool globally in this field but the current gap between demand and supply is 51% which is projected to widen. Though very niche, it is an opportunity which should not be missed.

Cautionally employing a large, young and aspirational population is not easy but it is a far better challenge to have than dealing with an ageing one with its attendant economic and societal implications. India is in a sweet spot and must employ a holistic approach to create a talent pool so as to harness its demographic dividend for the benefit of the world at large.

4. The continuing distribution of the death penalty GS 2 (Governance)

- **Why in News:** The recent legislative move (**Aparajita Woman and Child (West Bengal Criminal Laws Amendment) Bill, 2024**) comes amidst rising sexual violence in India, with 31,516 rapes reported in 2022. The Bill has been referred to the President, sparking a **national debate on capital punishment's effectiveness.**

• Legislative Developments

- **Death Penalty Expansion:** The Bill increases the number of offences punishable by death from 12 to 18, reflecting **public outrage over sexual violence**. Critics argue that harsher penalties do not improve women's safety, as high rates of violence persist.
- **Governor's Critique:** Despite unanimous passage by the West Bengal Assembly, the Governor has expressed concerns and referred the Bill to the President. This move indicates the need for a balance between legislative action and judicial oversight.
- **National Crime Statistics:** Data from the **National Crime Records Bureau** shows that **Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh** lead in rape cases, emphasizing systemic violence against women. This data reinforces the necessity for targeted legal reforms beyond punitive measures.
- **Global Perspective and Trends**
 - **Death Penalty in Global Context:** Globally, 112 countries have abolished the death penalty, while India remains a retentionist nation. This trend challenges the effectiveness of capital punishment as a deterrent to crime.
 - **Implications of Death Row Conditions:** Death row prisoners face severe mental and physical health challenges, often stemming from inadequate support. The increasing number of marginalized individuals on death row highlights socio-economic disparities in the justice system.
 - **Recommendations for Reforms:** Victim-centered reforms should include educational initiatives to challenge patriarchal norms. Comprehensive state support for survivors and their families is crucial for fostering resilience and dignity.

The continuing distribution of the death penalty

The life of the death sentence in India has been expanding, and like a phoenix, it rises in different forms every now and then. The latest addition to the Aparajita Woman and Child (West Bengal Criminal Laws Amendment) Bill, 2024, adopted by the West Bengal government, the reason being the brutal rape and murder of a doctor at Kolkata's I.C.T. Medical College and Hospital. It seeks to amend the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 (BNS), the Bharatiya Nagarik Sanhita, 2023 and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012, in their application to the State of West Bengal. Among other things, it introduces the death penalty for the offence of rape.

While it has been unanimously passed by the Bengal Assembly, the State Governor was critical but has referred it to the President of India. Though murder for consideration. In the same month of August, there were several such cases in other States with the survivors being Dalit/tribal women and children. In 2022 alone, the National Crime Records Bureau recorded 11,516 rapes in India, nearly four each hour, and 248 cases of murder with rape/gang rape. Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh topped the list with 5,395, 3,650, and 3,329 recorded cases of rape, respectively.

Global Data
In global figures from Amnesty International, at the end of 2022, nearly three quarters of countries had abolished the death penalty in law or practice. 82 countries had completely abolished the death penalty in law or practice. But 55 countries still retained the death penalty in law and practice. In South Asia, while Bhutan and Nepal are the only abolitionists for all crimes, the Maldives and Sri Lanka are abolitionists in practice. India, along with Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Pakistan, are the retentionists.

Project SIPA reports that in 2022 alone, India had 100 recorded death sentences. There were no recorded executions, and the number is down from 167 in 2021. Moreover, there were 561 people under the death sentence in India at the end of 2022, a consistent rise since 2019, when it was 578. It is also the highest death row population in a calendar year in around two decades.

Most of such death row prisoners spend several years on death row, with some being mental and ill. They have severe physical, psychological and mental health problems and without any state compensation, which suggest grave procedural flaws and perhaps caste, class, and the prison issues that pervade official institutions of the Indian criminal justice system and the people who make power through them. Some of these prisoners commit suicide, signifying the uttermost prison conditions in which they are made to live, including prison overcrowding, as undertrials are mostly from the



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marginalised communities and left to fend for themselves. They continue to constitute three-fourths of the total number of incarcerated people in India.

