

## DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS (DCA)

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## DIGITAL GOVERNANCE IN INDIA

### Context:

- Recently, the Prime Minister of India and Bill Gates discussed the role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) for digital governance in key focus areas like health, agriculture and education.

### About the Digital Governance:

- It is the application of **Information and Communication Technology (ICT)** for delivering government services, exchange of information, communication transactions, integration of various stand-alone systems and services between government-to-customer (G2C), government-to-business (G2B), government-to-government (G2G), and also back-office processes and interactions within the entire government framework.
- Data Governance** is a crucial aspect of digital governance. The launch of **India's Data Empowerment and Protection Architecture (DEPA)**, a consent management tool, has generated both excitement and concern among stakeholders.
  - It is important that the tool is implemented in a transparent, consistent, and secure manner.

### Role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Digital Governance:

- AI plays a pivotal role in Indian election campaigns by leveraging technology to overcome language barriers, marking a shift towards progressive politics empowering linguistic diversity and inclusive engagement.
- AI is also being used to drive economic growth and improve the lives of citizens.

#### Key Data:

- According to the **State of India Digital Economy 2024 Report of ICRIER**, India as a nation is highly digitalised, the average Indian is not.
  - It noted that nearly 48% of Indians do not access the internet and the quality of fixed line internet services does not match up to other G20 countries.
  - India's gender gap in internet connectivity is, at 10%, higher than the world average of 9%, and the rural-urban divide is at 58%, higher than the world average of 49%.
    - While the digital divide along gender is large, it is declining.
- According to **IAMAI's Internet in India Report (2023)**: Nearly 52% Indians (~759 million) have access to the internet.

### Key Benefits of Digital Governance:

- Efficiency in Administration, Inclusiveness, Time and Cost Effectiveness, Transparency and Accountability, Data-Driven Decision Making, Empowerment of Citizens, Innovation, Improved Public Services, Economic Growth, Sustainable Development.

### Digital Governance and Health:

- The 'Digital India' initiative has brought significant changes in the healthcare sector of India. Initiatives like Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM), CoWIN App, Aarogya Setu, e-Sanjeevani, and e-Hospital have made healthcare facilities and services reach every corner of India.
- The Ayushman Bharat Health Account (ABHA) Number is a hassle-free method of accessing and sharing one's health records digitally. The Aarogya Setu app has transformed into a National Health App, bringing a whole plethora of digital health services powered by the ABDM.

### Digital Governance and Agriculture:

- The **National e-Governance Plan in Agriculture (NeGPA)** was launched to achieve rapid development in India through the use of ICT for timely access to agriculture-related information to the farmers.
- Realising the significance of new digital & emerging technologies, the **NeGPA guidelines were amended in 2020-21** and funds were released for sanctioning projects for customization/shifting of web & mobile applications already developed by the States, to the platform to be developed using digital/emerging technologies.

### Digital Governance and Education:

- Digital Empowerment and Online Education are significant components to attain the **Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) of 50% by 2035** as targeted in the **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020**.
- Digital empowerment in the field of education opens up a plethora of options for the learners of today. Digital advancements have wide-ranging implications on higher education.

### Other Key Initiatives:

- Digi-Locker:** This initiative assists citizens in storing important documents in a digital format, such as degree certificates, PAN numbers, and mark sheets.

- ♦ It makes it easier to share documents and reduces the need for physical documents.
- **Mobile Seva:** It aims to provide government services via tablets and mobile phones.
- **myGov.in:** It is a platform for national citizen engagement where people can share ideas and get involved in policy and governance issues.
- **UMANG:** It is a unified mobile application that gives users access to services offered by the federal and state governments.
- **Computerisation of Land Records:** It ensures that landowners get digital and updated copies of documents relating to their property.
- **e-Office:** It received an award for its role in ensuring continuity of Government services and operations during the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### Potential Threats:

- **Cybersecurity Risks:** With the increasing dependence on digital systems, the risk of cyber threats has heightened.
  - ♦ About 91% of Indian companies experienced ransomware attacks in 2022, and about 55% of these companies reported financial implications.
- **Data Privacy Concerns:** The implementation of tools like India's Data Empowerment and Protection Architecture (DEPA) may pose risks associated with security and privacy.
  - ♦ If not properly implemented or managed, there is a risk that personal information could be misused or misappropriated.
- **Digital Inequality:** As the world becomes increasingly digital, there is a risk of digital inequality, where certain sections of the society might not have equal access to digital resources and services.
- **Dependence on Service Providers:** Remote work has moved digital exchanges from office networks to residential ones, which have a greater variety of connected devices with less protection against cyber intrusion.
- **AI-Enabled Threats:** With the increasing use of AI in digital governance, there is a risk of AI-enabled threats. AI-powered malware is a top concern for cybersecurity experts.
- **Deep Fakes Technology:** It can pose serious ethical and social challenges, such as creating fake news, spreading misinformation, violating privacy, and harming reputation.

