

INDIAN ECONOMY

In Context

- In 2022, India became the 5th largest economy in the world & will soon become the third-largest economy.

India's way towards third-largest economy

- The data sourced from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) show that India is indeed forecast to become the third-largest economy by 2027.
- Despite India's economy not growing as fast as it would like to (read 8%-9% per annum), even a more modest growth rate of 6% per annum will be enough for India to overtake Germany and Japan by 2027.

Significance of India's Global position

- India's GDP has grown by 83% between 2014 and 2023.
- This is just a shade lower than the 84% increase achieved by China during this period. The US GDP increased by 54%.
- However, barring these three countries, all the other top 10 countries have seen their GDP stagnate or even contract.
- Of the five countries that India overtook in the 9 years since 2014, the UK's total GDP has grown by a total of 3%, France's by 2%, Russia's by 1%.
- Italy's GDP has not grown at all while Brazil's GDP has contracted by 15%.

Key drivers of India's growth

+ Digital competitiveness:

- India has a strong digital advantage with its 900 million working-age population having affordable internet access at \$2.5/month and 650 million smart phones, all running on the India Digital Stack.
- This has led to deeper inclusion and new demand for financial services, consumer goods, healthcare, and education.
- The unbanked population has reduced to fewer than 20%, per capita data consumption is among the highest in the world at 17 GB and e-commerce is already at 7%.

+ Technology skills:

- India has an unparalleled base of technology skills.
- Technology services exports crossed \$150 billion in FY22 and continue to be relevant in an ever-digitizing world.
- There are 1,500 global capability centers in India, set up by many of the Fortune 500. With 5 million employees, the sector accounts for 40% of the global technology workforce.
- IT exports essentially pays for India's oil import bill.

+ Transformative public infrastructure investment:

- India has among the best metro airports in the world and is the third largest air traffic market having grown at a CAGR of 17% pre-Covid.
- Investments in airport infrastructure are providing deeper access to remote areas.
- Similar investments in ports, railways and highways are creating a world-class transportation network that will enable the creation of an efficient and integrated ecosystem for manufacturing, logistics and exports.

+ Development of a dominant manufacturing base:

- The Indian government is working to increase the manufacturing sector's share of GDP from the current 15%
- This is being done by introducing multiple programs
- One of the tailwinds is the diversification of global supply chains away from China, where the median age is 38 and the labor supply continues to get tighter.
- India's demographic dividend can step in to fill the gap.

+ Initiatives to reduce external energy dependence:

- India is working to achieve energy independence by 2047 and reduce the \$100 billion spent annually on energy imports by increasing investments in renewable energy and green hydrogen.
- The government has set a goal of 500 GW of renewable capacity by 2030, requiring \$300 billion in investments.
- India is making progress, such as achieving 83% electrification in railways and aiming to reach 100% by 2024.

+ India's continued dominance as a food basket to the world:

- It is the largest producer of milk, pulses, and spices, and second largest in fruits, vegetables, tea, farmed fish, cotton, sugarcane, wheat, and rice, supporting 17.8% of the world's population.

✚ Resilient banking system:

- India's financial institutions have shown resilience with a substantial decrease in NPAs (11% in FY18 to 5% currently) and capital adequacy (17%) to support credit growth.

✚ Political stability and innovative public policy:

- India has a stable political climate which has led to consistency and predictability in policies in the last decade promoting efficiency and agility in doing business.

Challenges

Slowed growth momentum:

- India's growth momentum has slowed down considerably between 2014 and 2023 when compared with the 2004-2014 period (when GDP grew by a total of 183%).

Greater gaps ahead:

- Moving from rank 10 to rank 5 was relatively easier because the GDPs were within \$1 trillion of each other. The gap between the third rank and the first two is far greater.
- In 2027, India's GDP will be one-fifth of China's (short by \$20 trillion) and one-sixth of the US's (short by \$26 trillion).