On VAMC and societal responses

Uniformly, the use of 'decolonisation language' that gave birth to the BNS replacing the Indian Penal Code, while enabling a few positive changes, has increased the number of offences punishable by death from 12 to 18. India has shifted to a more deterrent regime for sexual offences without any significant change in women's safety and empowerment. A glance at the nature of offences where the death sentence has been given by sessions courts in 2022, shows murder involving sexual offences at the top of the chart (64). Sexual violence against women and children (VAMC), particularly where the victim is killed, most often led to outcries of public anger, grief, and shock, followed by the demand of capital punishment from certain sections for the rapists, who are often termed as rakhwas, hitman, serial killers.

This framing creates an 'othering' – as if the accused is not from the same society that we inhabit – and justifies death for them as a tool for retribution, which also seems to be rooted in India's religious and societal culture that celebrates death the killing of devils by gods and goddesses. Such calls for 'justice' to victims mostly are the honour of the family, community, and nation, ignoring the victim's autonomy and what they want, which is also reflected in judicial discourse. On the other hand, there is a normalisation and politico-legal tolerance of everyday VAMC by men, including their public flagging, sexual violence, and killing – outside by strangers without any public intervention, and at home by husbands and relatives. Worryingly, searches for victims' videos trend on Google and explicit sites.

The recommendations made by the Justice Verma Committee argued that the death sentence does not necessarily act as a deterrent against crimes such as sexual offences, including gang rape. However, the Indian Calcutta did not consider those recommendations. So, if the objective behind the death penalty is not fulfilled, the carceral politics of sexual violence must be dismantled by infusing abolitionist feminism. A key concern is also to bring human rights-based language to mainstream, the majority of whom do not have access to it, and whose thoughts towards the death penalty are shaped by cultural and religious narratives. There must be an abolitionist feminist movement to reform the death sentence and even life imprisonment without parole as responses to sexual violence including rape, and the social causes and cultural conditions that lead to VAMC.

It also needs to work on the structural issues of the distribution of land and wealth for the marginalised communities, their representation in all spaces and institutions – both private and public – and a radical shift towards properly funded public education and health care. Governments and society need to work on the need of targeted support and a range of state facilities rape survivors need in order to access education, employment, health, marital and family life. They also need to provide support to families of rape survivors, particularly minor siblings, if any, in terms of their access to education and resources, and take part in community building and a revaluation of fraternity to ensure their dignity that the Indian Constitution upholds.

Complex issues but there must be a start
There need to be victims-centred procedural and institutional reforms and some sort of 'vets' panels, but Justice indicates the way, to protect the daughter's policy initiative to eliminate the patriarchal notions of the honour of the family, community, and nation residing in female bodies and virginity, honourkilling and ignoring the problems mentioned above will make the abolition movement appear superficial to say the least and forced from the top. The death penalty is the safest escape route from accountability as it does not burden the state with the hard work of reforming the police, prosecution, judiciary and supporting survivors. A culture of utilising existing research for an evidence-based informed policy-making by the central and state legislatures needs to be institutionalised to avoid knee-jerk populist reactions that lead to criminal injustice. Additionally, research needs to be conducted on if and how the socio-religious background of judges plays a role in their awarding the death sentence.

Indian society is again striving for social change through legal reform. It seeks the case, the safety and the support for rape survivors and their families, alongside state accountability. But we must remain attentive to how the separation of law (including contract, family, labour and property laws) constructs the socio-economic status of women and children, particularly from the oppressed castes and other marginalised communities. It asymmetrically distributes wealth, knowledge and power. Abolition of the death penalty and creating a safer environment for women and children are complex issues. They require understanding, teaching, and engaging the law, critically. There must be an abolitionist and public talk about caste, race, religion and gender-based violence through an intersectionality lens, including by the organisations and the people who champion these causes. Feminists agree that sexual offences are more about power than sex. There is a need for public and judicial awareness campaigns debunking the myth of the death sentence leading to a reduction in VAMC, and to bring greater equity from within the private sphere (family) to the public sphere, rather than distributing state wealth and sentence inflation. Punishment alone cannot change society.

