

INTERNATIONAL RELATION

❖ **Multilateral reforms as a priority in the G-20**

➤ **CONTEXT:** While assuming the G-20 presidency in December 2022, India stated that its agenda would be inclusive, ambitious, action-oriented, and decisive. India also said that its primary objectives are to build global consensus over critical development and security issues and deliver global goods. This resulted in placing multilateral reform as one of the top presidential priorities for India.

• Accordingly, the G-20 idea bank, Think 20, also placed multilateral reforms as one of its priorities. The T20 Task Force on 'Towards Reformed Multilateralism' (TF7) aims to construct a roadmap for 'Multilateralism 2.0'.

➤ **Why is multilateralism important?**

• Multilateral cooperation today, is confronting multiple crises. First, due to persistent deadlocks, multilateralism has lost the majority's trust. Second, multilateralism is facing a utility crisis, where powerful member-states think it is no longer useful for them.

• Moreover, increasing great-power tensions, de-globalisation, populist nationalism, the pandemic, and climate emergencies added to the hardships. This impasse led states to seek other arenas, including bilateral, plurilateral and minilateral groupings, which subsequently contributed to further polarisation of global politics.

• However, cooperation and multilateral reform is the need of the hour. Most of the challenges nations face today are global in nature and require global solutions. Pressing global issues such as conflicts, climate change, migration, macroeconomic instability, and cybersecurity can indeed only be solved collectively.

• Furthermore, disruptions such as the COVID-19 pandemic have reversed the social and economic progress that the global society made in the past couple of decades.

➤ **Why is reform difficult?**

• Reforming multilateralism is a difficult task for various reasons.

✓ First, multilateralism is deeply entrenched in global power politics. As a result, any action in reforming multilateral institutions and frameworks automatically transforms into a move that seeks changes in the current distribution of power. Modifications in the distribution of power in the global order are neither easy nor normal. Moreover, it may have adverse implications if not done cautiously.

✓ Second, the status quo powers see multilateral reforms as a zero-sum game. For instance, in the context of the Bretton Woods system, the U.S. and Europe believed reform would reduce their influence and dominance. This makes decisions about reform in these institutions, by consensus or voting, hard.

✓ Third, multilateralism appears at odds with the realities of the emerging multiplex global order. The emerging order seems more multipolar and multi-centred. Such a situation facilitates the formation of new clubs, concerts and coalitions of the like-minded, which makes the reform of older institutions and frameworks more challenging.

➤ **What can G-20 and India do?**

• To fix the malaise within multilateralism, G-20 needs to devise multiple solutions. Currently, the multilateralism reform narrative lives only in elite circles and some national capitals, particularly the emerging powers. Therefore, G-20 should first focus on setting proper narratives of multilateral reform.

• G-20 may constitute an engagement group dedicated to bring the narrative to the forefront of global discourse.

India should also urge the upcoming chairs of the grouping, Brazil and South Africa, to place multilateral reforms as their presidential priorities. Since both have global high-table ambitions, it would be an easier task for India.

• Many of today's problems need global solutions and global cooperation. However, it should also acknowledge the limitations of multilateral cooperation.

• Competing interests and the dominance of powerful states are there to stay in multilateral platforms. Therefore, while supporting multilateral cooperation, G-20 should continue encouraging minilateral groupings as a new form of multilateralism and try to transform them into multi-stakeholder partnerships.

• Creating networks of issue-based minilaterals, particularly in areas related to the governance of the global commons will be helpful in preventing competitive coalitions where other actors play the same game to their advantage, leading to a more fragmented world order.

• Multilateral reforms also require mobilising the political will, subsequently giving concessions and conciliations. However, most reform bids have yet to take this issue seriously.

• To overcome the trust, legitimacy and utility crises of multilateralism, the world requires a model, and the G-20 can be one. However, to fit the purpose, the group needs to be more inclusive without sacrificing efficiency. For example, including the African Union as a permanent member and the UN Secretary-

General and General Assembly President as permanent invitees would be helpful to enhance its legitimacy.

- Similarly, to address the crisis of trust and utility, G-20 should put all its efforts into solving one or two pressing global issues and showcase it as the model of new multilateralism. Food, fuel and fertilizer security can be one such issue. On the one hand, it falls under the 'low politics' of world politics, so cooperation is more achievable. On the other, it is a global cause of concern, since it can trigger stagflation and recession across the globe. More significantly, this issue spreads across the overall priorities of India within and beyond the G-20.

