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- **Loans vs. Grants:** A significant portion of the reported climate finance consists of loans, not grants, adding to the debt burden of developing countries.
- For instance, in **2022**, **69.4%** of international public climate finance was in the form of loans, with only **28%** provided as grants.
- Developing nations argue that climate finance should be predominantly **grants** or at least **concessional loans** (loans with low-interest rates), to avoid increasing their financial burdens.
- **India's Climate Finance Needs:**
 - India is a prime example of a country with ambitious climate goals but significant financial needs. India's climate targets include:
 - **500 GW of non-fossil fuel capacity by 2030.**
 - **5 million metric tonnes of green hydrogen (GH2)** production capacity annually.
 - **Electric Vehicle (EV) penetration** across various categories by 2030.
 - The cost to achieve these goals is enormous:
 - An estimated **₹16.8 lakh crore** will be required for renewable energy projects by 2030.
 - India's **Green Hydrogen Mission** alone requires an additional **₹8 lakh crore** in investments.
 - To meet its **electric vehicle (EV)** targets, consumers will need to spend **₹16 lakh crore** on EVs .
 - Looking further ahead, **India requires ₹850 lakh crore in investments between 2020 and 2070** to meet its **net-zero emissions**
- **New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG):**
 - As the current \$100 billion climate finance target expires in 2025, there is a push for a new, more ambitious goal, called the **New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG)**. The **NCQG** must include:
 - **Actual disbursements**, not just commitments.
 - **New and additional funding**, beyond existing aid.
 - **Public capital** in the form of direct grants.
 - **Mobilized private capital** that results from public funding initiatives.
 - A high-level expert group at **COP26** and **COP27** determined that developing countries (excluding China) will need around **\$1 trillion** in external climate finance annually by **2030**.
- **Challenges in Climate Finance:**
 - The road to securing adequate climate finance for developing countries is fraught with challenges:
 - **High capital costs:** Developing countries often face **twice the cost** of capital for green technologies, such as solar photovoltaics, compared to developed nations.
 - **Competing developmental needs:** Developing nations need to balance economic growth with climate action, often needing external financial support to do so.
- **Conclusion:**
 - As the world prepares for **COP29**, climate finance remains at the forefront of global negotiations.
 - Developing countries, including India, need substantial external financial assistance to meet their climate goals and adapt to the growing impacts of climate change.
 - The ongoing debate around the **\$100 billion commitment** and the push for a more ambitious **NCQG** highlights the urgency for **developed countries** to fulfil their responsibilities and ensure that **vulnerable nations** have the resources they need to fight climate change effectively.

2. Lady Justice Statue GS 2 (Judiciary)

- **Why in News:** The Supreme Court has recently unveiled a new statue of "Lady Justice", reimagining the image

- **More on News:**

- **Old version** - The lady justice statue typically a blindfolded woman holding a set of scales in one hand and a sword in the other is synonymous with legal practice around the world.
- The blindfold in the classic rendition has been to represent the impartiality of justice.

- **History** - The imagery of Lady Justice can be traced back to Greek and Roman mythology.

- Themis, one of the 12 Titans born to Gaea and Uranus according to works of the Greek poet Hesiod who lived circa 700 BCE, is known as the goddess of justice, wisdom, and good counsel.
- The first Roman emperor Augustus (27 BCE-14 CE) introduced the worship of Justice in the form of a goddess known as Justitia (or Iustitia). Justitia, like Themis, did not wear a blindfold.
- The blindfold was added during the Renaissance period (14th century) probably as a satire on the corrupt state of legal systems with judicial institutions turning a blind eye.
- **In India** - The British Raj also introduced the iconography of Lady Justice.
 - At the Calcutta High Court first constructed in 1872 images of Lady Justice were carved into the pillars supporting the building.

- **New one** - It is a 6-foot-tall statue of a saree-clad woman with no blindfold, holding scales a copy of the Constitution of India.
 - The new statue with unimpeded vision is meant to signify that Law is not blind, it sees everyone equally.
 - **Designed by** - Vinod Goswami.

What does the new 'lady justice' statue signify?

What is the symbolism behind the change? How many cases are pending before courts in India?

Reimagined, R.

The story so far: Last week, the Chief Justice of India unveiled the 'new lady justice' statue in the Supreme Court premises that replaced the 'original lady justice'. The new statue is depicted in a saree, has shed the blindfold and holds scales on one hand and the Indian Constitution on the other.

What is the background?

It is believed that the origin of the modern-day 'lady justice' is justice, the goddess of justice in Roman mythology. 'Lady justice' is depicted with a blindfold, scales, and a sword. The blindfold was added during the Renaissance period (14th century) probably as a satire on the corrupt state of legal systems with judicial institutions turning a blind eye. It was only during the enlightenment period (17th-18th century) that it was reinterpreted as representing impartiality. It signifies that justice should be

administered without bias regardless of wealth, power and social status. The scales represent balance. It emphasises that courts must weigh both sides of an argument before delivering a judgment. Finally, the sword symbolises the power and authority of the law, signifying that the law can both protect and punish.

Why the change?

When the British established their control over India, they introduced their legal system. The hierarchy of courts from lower courts to the Supreme Court is a relic of the British system. It was during British rule that the 'lady justice' became a prominent symbol in India and was placed outside courtrooms.

The new statue is an attempt at decolonisation, with an aim to shed colonial symbols. The statue replacing the western attire brings the statue closer to Indian traditions. The removal of the blindfold and having eyes open is significant in the Indian context. It conveys that the law is not blind and it 'sees' everyone equally.

More importantly our social diversity, the discrimination faced by underprivileged sections, constitutional provisions and laws made for their empowerment require a nuanced approach of 'seeing' every case appropriately and delivering justice. The sword being replaced with the Constitution symbolises the supremacy of the Constitution and its value to our jurisprudence. The preserving of the scales goes on to show that the courts will continue weighing evidence impartially and hearing both sides before delivering its final judgment.