5. SC stops illegal 'bulldozer justice' actions GS 2 (Governance)

- **Why in News:** By invoking its special powers under Article 142 of the Constitution, the Supreme Court froze **illegal bulldozer demolitions** across the country until October 1, highlighting reports of "**glorification, grandstanding, and even justifications**" of the destruction of private homes and properties belonging to undertrials and their families.
- **What is Bulldozer Justice?**
 - "Bulldozer Justice" refers to the practice where government authorities demolish the properties of individuals accused of crimes, such as rioters or protesters, often without a legal trial.
 - This involves using heavy machinery like bulldozers to tear down homes or businesses, as a way to punish these individuals swiftly.
- **Why it is supported?** Supporters of "Bulldozer Justice" see it as a deterrent to discourage unlawful activities. They believe it provides **instant justice**, in contrast to the **lengthy judicial process**.
- **Criticism of Bulldozer Justice**

- Bulldozer justice is a practice that is **"inconceivable"** in a nation governed by the rule of law.
- Bulldozing alleged illegal properties of crime accused without serving notice is a **violation of the rule of law**.
- Any state action, including demolitions, must be in accordance with the law and not used arbitrarily.
- The guilt of the accused must be proved before a court of law and the punishment should be given by the judiciary and not by executive action.

- It is a **gross violation of law, human rights and the principles of natural justice**.
- The demolitions often occur without proper legal procedures, **violating the fundamental principle of due process**.

• Impact on Society

- **Public Perception:** The societal acceptance of **"instant justice"** reflects a troubling shift in attitudes towards legal processes. The glorification of demolitions as a deterrent undermines the foundational **principles of justice and equality before the law**.
- **Homelessness and Violation of Rights:** The destruction results in **severe human rights violations** rendering families homeless and destabilizing communities.
- **Judicial Responsibility:** The reliance on the judiciary to curb executive overreach is a concerning trend in Indian democracy. It raises critical questions about the **effectiveness of existing laws and the accountability of government officials**.
- **Recommendations for Future Action**
 - **Implementation of Guidelines:** There is an urgent need for the Supreme Court's proposed guidelines to be effectively implemented, ensuring that all demolitions are conducted legally and with due process.
 - **Accountability Mechanisms:** Establishing mechanisms to hold **government officials accountable** for unlawful demolitions can deter misuse of power and restore faith in governance.
 - **Public Awareness:** Increasing public awareness about **legal rights and the importance of due process** can help foster a more informed citizenry that challenges unlawful state actions.

6. Rethinking Rapa Nui

Recent events of importance

- **Why in News:** Recent studies have challenged **long-held beliefs** about the **population dynamics and environmental impact of the early inhabitants of Rapa Nui (Easter Island)**. The findings suggest that the island's population was never as large as previously thought and that the alleged ecological collapse leading to the island's demise may be an oversimplification.
- **What are Rapa Nui?**
 - Rapa Nui, commonly known as **Easter Island**, is a **remote volcanic island** in the **southeastern Pacific Ocean**, famous for its hundreds of large stone statues called **Moai**.
 - It is one of the **most isolated inhabited places on Earth**, located about **1,900 kilometers from the nearest inhabited island** and nearly **3,800 kilometers from the Chilean mainland**.
 - The island was first settled around **1210 AD** by ancestors of **contemporary Polynesians**.
- **Previous Theory**
 - The previous theory posited that **Rapa Nui's population experienced rapid growth, leading to environmental degradation**. It was believed that the inhabitants deforested the island to construct the **Moai** and to use wood for fuel, leading to a **collapse of the ecosystem**.