CLIMATE CHANGE

❖ **The problems with Compensatory Afforestation in India**

- **CONTEXT:** As part of its international climate change commitments, India has promised to increase its forest and tree cover to ensure that they are able to absorb an additional amount of 2.5 billion to 3 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent by 2030. Unlike the two other commitments India has made (one related to improvement in emissions intensity and the other about the deployment of renewable energy) the forestry target is a relatively difficult one to achieve.

- Forests are under stress due to the need for rapid industrial and infrastructure development, and accompanying urbanisation. In the last 10 years, more than 1,611 square km of forest land, a little more than the area of Delhi, has been cleared for infrastructure or industrial projects. Nearly a third of this (529 sq km) has been cleared in the last three years itself. But government data also shows that total forest cover had increased by 1,540 square km in the two years between 2019 and 2021.

- A number of tree plantation, afforestation and reforestation programmes are being implemented to increase India's forest and tree cover. These include:

- ✓ The Green India Mission,
- ✓ National afforestation programme
- ✓ The tree plantation exercises along the highways and railways.
- ✓ Other flagship government programmes like the national rural employment guarantee scheme (MGNREGS) and Namami Gange also have significant afforestation components.

➤ **What is Compensatory Afforestation?**

- But the showpiece effort for extending India's forest cover has been its compensatory afforestation programme that seeks to ensure that forest lands getting 'diverted' for non-forest purposes, like industrial or infrastructure development, is mandatorily accompanied by afforestation effort on at least an equal area of land.

- While the plantation exercise on new lands cannot be compared with the fully grown forests getting diverted, compensatory afforestation (made a legal requirement through the Compensatory Afforestation Fund Act of 2016) does ensure that newer parcels of land are earmarked for developing them as forests. Project developers, public or private, are required to fund the entire afforestation activity on these new lands.

- The law also acknowledges the fact that newly afforested land cannot be expected to immediately start delivering the range of goods and services (timber, bamboo, fuelwood, carbon sequestration, soil conservation, water recharge, and seed dispersal) that the diverted forests were providing. As a result, project developers are also asked to pay for the Net Present Value (NPV) of the forests being cleared, based on a calculation decided by an expert committee. According to the recently revised calculations, companies have to pay NPV at rates ranging between Rs 9.5 lakh and Rs 16 lakh per hectare, depending on the quality of forests getting diverted.

➤ **Some other fees and charges are also levied**

- All this money is meant to be spent solely on increasing, or improving the quality of, forest cover in the country, or on works that help this objective. The money is parked in special funds created for this purpose at the Central and state levels. The money is first deposited in the Central fund, from where it gets disbursed to states where the projects are located. The Central fund can keep up to 10 per cent of the total money for spending towards administrative expenses. The rest has to be sent to the states according to their share.

- ✓ Critics say compensatory afforestation had legitimised clearing of forests, and see it as an example of 'greenwashing'.

- ✓ The contrary view is that since the clearing of forests for one or the other purpose cannot be entirely eliminated, compensatory afforestation is a good mechanism for attempting to make up for these losses to some extent.

➤ **Huge money for Compensatory Afforestation**

- The compensatory afforestation law came into being only in 2016, but the concept has existed since the 1980s, as an offshoot of the Forest Conservation Act of 1980, which made it mandatory for project

developers to seek 'clearance' of the Environment Ministry for any diversion of forest land. The practice got institutionalised through the Supreme Court orders and observations during the hearings of the famous Godavarman case in the 1990s and 2000s.

- But due to other litigation, the money collected for compensatory afforestation before 2016 had remained largely unutilised. Serious work on compensatory afforestation has begun only after the 2016 Act.
 - More than Rs 66,000 crore has been realised in the Central fund through different levies prescribed in that law. A substantial part of this (nearly Rs 55,000 crore) has already been sent to the state governments. But as the accompanying investigative report shows, much of this money remains locked in state government funds.
 - State governments have to prepare an annual plan of operations for afforestation work through this money. The APOs contain details of money that is intended to be spent during a financial year for specific works related to afforestation.
 - Once this plan gets approval from the Compensatory Afforestation Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA) at the Central level, the state government transfers the approved amounts to the state forest departments, which then carry out the work.
 - Government records show that APOs by the state governments have not made full utilisation of the funds at their disposal, and even the money approved for this APOs has not been entirely spent.
 - Sporadically, there have also been allegations of misutilisation or diversion of these funds, and in some cases investigations have been ordered.
- **Other problems with the practice**
- Besides the low utilisation of funds, lack of availability of suitable land remains the biggest problem for compensatory afforestation.
 - The land that is made available for afforestation usually cannot be used for any other purpose, and is often extremely unsuitable for growing plantations. While there are examples of some good plantations having come up, the poor quality of land poses a difficult challenge in most instances.
 - Also, while the law mandates at least an equal area of land to be provided for compensatory afforestation, rarely is a contiguous stretch of land available for this purpose. The total area of land is often distributed over twenty or more different locations. Even if very good plantations were grown, these can never be compared to the kind of forests that often get diverted.
 - Then there are other problems as well. Activists working on the ground complain that often the plantations are monocultures, meaning they contain only one species of plants. A key element of any forest is biodiversity. Forest officials on the other hand point to biotic pressures, referring to the challenge the plantations face from nearby human habitations and cattle.