What urgent actions are needed?

The Supreme Court last week dismissed a Public Interest Litigation which sought a time frame of three years for disposal of over five crore cases pending in all courts of the country. The Supreme Court held that while the demand was desirable, it is practically impossible considering the flood of litigation faced by the justice delivery system. However, justice delayed is justice denied and there are some

urgent actions needed in this regard with respect to the institution that delivers justice.

Firstly, the revised Memorandum of Procedure that deals with appointment of judges by the collegium has not been finalised for the past eight years. This needs to be finalised by the government and judiciary without any further delay to bring transparency and accountability to the process of appointment.

Secondly, the representation of backward classes, scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, and religious minorities is low than 25% in the higher judiciary and women constitute less than 15%. The appointments to higher judiciary should reflect the social diversity of our country.

Third, the High Courts invariably operate at only 60-70% strength thereby contributing to the huge pendency of over 60 lakh cases at present. The government needs to appoint collegium recommendations for High Courts without dragging its feet. The vacancies in lower courts, where 4-4 crore cases are pending, should also be filled by the states without backlog. Finally, cases dealing with the constitutional validity of amendments/laws and individual liberty should be heard on a priority basis by the higher judiciary. These measures would ensure that the new symbol is not just symbolic but reflects the actions taken for the delivery of fair and prompt justice.

THE GIST
The new statue is a departure from the traditional, with an aim to shed colonial symbols.
When the British established their control over India, they introduced their legal system. It was during the British rule that the 'lady justice' became a prominent symbol in India and was placed outside courtrooms.
The new statue is an attempt at decolonisation, with an aim to shed colonial symbols.



3. Vitiligo GS 2 (Health)

- **Why in News:** A new Kannada film, 'Bili Chukki, Halli Hakki' is attempting to take the veil of stigma off from Vitiligo, disease that is usually the subject of stereotypes and ignorance in India.
- **More on News:**
 - Vitiligo is a **chronic auto-immune skin disorder** that results in the loss of pigment in patches, causing white areas to appear on the skin.
 - This condition arises due to the **malfunction or destruction of melanocytes**, the cells responsible for producing melanin, the pigment that gives skin its colour.
 - **Symptoms** - Those affected develop depigmented patches that may occur anywhere on the body, including the skin, hair, and even the lining of the mouth.
 - **Causes** - The **cause of vitiligo is unknown**, but it may be related to immune system changes, genetic factors, stress, or sun exposure.
 - **Triggering factors** - Potential triggers could include oxidative stress, physical trauma, severe sunburn, or chemical exposure.

- **Frequency** - Vitiligo is a common disorder that affects between 0.5% and 2% of the population worldwide.
- It occurs with similar frequency in all ethnic groups, but may be more noticeable in dark-skinned people.
- **Risk factors** - People with a family history of certain autoimmune diseases have a higher risk of getting this disease.
- The pale areas of skin caused by vitiligo are more vulnerable to sunburn, so it's important to take extra care when in the sun and use a sunscreen with a high sun protection factor (SPF).
- **Treatment** - There is **no cure** for vitiligo, but treatments can help stop the progression and reverse its effects.
- Options include topical corticosteroids, calcineurin inhibitors, and phototherapy, which work to slow depigmentation and encourage the regeneration of melanocytes.
- In advanced cases surgical interventions like skin grafting or depigmentation therapy may be considered to even out skin tone.

As trade gap with UAE, ASEAN widens, India pauses talks with others

RAVIDUTTA MISHRA
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 20

AFTER A series of free trade agreements (FTAs) that have proved more beneficial to partner countries, India is adopting a more cautious negotiating strategy, temporarily pausing talks for trade pacts with smaller countries such as Oman and Peru.

The Commerce Ministry is working on developing a fresh Standard Operating Procedure

(SOP) aimed at addressing the "lack of consistent and streamlined" procedures for negotiating future trade agreements.

This comes after several trade agreements, including the pact with the UAE that came into effect in February 2022 and the one with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) signed way back in 2010, have resulted in significantly higher imports of goods compared to exports, and concerns over potential breaching of

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

4. India's Shift to a Cautious Approach in Trade Negotiations GS 3 (Economy)

- **Why in News:**
 - India is adopting a more cautious strategy in its trade negotiations, halting talks for free trade agreements (FTAs) with smaller countries like Oman and Peru. This shift is due to concerns that past FTAs have disproportionately benefitted partner countries.
 - The pause in negotiations comes not only due to the widening trade gap but also concerns over the outflow of investment from the country.
- **Widening Trade Deficit with FTA Countries**
 - **Background**
 - India's trade agreements with countries like the UAE and ASEAN have resulted in surging imports, widening the trade deficit
 - **Deficit with ASEAN**
 - ASEAN remains a crucial trading partner for India, accounting for 11 percent of its global trade, with bilateral trade reaching US\$ 122.67 billion during 2023-24.
 - India's trade with ASEAN experienced astounding growth after signing the ASEAN-India Trade in Goods Agreement (AITIGA).
 - However, the trade disproportionately benefits the ASEAN region.
 - Between FY 2009 and FY 2023, imports from ASEAN to India grew by 234.4 percent while exports from India rose only by 130.4 percent.
 - As a result, India's trade deficit expanded from US\$ 7.5 billion annually when the agreement was enacted in 2011 to approximately US\$ 44 billion in 2023.
 - **Deficit with UAE**
 - India's trade deficit with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) widened after the signing of the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) in May 2022
 - Within eight months of the CEPA coming into effect, India's trade gap with the UAE widened by more than \$5 billion.
 - India's exports to the UAE grew by 11% to \$20.25 billion, while imports climbed 24.4% to \$36.23 billion.