SC freezes illegal 'bulldozer' action till hearing on Oct 1

Rapa Nui genomes restore the real history of an old, troubled people

Studying indigenous genomes offers invaluable insights into historical population dynamics, ecological adaptations, and the complex stories of human migration and survival. In many ways, the Rapa Nui genomes also show how genomic evidence can expose the derogatory myths that often surround indigenous peoples.

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The Moai statues on Rapa Nui, with all 12 Moai, returned in the 1980s. (AP Photo/Chris Wedel)

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- This theory painted the island as a **cautionary tale of "ecocide,"** where human actions irrevocably destroyed the environment, resulting in the population's decline.

• What Has Been Found Now?

- Recent research indicates that the population of Rapa Nui **may never have exceeded sustainable levels.** Instead of a **significant population collapse,** it appears that early inhabitants maintained a stable population by adapting to the island's challenging conditions. Key findings include:
 - **Rock Gardens:** Early settlers constructed **rock gardens to cultivate sweet potatoes,** which allowed them to secure a **food supply** despite the island's limited agricultural potential. This technique involved scattering stones over low-lying areas to create favorable microclimates for crop growth.
 - **Population Estimates:** The area covered by these rock gardens is much smaller than previously assumed—less than 188 hectares, or less than 0.5% of the island. This could only sustain a population of about 2,000, contradicting earlier estimates that suggested larger numbers.
 - **Diet and Adaptation: Isotope analysis of bones and teeth** indicates that early inhabitants derived a significant portion of their diet from the **sea (35-45%)** and supplemented it with less nutritious plants. This adaptability suggests resilience in managing limited resources.
 - **Stable Population at European Contact:** When Europeans first arrived in 1722, the population of Rapa Nui was around 3,000, aligning with the findings that the island's inhabitants successfully adapted to its environmental constraints.
 - These discoveries challenge the narrative of a catastrophic collapse, suggesting instead that the islanders demonstrated resilience and ingenuity in the face of ecological limitations.

Nature of J&K Assembly

J&K Reorganisation Act of 2019 created a vastly different structure, in which the LG, appointed by Centre, has the most important role. What powers will the new Assembly of the Union Territory of J&K have?

APURVA VIDYAWANATH
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 17

THE FIRST phase of polling for the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly will take place on Wednesday, September 18, when the first election will be held in the constituencies of Jammu and Kashmir. The new Legislative Assembly will be substantially different from earlier Assemblies.

The constitutional changes of August 2019 took away the statehood of Jammu and Kashmir — that, the new Assembly will be for a Union Territory (UT), not a state. What powers will the new Assembly of Jammu and Kashmir have?

J&K, Puducherry, Delhi

The Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019, which came into effect on October 31, 2019, without a legislature, and the UT of Jammu and Kashmir with a legislature.

An amendment was made to the First Schedule of the Constitution, which lists all states and UTs, and to Article 3 of the Constitution, which deals with the "Parliamentary form of government and administration of areas, boundaries or names of existing states".

Article 239, which deals with the administration of Union Territories, states that "Every administrative officer shall be appointed by the President, acting in such manner as he thinks fit, through an administrator."

Section 13 of the 2019 Act states that Article 238A of the Constitution, "Status of the Legislatures of Council of Ministers or other officers in the territorial jurisdiction of the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir," shall also apply to the UT of Jammu and Kashmir.

Delhi is the only other Union Territory with a legislature, as dealt with separately in the Constitution — under Article 238AA. As the national capital, Delhi has a unique constitutional status, which has been the subject of much litigation before the Supreme Court.

While the Supreme Court has, in judgments delivered in 2018 and 2023, upheld the powers of the legislature of Delhi, a constant, politically charged divide between the Lieutenant Governor and the state government has been a recent theme.

In Delhi, there are three subjects — land, public order, and police — are reserved for the LG. However, control over "services" or the

bureaucracy, has been a bone of contention between the state and the Centre. After the 2019 reorganisation, the LG cannot exercise independent discretion on subjects other than the three reserved subjects, the Centre instead legislates in 2023, bringing services under the control of the LG. This too, is one of the challenges before the court.

Delhi's anti-corruption bureau (ACB) too, has been an issue between the state and the Centre.