Low per capita GDP:

- One should not forget that these are aggregate numbers for the whole country.
- Actual prosperity is better captured by per capita GDP numbers. Here, the gap is way too much.
- At \$2,600 per annum, India's per capita GDP is not only the lowest among the top 10 countries but considerably lower than that of the countries it has overtaken, such as \$47,000 in the UK or \$10,000 in Brazil or \$37,000 in Italy.

Way ahead

- India is a strong investment destination due to its diverse economy, growing middle class, and stable political environment.
- Its expanding technology sector and economic liberalization offer many opportunities for businesses and investors.
- The nation's democratic institutions also provide a reliable foundation for long-term investment and hope for a prosperous future.

SOCIAL ISSUES

Persons with Disabilities (PWDs)

In News

- There is an uproar over dropping disability-related questions in the sixth round of the National Family Health Survey.
- The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Social Justice and Empowerment has called upon the Union government for failing to accurately estimate the population of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs).

About Persons with Disabilities(PWDs):

- As per United Nations Conventions on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities PWDs include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.
- As per National Family Health Survey, India's population of people with a disability has reduced to 1% between 2019 and 2021, from the 2.2% (26.8 million) estimated by the Indian census in 2011.
- As per 2011 population census, 20% of persons with disabilities in India have a disability in movement, 19% have a disability in seeing, 19% have a disability in hearing and 8% have multiple disabilities.

Issues and Challenges faced by PWDs

- **Social Stigma:** The word disability is being seen as a social stigma, according to which parents feel ashamed of their children, and in fear most of them feel uncomfortable in public upfront.
- **Institutional Failures:** Indian education system and Government institutions both are failing in making arrangements for the welfare for disabled persons to an extent. There should be proper seats for disabled persons at classrooms as well as at the exam centers. Illiteracy is particularly prevalent among disabled people and constitutes a double disadvantage. In addition to being disabled, they are isolated by illiteracy.
- **Unemployment:** Disabled persons are the ones who are scapegoats in getting fired at tenure of recessions. They are first to be discharged from their services when cost cutting methods are adopted by the companies.
- **Stress:** The physically handicapped person is subjected to a lot of stress because of lack of social relations. In addition to increased physical and emotional stress, the crippled individual is condemned to a similar outcome in his social life.

What needs to be done?

- There should be reforms in Education system to build a better society through which disabled persons can face the challenges of life with courage and conscience.
- Job-oriented training is the need of the time. There should be well trained professionals for training who can ignite the minds and train them to cater the needs of the service industry.
- Vocal and linguistic teachers should be recruited for the overall well being of the people.
- Camps should be arranged to distribute free bicycles to poor persons and to provide adequate facilities to them.

Government Schemes and Initiatives

- **Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities:** Understanding the special needs of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs), the government carved out a special department under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.
- **‘Divyang’:** With a view to change the societal attitude towards PwDs and to encourage them to participate in the society without any feeling of inferiority, the Prime Minister coined the term ‘divyang’ to denote PwDs.
- **Accessible India Campaign:** The campaign was launched in 2015 to create a barrier-free environment for divyangjan. The project envisages creation of ramps, help desks and accessible toilets in public places.
- **Sugamya Bharat:** To understand the problems of divyangjan, the Government has launched the Sugamya Bharat app. The app lets people provide feedback on accessibility issues for PwDs.
- **Unique Disability Identity Project (UDID):** The Project is aimed at easing disability certification, while weeding out fraud in the process.
- **Divya Kala Shakti:** It is a scheme of the Government of India to encourage divyangjan to participate in cultural activities.
- **Assistance to Disabled Persons for Purchase/Fitting of Aids and Appliances (ADIP) Scheme:** Under this programme, the Government provides aids and assistive devices to PwDs.

Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016

- The Act replaces the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995.
- It fulfills the obligations to the United National Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), to which India is a signatory.
- Disability has been defined based on an evolving and dynamic concept.
- The types of disabilities covered are 21 and the Central Government has the power to add more types of disabilities.
- The Act provides for penalties for offences committed against persons with disabilities and also violation of the provisions of the new law.
- Special Courts will be designated in each district to handle cases concerning the violation of the rights of PwDs.

Conclusion

- PwDs constitute one of the most vulnerable sections of the country. They also can be a source of untapped potential, which, if harnessed well, may increase the economic growth and development in the country.
- The need of the hour is proper sensitization of the community towards the issues faced by PwDs, as well as to remove the social stigma attached to their integration into the society.

PRELIMS FACT

1. Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2023

- The Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2023 has been passed in Lok Sabha.

About the Bill

- The Bill was first introduced in Lok Sabha in 2022. Subsequently, it was referred to the Joint Committee of the Parliament.

Aim:

- To give a boost to Ease of Living and Ease of Doing Business.
- Through the Bill, 2023, a total of 183 provisions are being proposed to be decriminalized in 42 Central Acts administered by 19 Ministries/Departments. Decriminalization is proposed to be achieved in the following manner: -
 - ✓ Both Imprisonment and/or Fine are proposed to be removed in some provisions.
 - ✓ Imprisonment is proposed to be removed and fine retained in few provisions.
 - ✓ Imprisonment is proposed to be removed and Fine enhanced in few provisions.
 - ✓ Imprisonment and Fine are proposed to be converted to Penalty in some provisions.
 - ✓ Compounding of offences is proposed to be introduced in few provisions.
- For effective implementation of the above, the bill proposes measures such as:

- ✓ Pragmatic revision of fines and penalties commensurate to the offence committed;
- ✓ Establishment of Adjudicating Officers;
- ✓ Establishment of Appellate Authorities; and
- ✓ Periodic increase in quantum of fine and penalties
- It is also ensured that the degree and nature of punishment is commensurate with the severity of the offence.

Benefits of the Amendment Bill

- The Amendment Bill will contribute to rationalizing criminal provisions and ensuring that citizens, businesses and the government departments operate without fear of imprisonment for minor, technical or procedural defaults.
- This bill establishes a balance between the severity of the offence/violation committed and the gravity of the prescribed punishment.
- The proposed amendments ensure the adherence to law by businesses and citizens, without losing the rigor of the law.
- Some of the amendments proposed in the Bill are to introduce suitable administrative adjudication mechanisms, wherever applicable and feasible.
- This would go a long way in reducing undue pressure on the justice system, reduce the pendency of cases and help in a more efficient and effective justice dispensation.
- Decriminalization of provisions which affect citizens and certain categories of government employees will help them live without the fear of imprisonment for minor violations.

2. Scheme for financial assistance to veteran artists

Context:

- Financial assistance is given by the Ministry of Culture to the artists who are facing difficulties due to old age.
- The Ministry of Culture administers a Scheme by the name of “Scheme for Financial Assistance for Veteran Artists”.
- This is for senior artists aged 60 years and above who have contributed significantly in their specialized fields of performing arts and culture, but are facing financial difficulties due to old age.
- Under the scheme, financial assistance of Rs. 6000/- per month is given to the selected artists aged 60 years and above.
- Their annual income is not more than Rs. 48,000/- upon receipt of Digital Life Certificate once in a year and annual income certificate once in every Five years.
- It is a Central Sector Scheme under which financial assistance is provided to the beneficiaries directly and is not routed through the States or Union Territories.

3. Resource Efficiency Circular Economy Industry Coalition

- Recently the Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change launched the Resource Efficiency and Circular Economy Industry Coalition (RECEIC).

Objective:

- RECEIC is an industry-driven initiative aimed at promoting resource efficiency and circular economy practices globally. It will facilitate knowledge-sharing, best practice sharing, and sustainable practices among the participating industries.
- Founding members: 39 companies headquartered in 11 different countries have joined the coalition as its founding members.
- The coalition has three guiding principles – Partnerships for impact, Technology Cooperation and Finance for scale.