- **Strategies employed by India to address the issue**

- **Development of a New SOP**

- The Commerce Ministry is drafting a fresh Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) to streamline future trade negotiations.
 - The SOP will include modern chapters on labor, environment, and trade-offs, with a clear focus on human resource mobilisation and the hierarchy of negotiating teams.
 - The draft also includes input from the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and the Department of Economic Affairs (DEA), referencing consultancy private group.

- **Shift in Focus to Larger Markets and Geopolitically Important Countries**

- India is now focusing on trade deals with larger markets such as the European Union and the UK, and countries of geopolitical importance like the Maldives.
 - Negotiations with smaller countries are paused, as India feels it has not received commensurate returns in past agreements.
 - India opens a large market for the partner country, but there is a sense that it is not receiving commensurate returns

- **Reviewing Past FTAs and Tariff Asymmetry**

- India is reviewing the ASEAN trade agreement, which has led to significant trade deficits post-Covid.
 - The review is expected to be completed by next year, focusing on resolving tariff asymmetry, which has disadvantaged India in these deals.

- **Stringent norms for Rule of origin and imposition of anti-dumping duties**

- The rising influx of Chinese investments and goods into ASEAN has sparked concerns over the rerouting of Chinese products into India through the region.
 - The Economic Survey highlighted that Chinese firms are increasingly rerouting supply chains through countries like Mexico and Vietnam.
 - In response, India's Ministry of Commerce and Industry launched an anti-dumping investigation on various goods imported.
 - India is also taking a tough stand on the issue of rule of origin while negotiating with other countries.

- **Challenges faced by India in trade negotiation**

- **Current Negotiating Capabilities**

- One of the main challenges for India is the lack of subject matter expertise and institutional memory in trade negotiations.
 - In contrast, foreign negotiators tend to have more experience, putting India at a disadvantage.
 - Foreign negotiators are battle-hardened with years of expertise in negotiations, unlike in India where officials are rotated periodically.

- **Exit from RCEP and Concerns over Rising Imports from China**

- India exited the China-led Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) negotiations due to concerns over rising imports from China.
 - Meanwhile, trade between China and ASEAN grew after RCEP came into effect in 2022, increasing competition for India in the region.

- **Other challenges**

- Global economic slowdown, the rise of tariffs and non-tariff barriers, and new trade policies such as the EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism and Deforestation Rules as major challenges.

5. Digital Way Forward in Governance **GS 2 (Governance)**

• Why in News:

- The adoption of the Global Digital Compact (GDC) at the United Nations Summit marks a pivotal moment in the realm of digital governance.
- This initiative aligns with the multi-phase Universal Safeguards for Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) launched in 2023 by the Office of the UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Technology (OSET) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP).
- As digital governance evolves, the GDC sets the stage for global cooperation, with India taking a leading role in championing the cause of DPIs, especially for the Global South.

• An Analysis of India's Leadership in Promoting Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)

○ Pioneering Initiatives: Aadhaar and UPI

- At the heart of India's leadership in DPIs is the Aadhaar program, the world's largest digital identity system, which provides unique identification numbers to over 1.3 billion residents.
- Launched in 2009, Aadhaar was designed to ensure that every Indian has a secure and verifiable identity, which in turn facilitates access to various public services.
- Aadhaar has enabled more efficient delivery of social welfare schemes reducing leakages and ensuring that subsidies reach the intended beneficiaries directly.
- In addition to Aadhaar, India's Unified Payments Interface (UPI) has revolutionised the digital payments landscape.
- UPI, launched in 2016, is an interoperable real-time payment system that allows seamless transactions between banks and payment platforms
- As of August 2024, UPI has facilitated a staggering 14.96 billion digital transactions in a single month, making it one of the largest digital payment systems globally.
- By leveraging this digital identity, India has built an extensive ecosystem that connects people to services like banking, health, and education, driving financial and social inclusion across the country.

○ The Modular Open-Source Identity Platform (MOSIP)

- India's commitment to promoting DPIs on a global scale is further demonstrated by its development of the Modular Open-Source Identity Platform (MOSIP).
- MOSIP is a not-for-profit initiative designed to help countries build their own digital identity systems.
- It is a customisable, open-source platform that provides the technological infrastructure needed for digital identity programs.
- By offering MOSIP to other nations, India has empowered governments to create secure and interoperable digital identity systems, without the burden of high licensing costs or the need for proprietary software.

○ Driving Economic Inclusion through DPIs

- India's focus on digital public infrastructure is deeply tied to its goal of fostering economic inclusion.
- By providing digital identities, promoting cashless transactions, and creating digital ecosystems for financial services, India has made significant strides in bringing marginalised communities into the economic fold.



MANSI KEDIA AND SRUTHI VANGURI

THE DIGITAL WAY FORWARD

Impact assessment studies can ensure digital public goods are accessible, inclusive

THE ADOPTION OF the Global Digital Compact (GDC) at the UN Summit on September 22, 2024, officially marks the beginning of a period of global multi-stakeholder cooperation in digital governance. It is a commitment by the 193-member UN General Assembly to ensure that the design, use, and governance of technology benefits all. It follows the multi-phase Universal Safeguards for Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) initiative, launched in 2023 by the Office of the UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Technology (OSET) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). India, through its G20 presidency, mainstreamed the idea of DPIs as an instrument to accelerate the pace of economic development, especially in the Global South. With the world's largest digital identity programme, Aadhaar, and the highest volume of real-time digital payments (last recorded at ₹436 billion for the month of August), India has been at the forefront of global dialogues on DPIs. However, the DPI euphoria is now expanding longitudinally – the World Bank's ID4D (Identity for Development) is supporting nearly 80 countries. G20's (Digitising government-to-person payments) in 25 countries, and India's not-for-profit initiative Modular Open-Source Identity Platform (MOSIP) is working with 11 countries. Given its potential for scalability, the UN's safeguard framework brings only words of caution, highlighting the need to carefully manage and regulate the deployment of DPIs.