The Union Ministry of Home Affairs issued a notification in 2017, saying Delhi will have control of ACB only to the extent that it deals with Delhi's bureaucrats, and not government officers in the territorial jurisdiction of Delhi. Besides, the consent of the MHA is required to prosecute central government officers working in the Delhi government.

Powers of the Assembly

As per the 1st Instrument of Accession, J&K had acceded to India in respect of only defence, foreign affairs, and communications. Under Article 239, as it stood before the abrogation, Parliament had limited legislative powers with respect to J&K. Over the

years, however, the Centre's lawmaking power was extended to cover several other subjects under the Concurrent List (the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution).

The Reorganisation Act of 2019 introduced a vastly different structure in which the LG has a much bigger role compared with the state Assembly. This can be understood from two provisions.

First, Section 32 of the Act, which deals with the control of legislative power of the Assembly, states that "subject to the provisions of this Act, the Legislative Assembly may make laws for the whole or any part of the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir with respect to any of the matters enumerated in the State List except the subjects mentioned in entries 1 and 2, namely 'Public Order' and 'Police' respectively or the Concurrent List in the Seventh Schedule to the Constitution of India in so far as any such matter is applicable to relation to the Union Territories."

States, on the other hand, can legislate on subjects in the Concurrent List, to the extent that such laws are not repugnant or contrary to the central law on the issue.

Second, even for this, the 2019 Act has a key rider — Section 36, which deals with special provisions as to financial bills. This provision states that a Bill or amendment "shall not be introduced, introduced, or moved in, the Legislative Assembly except on the recommendation of the Council of Ministers, states: 'The Lieutenant Governor shall, in the exercise of his functions, act in accordance with the directions of the Government of the Union Territory.'

The provision has wide impact since it usually every policy decision could create a financial obligation for the Union Territory.

Powers of the J&K LG

The 2019 Act also specifies the powers of the J&K LG. Section 35, which deals with the role of the Council of Ministers, states: 'The Lieutenant Governor shall, in the exercise of his functions, act in accordance with the directions of the Government of the Union Territory.'

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7. What Powers will the new Jammu and Kashmir Assembly have? GS 2 (Governance)

• Introduction:

- The first phase of polling for the Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly is set to commence on from 18th Sep, 2024.
- This election is particularly significant as it marks the **first since the abrogation of Article 370 in 2019,** fundamentally altering the political and constitutional landscape of the region.
- The **new Assembly will represent a Union Territory (UT) rather than a state,** introducing substantial changes to the governance structure.

• Constitutional Changes Post-2019:

- In August 2019, Jammu and Kashmir's statehood was revoked, and it was bifurcated into two Union Territories—**Jammu and Kashmir with a legislature** and **Ladakh without a legislature.**
- This restructuring was made possible through the **Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019,** which amended the First Schedule of the Constitution to reflect the new status and provided a fresh framework for governance under **Article 239,** which governs Union Territories.

• Governance Structure of Jammu and Kashmir:

- The governance of the new UT of Jammu and Kashmir is unique, akin to the model followed by the Union Territories of **Delhi and Puducherry,** but with some distinctions.
- Under **Article 239A,** the region will have a Legislative Assembly, similar to Puducherry.
- However, the powers of this Assembly will differ substantially from the powers held by states.

• Powers of the Legislative Assembly:

- The **Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019** outlines the specific powers of the Legislative Assembly.
- **Section 32** of the Act states that the Assembly may make laws on matters in the **State List**, except for critical areas like public order and police.
- Additionally, the Assembly can legislate on subjects in the **Concurrent List**, as long as such laws do not conflict with central legislation.



- However, **Section 36** introduces an important condition for financial legislation.
- Any Bill related to financial obligations must be recommended by the **Lieutenant Governor (LG)** before being introduced in the Assembly.
- This gives the LG substantial control over policies that could impact the region's finances.