PRELIMS

1. Olive Ridley turtles

➤ **CONTEXT:** Nearly 6.37 lakh Olive Ridley turtles have arrived for mass nesting on the Rushikulya coast this year, setting a new record for the beach in Ganjam district of Odisha.

- Scientific name: Lepidochelys olivacea; also known as the Pacific ridley sea turtle.
- Location: Found in warm waters of the Pacific, Atlantic and Indian oceans.

➤ **Features:**

- One of the smallest sea-turtles on the earth. Olive green colour of their shell. They can grow up to two-and-a-half feet in length and weigh 30-45 kilograms.
- Food: Mainly shrimp, crab, molluscs, fish and crabs.
- Known for their unique mass nesting called Arribada (which means 'arrival by the sea' in Spanish), where thousands of females come together on the same beach to lay eggs.
- They hatch in 45 to 60 days.
- Gender: determined by the temperature at which they are hatched.



- ✓ A male turtle is born if the egg hatches at a temperature below 29 degrees Celsius. Above that, the hatchling is a female.

Observation Status: IUCN Red List: Vulnerable, Schedule I of Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, CITES Appendix I

Nesting sites: Rushikulya rookery coast (Odisha), Gahirmatha beach (Bhitarkanika National park) and Mouth of the Devi River. As part of a long-term study, researchers of the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) continued tagging of Olive Ridley turtles at these places also.

Threats: More frequent and intense flooding and cyclones, Sex ratio is getting skewed because of global warming, Hunted for meat and shell, Anthropogenic factors like fishing trawlers etc. This year (2023), the beaches remained unaffected as there were no extreme weather events such as cyclone and heavy rain and the turtles ascended the perfectly sloped beaches at the Rushikulya river mouth.

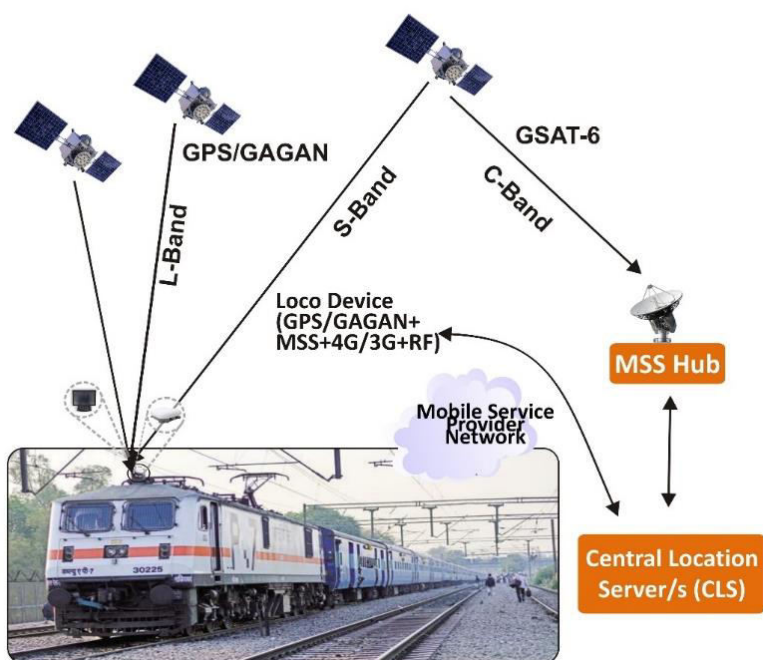
➤ **Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary**

- It is a marine wildlife sanctuary located in Odisha.
- It is the world's largest nesting beach for Olive Ridley Turtles.
- It extends from Dhamra River mouth in the north to Brahmani river mouth in the south.
- Gahirmatha was declared a turtle sanctuary in 1997 by Odisha after considering its ecological importance and as part of efforts to save the sea turtles.