As DPI and DPI-type initiatives spread foundationally and sectorally in India, impact assessments can directly support policy makers, not only to track success, but also to guide design improvements, and ensure that DPIs remain accessible, inclusive, and effective. Without such an assessment, governments risk investing in infrastructure ecosystems

that may not fully serve their intended purpose, or worse, exacerbate existing inequalities. Initial evidence suggests that DPIs have catalysed financial inclusion in India. Bank accounts for adults increased from 25 per cent in 2008 to more than 80 per cent in the past six years, with women owning 56 per cent of these accounts. The value of digital transactions reached nearly 50 per cent of India's nominal GDP in 2022-23, and enabled access to credit through pre-sanctioned loans on UPI. However, beneath these macro-level achievements lie deeper questions about how DPIs affect citizens' livelihoods, income, physical well-being, and social agency. Deconstructing this causality, where one can draw a direct link between, say, UPI and income, is already quite difficult, and in the absence of granular intersectional data almost impossible. Besides, DPIs also have an impact on the private sector and government, both as users and providers of technology. One of the biggest hurdles in conducting impact assessments is the lack of data. Tempting as it can be to rely on familiar metrics, such as the number of people enrolled in Aadhaar, the total number of transactions processed through UPI or the number of Jan Dhan accounts, this data alone does not provide an adequate reflection of impact. Data on socio-economic background of users, frequency of usage, or behavioural changes prompted by these systems, are important – for instance, finding evidence for whether DPI-enabled lending increased or decreased systemic risk. Intersectional data is important to examine how demographic factors like gender, income and education interact to shape outcomes. Can we quantify UPI's effect on the financial independence of rural women? Much of what we need is anecdotal evidence, not systematic or data-driven. While privacy and security concerns related to data collec-

tion are paramount, there is much to gain from unexplored granular insights. Data that can be analysed to reveal who is benefiting, who is left behind, and why. This is not to exclude assessments on markets and governance. To overcome these challenges and make impact assessments routine for DPIs in India, we propose 3Ds – design, data, and dialogue. The first step is to integrate impact assessment mechanisms in the design of DPIs, much like privacy or security. Systems should be designed with the ability to collect data that enable impact assessments, forming a continuous feedback loop. The second is to make data available through trusted and well-governed mechanisms. Most government agencies err on the side of minimisation, which can compromise quality of assessments over data misuse. Building trust with citizens and the private sector through well-designed data collection systems can make high quality assessments possible. Technical designs will also be important for data discoverability and use. Finally, fostering a dialogue among stakeholders and building a community that involves third-party assessment agencies, policy makers, private sector and civil society can drive ownership. Establishing protocols for engagement will enable participative governance and improve overall accountability.

India's confidence in DPIs is not misplaced. However, by emphasising on impact assessments and institutionalising the process, corrective and timely action, where necessary, can be taken. This will help accomplish the promise of DPIs in not only transforming economies, but millions of lives. The journey has begun well, but it's only half done.

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- One of the **key successes** has been the **rapid expansion of bank account ownership under the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY)**, which uses Aadhaar to verify identities.
- As a result, bank account ownership among Indian adults increased from 25% in 2008 to over 80% in recent years.
- **Existing Challenges and the Need for Impact Assessments**
 - **Existing Challenges**
 - Despite the enthusiasm surrounding DPIs, **there are critical challenges that must be addressed.**
 - The **UN's safeguard framework stresses the importance of managing and regulating the deployment of DPIs to ensure that they remain inclusive, accessible, and effective.**
 - This is **especially crucial as DPI initiatives become more widespread, both in foundational areas such as digital identity and payments and in sectoral applications like healthcare and education.**
 - **Necessity of Impact Assessment**
 - The necessity of impact assessments for DPIs is **particularly significant in India, where these infrastructures have driven notable advancements.**
 - **For instance, the rate of bank account ownership among adults in India rose from 25% in 2008 to over 80% in recent years, with women owning 56% of these accounts.**
 - Furthermore, **digital transactions have become a major economic driver, contributing to nearly 50% of India's nominal GDP in the fiscal year 2022-23.**
 - These **achievements have also facilitated access to credit through pre-sanctioned loans on platforms like UPI.**
 - However, **beneath these impressive figures lie complex questions about the true impact of DPIs on people's lives, especially regarding their livelihoods, income, and social agency.**
- **Necessary Measures to Overcome the Challenges Associated with Impact Assessments**
 - **Integration of Impact Assessment During Design Phase**
 - Integrating impact assessment mechanisms during the design phase of DPIs can **ensure that data is collected systematically from the outset.**
 - Much like privacy and security considerations, **data collection capabilities must be built into DPI systems to create a continuous feedback loop.**
 - This **approach would allow for regular monitoring and adjustments, ensuring that DPIs remain effective and equitable.**
 - **Transparent and Secure Data Collection System**
 - **The second pillar, data, involves making relevant information accessible through trusted and well-governed mechanisms.**
 - **Government agencies often prioritise data minimisation to prevent misuse, but this caution can hinder effective assessments.**
 - **By building trust with citizens and the private sector through transparent and secure data collection systems, higher quality assessments can be achieved.**
 - Moreover, **technical advancements are necessary to enhance data discoverability and utility, enabling more precise evaluations of DPI impacts.**
 - **Dialogue Among Stakeholders**
 - **Creating an atmosphere of dialogue among stakeholders is essential for building a community** that includes policymakers, third-party assessment agencies, the private sector, and civil society.
 - **Engaging these actors in regular conversations can facilitate participative governance, fostering accountability and encouraging shared responsibility for the success of DPIs.**
 - **Establishing clear protocols for such engagement will ensure that all voices are heard, driving continuous improvement in the design and implementation of digital infrastructures.**
- **India's Influence on Global Digital Policies, Future Role and the Path Forward**
 - **India's Influence on Global Digital Policies**
 - **India's success with Aadhaar and UPI has positioned it as a thought leader in global discussions on DPIs.**

- During its G20 presidency, India has championed the idea that DPIs can be a powerful tool for accelerating development in low- and middle-income countries.
- By sharing its experience and best practices, India has sought to encourage other nations to adopt similar approaches to building digital infrastructures that are inclusive, scalable, and secure.