• **Comparison with Delhi's Governance Model:**

- The governance structure of Jammu and Kashmir can be compared to Delhi, another Union Territory with a legislature.
- However, Delhi's powers are limited, with key areas such as land, public order, and police under the direct control of the **LG**.
- Disputes between the Delhi government and the LG have often led to legal battles, particularly over control of **services** (the bureaucracy).
- In Jammu and Kashmir, the LG has similar control over public order, police, and anti-corruption matters.
- The **2019 Act** also allows the **LG to exercise discretion on issues outside the purview of the Legislative Assembly**, thus giving the LG considerable influence in governance.

• **Role of the Lieutenant Governor:**

- The **Lieutenant Governor** in Jammu and Kashmir holds significant authority, as defined under **Section 53** of the 2019 Act.
- The LG can act independently in matters beyond the legislative powers of the Assembly, including the **All India Services** and **Anti-Corruption Bureau**.
- Moreover, the **LG's decisions cannot be easily challenged in court**, making the office a powerful administrative entity.
- In the lead-up to the elections, several administrative changes have further extended the powers of the LG.
- These changes include the ability to appoint the **Advocate General**, law officers, and participate in decisions related to prosecution and sanctions.

• **Conclusion:**

- The upcoming Jammu and Kashmir Assembly elections mark a new chapter in the region's governance, with a drastically altered political and constitutional framework post-2019.
- The region now functions as a Union Territory with a limited legislative assembly, much like Delhi and Puducherry, but with additional checks in place through the enhanced powers of the LG.
- How these changes will impact governance and the balance of power between the Centre and the region remains to be seen, especially as the region moves towards a new political and administrative reality.

8. **Exploding pagers in Lebanon** **GS 2 (International events)**

• **Why in News:**

- In Lebanon, thousands were injured after pagers used by Hezbollah, a militant group, exploded almost simultaneously across the country. The blasts resulted in at least nine deaths and around 2,800 injuries, many of them severe.

- The cause of the attack remains unclear, but it appears to have been highly sophisticated. Hezbollah has blamed Israel for the incident, though Israeli officials have not yet commented on the matter.

- **Hezbollah**

- **About**

- Hezbollah, meaning "Party of God," is considered the world's most heavily armed non-state actor, according to the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS).
 - The group possesses a wide range of weaponry, including rockets and missiles.
 - The group opposes Israel and Western influence in the region, and it has supported Syria's President Bashar al-Assad during the Syrian civil war.
 - In the mid-2000s, Hezbollah became more involved in Lebanese politics and now holds seats in the country's parliament.
 - However, it has faced increasing protests due to worsening economic conditions in Lebanon.

- **Formation**

- It originated during the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990), a conflict partly fueled by the presence of Palestinian refugees after the creation of Israel in 1948, which led to Israeli invasions of southern Lebanon in 1978 and 1982.
 - Hezbollah was formed around this period, inspired by Iran's 1979 Islamic revolution, and has received funding and support from Iran and its Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC).

- **Pager**

- **About**

- A pager, or beeper, is a small, portable device used for receiving and sometimes sending short messages or alerts.
 - Pagers receive messages through radio frequencies from a base station or central dispatch.
 - Messages can be numeric or alphanumeric, which are then displayed to the user.
 - Two-way pagers allow users to send and receive messages, similar to early text messaging.

- **Operation**

- Pagers operate on dedicated radio frequencies and are designed to receive messages over these frequencies.
 - The range of a pager depends on the frequency band used and the coverage area of the paging network.

- **Popularity in Professional Use**

- Pagers were widely used in the late 1990s and early 2000s, especially in professions requiring reliable communication, such as healthcare and emergency services.
 - They do not rely on cellular networks, making them more dependable in areas with poor cellular coverage.

- **Types of Pagers**

- **Numeric Pagers:** Display only numbers, often used to send phone numbers or simple alerts.
 - **Alphanumeric Pagers:** Display both letters and numbers, allowing for more detailed messages.

- **Advantages of using a pager**

- Pagers are ideal for quick alerts and reliable communication, especially in remote areas where cellular signals might be weak.
 - They are straightforward devices, simple to use, and less prone to technical issues.
 - One-way pagers are generally untraceable because there is no signal transmission to the base station that sends the signal in the first place.