2. **Real-Time Train Information System (RTIS)**

- RTIS is being installed on locomotives and trains for automatic acquisition of train movement timing at the stations, including that of arrival and departure or run-through.
- Centre for Railway Information System (CRIS), an organisation under the ministry of railways, delves deeper on this real-time monitoring system developed with ISRO.
- The real-time monitoring is actually a technique which helps in determining the current state of queues and channels within a queue manager, the IBM website states.
- The information received is accurate at the moment the command was issued.
- The locomotive device comprising GPS Aided Geo-Augmented Navigation System (GAGAN) captures the loco/train position.

REAL TIME TRAIN INFORMATION SYSTEM



The satellite (SatCom) communication transceiver, 4G-3G complements this SatCom and the 2.4 GHz along with appropriate CPU, memory, embedded operating system and application system.

- The external antennae for all the modules is housed in the outdoor unit mounted on loco rooftop.
- The satellite transponder and the hub has been installed at the CRIS datacentre to receive moment updates through the satellite communication.
- The events along with the position and locations are communicated to a central location server using satellite and 3G/4G mobile data service.

- The Central Location Server (CLS) at the CRIS centre processes the received data and then relays it to the control office application for the automatic plotting of control charts.
- The Control Office Application (COA) is already integrated with the national train enquiry system, and accurate real-time information for passengers is obtained automatically.
- The CRIS data centre receives train speed information continuously every 30 seconds from GAGAN receiver.

- The configuration management system (LMCS) is utilised to monitor the health of loco device, managing its configuration & updating the software/firmware in the loco device.
- The emergency messaging between Loco driver and control office is also implemented through RTIS.
- The train control will be able to track the location and the speed of RTIS-enabled train more closely without any manual intervention.

ANSWER WRITING

Q. To achieve the goal of doubling the farmer's income, the agriculture sector needs a multipronged strategy in order to address certain existing challenges. Examine.

Agriculture is one of the most important sectors of the Indian economy and employs close to 45 per cent of the workforce in the country. The government in the year 2016 declared the ambitious target of doubling the farmer's income by 2022. As agriculture employs the largest share of the workforce and is key to ensuring food and nutritional security, focusing on agriculture is the right way to ensure long-term high growth of the overall economy.

However, the agriculture sector is still marred with many challenges which act as impediments to achieving the goal of doubling the farmer's income:

- Low agricultural productivity per unit of land: India's farm yield is 30-50% lower than that of developed nations.
- Fragmented Landholdings: Over the years, the number of farm holdings in India has increased but the area under farming has come down. Marginal and small holdings together constitute 86 per cent of total holdings in India. Such a fragmented land occupancy structure makes it almost impossible for farmers to viably invest in tube wells, drip irrigation, storage or bulk inputs.
- Disguised Unemployment: Nearly 45% of the Indian population is employed in agriculture while its contribution to the GDP is around 18%. This leads to disguised unemployment and low labour productivity.
- Food Inflation and Volatility in Food Prices: Agricultural production in India is still heavily dependent on rainfall and its spatial distribution. Adverse climatic conditions like drought, flood and unseasonal rains tend to disrupt both aggregate supply and supply chains imparting large volatility to the food inflation trajectory.
- Low-value addition by the food processing industry: In India, the food processing value addition is less than 10% of the produce while for most developed economies this is 100 to 300%.
- Low use of technology: Farm mechanisation in India has been lower at 40-45 per cent and it is often said that India is "tractorisised", not "mechanised". Globally, the tractor industry is only 38% of the total industry, however, in India, it is 80 per cent of the total industry.