○ Influence Beyond Policy Advocacy

- The World Bank's ID4D (Identity for Development) initiative, which supports nearly 60 countries in building foundational identification systems, draws on lessons from India's Aadhaar model.
- Similarly, the G2Px program, which focuses on digitising government-to-person payments, benefits from India's experience with direct benefit transfer schemes that leverage digital identity.
- These initiatives reflect a growing recognition of the need to create inclusive digital ecosystems, where foundational infrastructure like digital identity and payment systems serve as the bedrock for broader digital transformation.

○ India's Future Role and the Path Forward

- India's confidence in the transformative potential of DPIs is well-founded, but it must also be matched with a commitment to thorough and regular impact assessments.
- By institutionalising such assessments, India can take timely corrective actions when needed, ensuring that the promise of DPIs is fully realized.
- This approach will not only help in transforming economies but also in improving the lives of millions of people across the country and beyond.

● Conclusion

- The adoption of the Global Digital Compact represents a significant step towards global cooperation in digital governance.
- As DPIs gain prominence, India's leadership and experience provide a valuable blueprint for other nations.
- Yet, the path forward requires careful attention to the challenges of impact assessments, data collection, and inclusive governance.

6. The Huge Cost of Moving Away From Coal

GS 3 (Economy)

- Why in News:** A recent study by iForest (International Forum for Environment, Sustainability and Technology) reveals that India will need over \$1 trillion (Rs 84 lakh crore) over the next 30 years for a just transition away from coal. The study, the first of its kind, estimates the costs of phasing down coal mines and plants while ensuring socio-economic stability in coal-dependent regions.
- Coal Resource in India**
 - Statistics**
 - According to the National Coal Inventory of 2023, the total estimated coal reserve (resource) of India is **378.21 billion tonnes as of 01.04.2023**.

\$1 tn over 30 years: the huge cost of pivoting away from coal

NIKHIL GHANDEKAR
NEW DELHI, OCT 7, 2023

For a just transition away from coal, India will require over \$1 trillion or Rs 84 lakh crore over the next 30 years, according to a study by iForest (International Forum for Environment, Sustainability and Technology). The first of its kind study published last week, attempted to estimate the cost of phasing down coal mines and coal plants, along with the costs of ensuring socio-economic stability in coal-dependent regions.

Coal will be central to India's energy mix for at least another decade, and moving away from it poses a massive challenge.

What are the costs associated with a just transition?



Women carrying freshly mined coal at an open-cast mine in Jharkhand. (i)

Based on assessments of four heavily coal-dependent districts in India and review of just transition economic plans in South Africa, Germany and Poland, the study estimated the cost of coal components. These include the cost of mine closures and repurposing, retirement of coal plants and repurposing of the sites for clean energy, labour training for green jobs, economic diversification in the form of new businesses, community support, investments for green energy, revenue substitution for covering lost

to green energy plants and infrastructure will be required to meet the costs. Most of the study estimates will be required to meet the costs over the next 30 years.

Where will the funds for a just transition come from?

A combination of public funding, through grants and subsidies, and private investments in green energy plants and infrastructure will be required to meet the costs. Most of the study estimates will be required to meet the costs over the next 30 years.

CR (banks) for supporting new businesses in coal districts, and to support communities. Private investment, the study highlighted, will cover much of the energy costs of transition, and fund most new clean energy projects.

How have other countries approached a just transition?

Both developed and developing countries have adopted legislation or opened for investment plans with international funding to phase down coal use.

South Africa's just energy transition plan (JETP), for instance, will see it getting financial support for phasing down coal from the UK, France, Germany, the US, the European Union, the Netherlands, and Denmark. A total of \$80 billion will be required over the next two decades to support South Africa's 20-year energy transition, with \$15 billion to be required in the 2023-2027 period. A bulk of this will be for green energy investments. The finance will be provided in the form of concessional loans, grants, and public-private partnerships.

India has already \$4 billion in concessional loans, grants, and public-private partnerships. The fund can be used as a resource, along with corporate social responsibility

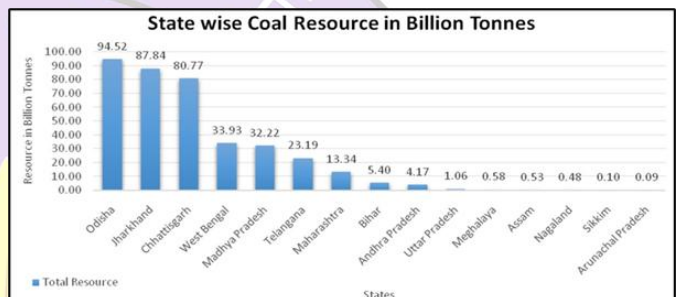
to green energy plants and infrastructure will be required to meet the costs. Most of the study estimates will be required to meet the costs over the next 30 years.

What did the study find for coal-dependent districts in India?

The districts identified were Buxar in Chhattisgarh, Bokaro and Ranigarh in Jharkhand, and Angul in Odisha. These were studied to assess their economic dependence on coal and coal-based industries, and to estimate the costs of a just transition.

For instance, it was found that the coal-based economy of Bokaro, with its multiplexes of plants and one integrated steel plant, contributes about 54% of the district's domestic product. Around 130,000 workers were employed in coal mining, coal plants, and allied sectors, such as steel and cement.

A full phase down of coal in the district, the study estimated, will begin after 2040. It will require an outlay of Rs 120 lakh crore over the next three decades to rehabilitate workers, repurpose mines, and start green energy production at locations where coal plants stand today.