4. Rabies

In News

- As per the Health Ministry data, Delhi saw the highest number of deaths due to rabies in the country in 2022.

About:

- It is a zoonotic viral disease (Disease Transmitted from Animals to Humans).
- It is caused by the Rabies virus, of the Lyssavirus genus, within the family Rhabdoviridae.
- It is a Ribonucleic Acid (RNA) virus that is present in the saliva of a rabid animal (dog, cat, monkey, etc).
- Rabies is 100% fatal but 100% vaccine-preventable.
- 33% of global rabies deaths are recorded in India.
- Common Vectors/ Reservoirs of Virus
- Most mammals can carry the virus and hence can cause the disease.
- In South Asia and Africa, the most common reservoir of the virus is the domestic/street dog.

- In developed nations like the USA, animals that transmit rabies are bats, foxes, raccoons, and skunks.

Symptoms:

- Anxiety, Confusion, salivation, seizures, hallucinations and paralysis.
- National Action Plan for dog Mediated Rabies Elimination by 2030 (NAPRE)
- Under this, the union will encourage all the States and UTs to make Rabies a notifiable Disease.
- A notifiable disease is any disease that is required by law to be reported to government authorities.
- “Joint Inter-Ministerial Declaration Support Statement” for Elimination of Dog mediated Rabies from India by 2030 was also launched.

4. Tail strikes

Context:

- The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has fined an airline following a special audit concerning frequent tail strike incidents.

What is a tail strike?

- A tail strike refers to an incident where the tail of an aircraft hits the ground or strikes any other stationary object.
- While tail strikes can occur during takeoff, a majority happen during the landing of an aircraft.
- Over 65 per cent of tail strikes happen during landings.
- Tail strikes can cause significant damage to the aircraft.
- Aircraft, depending on their size, have different “tail strike margins”:
- The longer the aircraft, more prone it is to a tail strike as the rear of the plane juts out further behind the rear undercarriage.

Reasons of tail strikes during takeoff:

- Incorrect takeoff speeds
- Poor rotation technique
- Incorrect centre of gravity, or mistrimmed stabilizer

Reasons of Tail strikes during landing

- Too low an approach speed
- Too high or too low of a landing flare
- Incorrect handling during crosswinds

ANSWER WRITING

Q. What are the significant values in the society of Assam? (10 marks/150 words)

- Society of Assam is known for certain values that are defining features of Assamese society. Important values practised in society of Assam are-
 1. Respect for elders
 - In Assamese culture, there is a strong emphasis on respecting elders and seeking their guidance. This is reflected in the tradition of-
 - a. Seeking the blessings of parents and elders before undertaking any important task.
 - b. Me-Dam-Me-Phi festival- It is a of the ancestor's worship which is being celebrated all over Assam on January 31 of every year.
 2. Environmentalism
 - People in Assam are expected to take care of the natural environment. This is reflected in the tradition of celebrating Bihu, a festival that marks the changing of seasons and the importance of agriculture.
 3. Celebrating Feminism
 - Menstruation has long been considered a taboo topic in India. Ambubachi Mela in Assam at Kamakhya temple celebrates womanhood and menstruation.
 4. Non violence
 - This is evident from the 6 years Assam movement(1979-85) that was conducted by the youth of Assam in a largely peaceful manner.
 5. Respect for diversity
 - Assamese society is diverse, with people from different religions and ethnicities living together. This is reflected in the tradition of celebrating different festivals, such as Durga Puja and Eid, with equal enthusiasm.
 6. Education
 - Education is highly valued in Assamese society, and people are expected to pursue knowledge and wisdom throughout their lives. This is reflected in the tradition of Gurukul, where students learn from their teachers in a residential setting.
 - Some degenerated values have also emerged like witchcraft, excessive materialism, religious intolerance. But Assam largely continues to hold the values that are the essence of Indian culture.