A multi-pronged strategy is required to address the above-mentioned issues:

- Adopting cooperative farming: As landholdings are small, using technology in farming is not remunerative for small and marginal farmers. There is a need to promote cooperative farming and consolidate landholdings.
- Declaring MSP for all crops: This will incentivise farmers to grow crops as per agro-ecological regions rather than focusing on the dominant rice-wheat pattern. This will also address the issue of wrong cropping patterns.
- Technological Interventions: Last technological intervention was the Green Revolution whose benefits have plateaued and even caused negative consequences. The need of the hour is large-scale area-specific technological interventions such as micro-irrigation, rainwater harvesting, balanced fertiliser uses for soil health, seed certification, and the use of indigenous varieties of seeds.
- Minimising Post-Harvest Losses: Agricultural economists have recognised that there is tremendous potential to increase the availability of agricultural produce, particularly horticultural crops like fruits and vegetables, by reducing wastage through a build-up of cold storage, warehousing, packaging and cold transport chain infrastructure.
- Higher Public Investments: Capital formation holds the key to agricultural growth and development. Public investment largely hovered around 1.7- 3.5 per cent of agriculture GVA during the last two decades. Hence there is a need to increase public investments in agriculture.
- Upgrading Food Quality and Safety Standards: Asian and Middle Eastern countries remain the major destinations for Indian agriculture exports, whereas entry into the markets of the US and EU has remained a challenge due to their high sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) norms. This can be addressed by upgrading food quality and safety.

Therefore, to address the above-mentioned challenges and truly realise the goal of doubling the farmer's income, India would require a second Green Revolution. Policy measures which reflect strong economic and political willpower are the need of the hour for making agriculture remunerative and sustainable.

MCQs

1. Which of the following best describes/describe the aim of 'Green India Mission' of the Government of India?
 1. Incorporating environmental benefits and costs into the Union and State Budgets thereby implementing the 'green accounting'.
 2. Launching the second green revolution to enhance agricultural output so as to ensure food security to one and all in the future.
 3. Restoring and enhancing forest cover and responding to climate change by a combination of adaptation and mitigation measures.
 Select the correct answer using the code given below.
 a) 1 only b) 2 and 3 only c) **3 only** d) 1, 2 and 3
2. Consider the following statements:
 1. As per law, the Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority exists at both National and State levels.
 2. People's participation is mandatory in the compensatory afforestation programmes carried out under the Compensatory Afforestation Fund Act, 2016.
 Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
 a) **1 only** b) 2 only c) Both 1 and 2 d) Neither 1 nor 2
3. Nagarjunsagar-Srisaïlam Tiger Reserve is the largest tiger reserve in India, often mentioned in news recently, is spread over which of the following states?
 - a) Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu b) Andhra Pradesh and Odisha
 - c) Karnataka and Kerala d) **Andhra Pradesh and Telangana**
4. Which of the following statements about the olive ridley turtles is/are correct?
 1. They are the smallest and most abundant of all sea turtles found in the world.
 2. They live in warm waters of Pacific, Atlantic and Indian Oceans.
 3. The Coromandel Coast in India is the largest mass nesting site for the olive ridley turtles.
 Select the correct Answer using the code given below.
 a) 1, 2 and 3 b) **1 and 2 only** c) 2 and 3 only d) 1 only
5. With reference to Real-Time Train Information System (RTIS) consider the following
 1. The RTIS uses information from GSAT satellites that have GAGAN payloads for tracking the movement of trains.
 2. The project is being developed by Indian Railway in collaboration with ISRO.
 Which of the above statement/s is/are correct?
 a) 1 only b) 2 only c) **Both 1 and 2** d) Neither 1 nor 2
6. National Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction (NPDRR) conference consider the following
 1. The Union Home Minister chairs the NPDRR.
 2. NPDRR was constituted under Disaster Management Act, 2005.
 Which of the above statement/s is/are not correct?
 a) 1 only b) **2 only** c) Both 1 and 2 d) Neither 1 nor 2
7. Dhara initiative often mentioned in news, which of the following is the nodal ministry to implement this initiative?
 - a) Ministry of Education b) **Ministry of Culture**
 - c) Ministry of Tourism d) Ministry of Environment and climate change
8. Kermadec Islands recently seen in news are part of which of the following country?
 - a) Philippines b) India c) **New Zealand** d) Japan
9. With reference to International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA) consider the following
 1. Tiger, lion, leopard, snow leopard, puma, jaguar, and cheetah are the seven main big cats that IBCA will aim to protect and conserve.
 2. India has proposed to launch this mega global alliance.
 3. Alliance was "inspired by the arrival of cheetahs in India" in 2022 from Namibia.
 Which of the above statement/s is/are correct?
 a) 1 and 2 only b) 2 and 3 only c) 1 and 3 only d) **1,2 and 3**
10. With reference to SVAMITVA Yojana consider the following
 1. The yojna aim to provide an integrated property validation solution for rural India
 2. It is a central sector scheme
 Which of the above statement/s is/are not correct?
 a) 1 only b) 2 only c) **Both 1 and 2** d) Neither 1 nor 2