- **Coal Production**
 - The all India Production of coal during **2023-24** was **997. 83 MT** with a positive growth of **11.71%**
- **Coal Import**
 - As per the present Import policy, coal can be freely imported (under Open General Licence) by the consumers themselves considering their needs based on their commercial consideration.
 - Coking Coal is being imported by Steel sector mainly to bridge the gap between the requirement and indigenous availability and to improve the quality.
 - Other sectors like Power sector, cement etc. and coal traders are importing non-coking coal.
 - Total coal import during 2023-24 was 261 million tonnes.
- **Ensuring a Just Energy Transition in India**
 - **About Just Energy Transition and challenges associated**
 - A "just" energy transition refers to an equitable and inclusive shift towards a low-carbon economy that takes into account the needs of workers and communities dependent on fossil fuels.
 - As the world's second-largest coal producer, India employs a vast number of individuals in coal mining, thermal power plants, logistics, and related sectors.
 - Public sector coal companies alone employ over 3.6 lakh workers, with many more in the private sector
 - As India aims for net-zero emissions by 2070, growing its renewable energy capacity will be crucial.
 - However, ensuring that coal-dependent workers and regions are not left behind in this transition poses a major financial challenge.
 - **Balancing economic stability with climate goals will require significant investment.**
 - **Costs associated with a just transition**
 - A study on India's just transition from coal, based on assessments of coal-dependent districts and international examples from South Africa, Germany, and Poland, identified eight key cost components.
 - These include:
 - mine closures and site repurposing,
 - retiring coal plants and converting them to clean energy,
 - skilling workers for green jobs,
 - fostering new businesses,
 - community support,
 - green energy investments,
 - compensating states for revenue loss, and
 - planning costs.
 - **Nearly 48% of the estimated \$1 trillion required over the next 30 years will be needed for green investments** to replace coal-based energy infrastructure with cleaner alternatives.
 - **Source of funds for this transition**
 - Funding India's just transition away from coal will require a mix of public and private investments.
 - Public funding, through grants and subsidies, will primarily address "non-energy" costs such as community support, skilling coal workers for green jobs, and aiding new businesses.
 - India's \$4 billion District Mineral Foundation funds, collected from miners, along with Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funds, can be used to support new businesses and coal-dependent communities.
 - Private investments, on the other hand, are expected to cover most of the "energy costs," focusing on developing clean energy projects and green infrastructure.

International Support for Coal Phase-Down – Case Studies

South Africa's Just Energy Transition

- South Africa's Just Energy Transition Investment Plan (JET-IP) will receive international financial support from countries such as the UK, France, Germany, the US, the EU, the Netherlands, and Denmark.
- The plan requires \$98 billion over two decades, with \$8.5 billion to be provided between 2023-2027.
- Most of the funds will go towards green energy investments, with financing through concessional loans, grants, and public-private partnerships.

Germany's Legislative Action on Coal Phase-Out

- Germany has enacted legislation to phase out coal power by 2038, with over \$55 billion allocated to close coal mines and power plants.
- The funds will also be used to support coal-dependent regions by fostering economic development.

Findings from the Study of Coal-Dependent Districts in India

- The study focused on four coal-dependent districts: Korba (Chhattisgarh), Bokaro and Ramgarh (Jharkhand), and Angul (Odisha), to assess their reliance on coal and estimate the costs of a just transition.
- In Bokaro, coal-based industries contribute 54% of the district's domestic product, employing around 1,39,000 workers in coal mining, power plants, and related sectors like steel and cement.
- The study estimates that a full coal phase-down in Bokaro will begin after 2040 and will require Rs 1.01 lakh crore over 30 years to rehabilitate workers, repurpose coal sites, and develop green energy infrastructure.

7. Rising Dependence on Agriculture for Livelihoods in India

GS 3 (Agriculture)

Why in News:

- The landscape of rural India is undergoing a significant transformation, as indicated by the recent All India Rural Financial Inclusion Survey for 2021-22.
- This survey (commissioned by NABARD) reveals a noteworthy increase in the proportion of rural households reliant on agriculture for their livelihoods, signifying a break from a decades-long pattern of dwindling rural agricultural links.

Growing Agricultural Households in India:

Statistical insights:

- According to survey, **57% of rural households were classified as "agricultural"** in 2021-22, a considerable rise from 48% in 2016-17.
- The survey defines an **agricultural household** as one that produces crops or livestock worth more than Rs 6,500 (Rs 5,000 in the earlier survey) and has at least one member engaged in self-employment in agricultural activities.

Income comparison:

- The average monthly income for agricultural households stood at **Rs 13,661 in 2021-22**, surpassing the Rs 11,438 for non-agricultural rural households.
- Notably, agricultural households have seen their income from farming rise to over 45% of their total income, an increase from 43.1% in 2016-17.
- This trend spans across various land sizes, illustrating a broad-based rise in agricultural income.**

Comeback of krishi in Bharat

The farm sector's share in employment is rising despite India registering high GDP growth rates in recent years, reversing a decades-old trend of rural India becoming increasingly less tethered to agriculture



HARISH DAMODHARAN

DEPENDENCE on farming for livelihoods and income rising in India, reversing a decades-old trend of the rural countryside becoming increasingly less tethered to agriculture.

The All India Rural Financial Inclusion Survey for 2021-22, released earlier this month, found that 57% of rural households in the country – including households in semi-urban centres with a population of less than 50,000 – were "agricultural". This was significantly higher than the 48% reported in the previous survey of 2016-17.

The survey, commissioned by the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), defined an "agricultural household" as one that (i) reported a total value of produce from farming exceeding Rs 6,500 (the cultivation of field and horticulture crops, livestock and poultry rearing, or aquaculture, aquaculture and aquaculture) and (ii) had at least one member who was self-employed in such activities during the reference year (July 2021 to June 2022). In the 2016-17 survey, the threshold self-reported value of produce was Rs 5,000.