- **Reasons behind its decline**

- With the rise of mobile phones and their extensive features, the use of pagers has declined significantly over time.
 - Mobile phones offer more advanced communication options, including voice calls, text messages, and internet access.

- **Lebanon attacks**

- **About the news**

- A spree of simultaneous detonations of pagers across Lebanon killed nine people and injured around 3000.
- Hezbollah has been using such devices for years to make it harder for their messages to be intercepted.
- The Hezbollah said in a statement that pagers used by people working for the group's institutions began exploding mysteriously.
- **Who is responsible for the attack?**
 - The attack took place a day after Israeli leaders had said they were considering stepping up their military campaign against Hezbollah.
 - Hezbollah has blamed Israel for the incident. Israel has not commented on this incident so far.
- **Israel-Hezbollah conflict heating up**
 - On October 8, 2023, Hezbollah began exchanging fire with Israel, a day after Hamas launched attacks in southern Israel, igniting the Israel-Gaza conflict.
 - As a Hamas ally, Hezbollah claims its attacks are in support of Palestinians under Israeli bombardment in Gaza.
 - The conflict has drawn in Iran-backed militants across the region, with Hezbollah being the strongest member of the "Axis of Resistance."
 - While connected to Gaza, the conflict between Israel and Hezbollah has its own dynamics, with the two having fought multiple wars, the last major one being in 2006.
 - Israel views Hezbollah as a major threat, particularly due to its growing arsenal and influence in Syria.
- **Exploding pagers: an indication of Supply chain infiltration**
 - Initial speculation suggested that the pager explosions in Lebanon were caused by a hack that overheated the batteries, but this theory was quickly dismissed based on footage of the blasts.
 - Cybersecurity experts described the event as potentially one of the largest physical supply chain attacks in history.
 - Following warnings from Hezbollah to avoid mobile phones over fears of Israeli tampering, the group had switched to using pagers.
 - A new batch of pagers was recently delivered, and **experts suspect that Israel may have infiltrated the supply chain, possibly planting military-grade explosives inside the devices.**
 - Experts suggested the pagers could have been armed via an electronic signal, such as an alphanumeric message.
 - According to a Hezbollah official, the devices were programmed to beep for several seconds before exploding, although the exact method behind the explosions remains unclear.

MCQ Current Affairs

18th Sept, 2024**1. Consider the following statements:**

- A. It is located in Odisha.
- B. It lies in a rich delta made by the Brahmani, Baitarani and Dhamara rivers.
- C. It is home to the largest congregation of the endangered Salt Water Crocodile in the country.
- D. It is also designated as a Ramsar site.

The above statements correctly describe which one of the following protected areas?

- a) Chilka Lake Bird Sanctuary
- b) Kolleru Bird Sanctuary
- c) Simlipal National Park
- d) Bhitarkanika National Park

2. The "Rapa Nui", also known as Easter Island, is located in:

- a) Southern Indian Ocean
- b) North Atlantic Ocean
- c) Southeastern Pacific Ocean
- d) Mediterranean Sea

3. With reference to the Seaweeds, consider the following:

- A. These are species of marine plants and algae that grow in the ocean.
- B. They act as effective binding agents in commercial goods such as toothpaste and fruit jellies.
- C. These species protect the human body from damage caused by free radicals.

How many of the above given statements are correct?

- a) One only
- b) Two only
- c) All three
- d) None

4. Consider the following statements regarding Phosphoric acid:

- A. It is a non-combustible and colorless acid obtained from phosphate rock deposits.
- B. It is used in the manufacturing of superphosphate fertilizer and livestock feeds.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) A only
- b) B only
- c) A and B
- d) Neither of two

5. Consider the following statements regarding the Online Information and Database Access or Retrieval (OIDAR) services:

- A. It is provided through the medium of the internet without having any physical interface.
- B. The service providers need not pay Goods and Service Tax on their services in India.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) A only
- b) B only
- c) A and B
- d) Neither of two

MCQ Current Affairs

18th Sept, 2024

1. d
2. c
3. c
4. c
5. a