More krishi in Bharat

The share of rural households identified as agricultural, based on the above definition, has gone up for nearly all states between 2016-17 and 2021-22 (see Table 1).

Also, the all India average monthly income of agricultural households, at Rs 13,661 in 2021-22, was more than the Rs 11,438 for non-agricultural rural households. In the 2016-17 survey, agricultural households earned a higher average monthly income (Rs 8,517) compared with their non-agricultural counterparts (Rs 7,209).

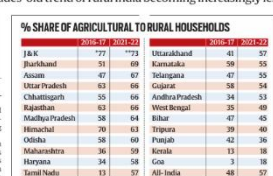
While agricultural households, the contribution of cultivation and animal husbandry to total income rose from 43% in 2016-17 to 45% in 2021-22. This increased share of income from farming activities was seen for those with less than one hectare of land (from 38.2% to 42.2%) and those with 0.4-1 hectare (from 52.5% to 63.8%) for those with 1.0-2 hectares, and from 58.2% to 74.4% for those with more than 2 hectares.

Simply put, the proportion of households in rural India reliant on agriculture as a livelihood source has registered a sharp increase between 2016-17 and 2021-22. Even for agricultural households, the income from farming has gone up as a share of their total income. There is correspondingly smaller share of income from non-farming activities (such as government/private jobs, self-employment, wage work, rent, deposits and investments), which applies to all land size categories.

The trend, moreover, has not been reversed, nor has it, in fact, agricultural households in rural India or Bharat. Not only is there a higher share of agricultural households, they are also earning more income from farming, which applies to all land size categories.

Impact of Covid-19

The reference year 2021-22 for the latest survey was one that followed the Covid-19 lockdown. The impact of the restrictions on economic activity, imposed in the



Source: NABARD All India Rural Financial Inclusion Survey, Data (in %)

* Includes only income from agriculture

AGRICULTURE SECTOR'S SHARE OF WORKFORCE (%)



Source: NSS Employment in Unemployment Survey (2011-12) and Periodic Labour Force Survey (2017-18)

value of the pandemic's first and second waves may well have been reflected in the survey's findings. While the survey was fielded from July 2021, the economic shock took hold in the first half of the survey period.

As per the PLFS data for 2021-22, the states with the highest share of their workforce employed in agriculture included Chhattisgarh (53.8%), Madhya Pradesh (53.8%), Uttar Pradesh (53.8%), Bihar (54.2%), Jharkhand (54.2%), Odisha (54.2%), and West Bengal (54.2%).

According to the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) Labour Force Survey (PLFS), agriculture employed 64.6% of the country's workforce in 1999-00. That share fell to 42.5% in 2004-05, 45.6% in 2011-12, and a low of 42.5% in 2018-19. Thereafter, a reversal of

trend has taken place, with the farm sector's share of the employed labour force rising to 45.6% and 46.1% in the first pandemic, off-trend years of 2019-20 and 2020-21 respectively. The PLFS reference year is July-June. Covid first struck in March 2020.

The paradox

The significant point to note is that agriculture's share has remained elevated even after 2021-22. Despite the economic shock, the share of agriculture in the economy has not fallen out of the pandemic, and according to an average annual GDP growth of 8.3% in the three years ended 2021-22. The latest annual GDP growth of 8.3% in 2021-22 is well above the pre-pandemic low of 42.5% in 2018-19 (see Chart).

The above trend is not in isolation. It is a reflection of the fact that agriculture has been a resilient sector, with its share of the Indian rural workforce in 2019-20, which dropped to 42.5% in 2019-20, rising to 45.6% in 2020-21. That dropped to 42.5% in 2021-22 and 46.1% in 2022-23, but only to rise again to 46.1% in 2023-24.

The increased dependence on agriculture for employment and livelihoods – measured both by the NABARD and PLFS data – is an economy that has expanded over 14.4% in constant prices between 2019-20 and 2023-24, a paradox that seems to defy explanation. It may partly have to do with the lack of jobs in manufacturing, which employed only 14.6% of India's workforce in 2023-24, down from 12.6% in 2011-12 and 12.3% in 2018-19.

Manufacturing's share of employment in 2023-24 was even below that of trade, hotels & restaurants (12.2%), and construction (12%).

The movement of surplus labour in agriculture is occurring, at least in part, from farms to factories. Instead, it is to sectors that need not have quite similar employment characteristics as agriculture – having less marginal productivity (output per worker), paying just above subsistence wages, and barely informal.

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- **How the COVID-19 Impacted this Trend of Rising Agricultural Households and Income?**
 - **Lockdown effects:**
 - The survey period coincided with the aftermath of COVID-19 lockdowns, which significantly impacted economic activities across sectors.
 - **Agriculture was exempt from many restrictions**, potentially leading to an overestimation of its share in rural livelihoods.
 - **The favourable monsoon seasons from 2019** further supported agricultural productivity, suggesting a complex interplay between external factors and survey results.
 - **Labour force dynamics:**
 - According to the National Sample Survey Office's (NSSO) Periodic Labour Force Surveys (PLFS), agriculture engaged 64.6% of the country's workforce in 1993-94.
 - That share fell to 58.5% in 2004-05, 48.9% in 2011-12, and a low of 42.5% in 2018-19.
 - However, post-2019, **the farm sector's share of the employed labour force rebounded**, with figures rising to 45.6% and 46.5% in the pandemic years.
- **Rising Agricultural Dependency Amid Economic Growth:**
 - **The paradox:**
 - Despite the Indian economy experiencing robust growth, with an annual GDP increase of 8.3% in recent years, agricultural dependency has persisted.
 - The proportion of the rural workforce engaged in agriculture rose from 57.8% in 2018-19 to 59.8% in 2023-24.
 - This trend presents a paradox: **why is a growing economy relying more on agriculture?**
 - **Employment issues:**
 - This paradox can be partly explained by the **stagnation in manufacturing employment**, which accounted for only 11.4% of the workforce in 2023-24, down from previous years.
 - **The movement of surplus labour** does not appear to be transitioning from agriculture to manufacturing; instead, **it is shifting to informal sectors** with similar low productivity and wage characteristics.
 - **Regional disparities in agricultural employment:**
 - According to the PLFS data for 2023-24, States like Chhattisgarh (63.8%), MP (61.6%), and UP (55.9%) have high agricultural workforce shares, while states like Goa (8.1%) and Kerala (27%) exhibit much lower dependence on agriculture.
 - **These variations highlight regional economic conditions and the effectiveness of rural development initiatives.**
- **Way Ahead to Address the Rising Dependence on Agriculture for Livelihoods in India:**
 - The rising dependence on agriculture for livelihoods in India **necessitates a thorough examination of underlying causes.**
 - As the economy grows, the challenge remains to **create sustainable employment opportunities outside of agriculture.**
 - Policymakers need to focus on **strengthening the agricultural sector while simultaneously promoting diversification into higher productivity sectors.**
 - Understanding this paradox is crucial for **crafting effective strategies** that ensure balanced economic growth and improved livelihoods in rural India.

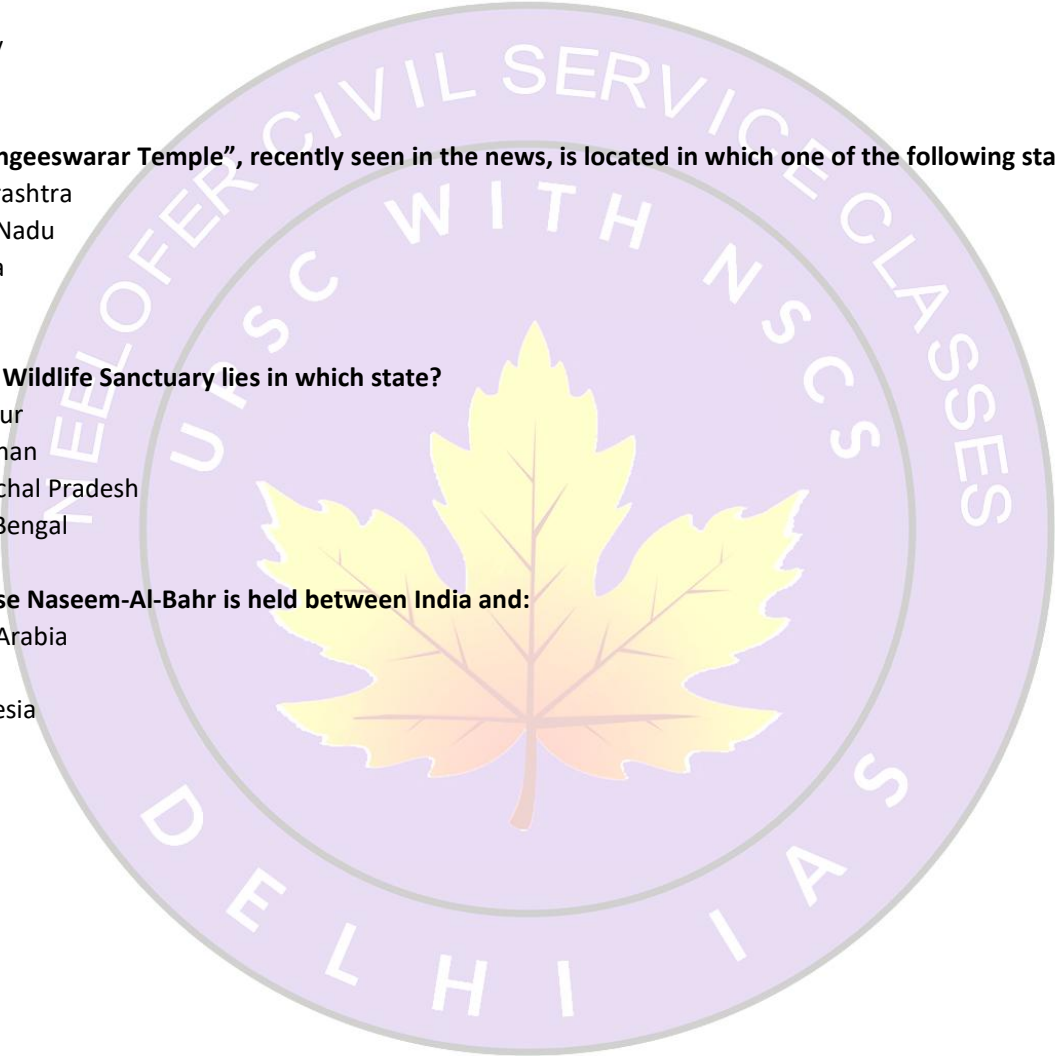
MCQ Current Affairs
21st Oct, 2024

1. Which one of the following is the best description of 'Coelogyne tripurensis', that was in the news recently?
 - a) A critically endangered bird species.
 - b) A rare species of butterfly
 - c) A newly discovered species of orchid.
 - d) A newly discovered species of fungus

 2. "Izdeliye 305" is a helicopter-launched air-to-surface missile developed by which country?
 - a) France
 - b) Israel
 - c) Turkey
 - d) Russia

 3. "Sri Singeeswarar Temple", recently seen in the news, is located in which one of the following states?
 - a) Maharashtra
 - b) Tamil Nadu
 - c) Odisha
 - d) Kerala

 4. Zeilad Wildlife Sanctuary lies in which state?
 - a) Manipur
 - b) Rajasthan
 - c) Arunachal Pradesh
 - d) West Bengal

 5. Exercise Naseem-Al-Bahr is held between India and:
 - a) Saudi Arabia
 - b) Japan
 - c) Indonesia
 - d) Oman
- 

Answers Current Affairs
21st Oct, 2024

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