- **Infrastructure Vulnerability:** India's critical infrastructure, such as power grids, transportation systems, and communication networks, is vulnerable to cyber attacks that can disrupt essential services and endanger public safety and national security.

#### Conclusion and Way Ahead:

- Digital governance is transforming the way public services are delivered, making them more efficient, accessible, and transparent.
  - ♦ However, it also presents new challenges in terms of data security, privacy, and digital literacy.
- As India continues to evolve its digital strategies, it must ensure that they are inclusive, transparent, secure, and conducive to sustainable development.

Source: HT

## EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER'S VISIT TO MALAYSIA

### Context

- Recently, the External Affairs Minister of India visited Malaysia.

### About

- The minister held a bilateral meeting with his counterpart in Malaysia. Both leaders held wide ranging discussions on bilateral cooperation including political, trade and economic, defence, digital, culture and education.
- Malaysia is a key partner for India in **ASEAN and Act East Policy**.
  - ♦ The visit to Malaysia provided an opportunity to reiterate commitment to further develop the Enhanced Strategic Partnership.

#### Overview of India and Malaysia Relations

- **Diplomatic Relations:** India and Malaysia established diplomatic relations shortly after Malaysia gained independence from British rule in **1957**.
  - ♦ Both countries are members of various international organizations, such as the United Nations, ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations), and the Non-Aligned Movement.

- **Trade and Economic Relations:** Malaysia is the 13th largest trading partner for India while India stands amongst the 10 largest trading partners globally.
  - ◆ Furthermore, Malaysia has emerged as the third largest trading partner for India from the ASEAN region and India is the largest trading partner for Malaysia among the countries of the Southeast Asian region.
  - ◆ Malaysia stands as Both countries have engaged in various economic agreements such as the **India-Malaysia Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA)**.
  - ◆ Both countries have agreed to conduct **trade settlements in Indian rupees**, reflecting an intention to bolster trade relations.
- **Defense and Security:** The defense ties have steadily expanded, marked by the signing of a **defense cooperation memorandum in 1993**, regular defense cooperation meetings, joint military exercises, and Malaysia's interest in acquiring 18 new Indian light fighter jets, indicating potential growth in arms trade between the two nations.
- **Strategic Partnership:** India and Malaysia have aimed to strengthen their strategic partnership through various initiatives, including high-level visits, joint commissions, and dialogues.
  - ◆ Both countries have expressed interests in enhancing cooperation in areas such as defense, counter-terrorism, maritime security, and cultural exchanges.
- **Tourism and diaspora:** Over the last two decades, tourism has been a cornerstone in fostering relations between India and Malaysia.
  - ◆ Various agreements, including the India-Malaysia visa waiver for diplomatic and official passport holders, a tourism-focused memorandum of understanding in 2010, a bilateral agreement on employment and workers' welfare in 2009, and a revised air services agreement in 2017, have significantly contributed to the growth of tourism between the nations.
- **Cultural Ties:** Indian influence in Malaysia can be seen in various aspects of Malaysian culture, including language, religion (Hinduism and Buddhism), architecture, cuisine, and festivals.

### Challenges:

- **Trade Disputes and Imbalances:** Trade disputes and imbalances have been a significant challenge in India-Malaysia relations.
  - ◆ Issues related to tariffs, non-tariff barriers, and trade restrictions have occasionally strained economic ties between the two countries.
- **Geopolitical Considerations:** Both countries have diverse foreign policy priorities and engagements with other nations, which can lead to differences in strategic perspectives.

### Conclusion

- India and Malaysia completed 65 years of modern diplomatic relations in 2022.
- The relations between India and Malaysia have grown from a Strategic Partnership to an Enhanced Strategic Partnership in the last 10 years, with new cooperation in cultural diplomacy, digital economy, and agricultural commodities forthcoming.

Source: BS

## UNITED NATIONS ON GLOBAL FOOD WASTE

### Context:

- Recently, the **United Nations** released the report, titled 'Think Eat Save: Tracking Progress to Halve Global Food Waste'.

### Key Highlights of the Report:

- **Scale of Food Waste:** In 2022, the world wasted 1.05 billion tonnes of food, amounting to one-fifth (19%) of food available to consumers being wasted at the retail, food service, and household level.
  - ◆ Households were responsible for 631 million tonnes of food waste, equivalent to 60% of the total food wasted in 2022.
- **Food Insecurity:** Food waste occurs while 783 million people are hungry and a third of humanity faces food insecurity.
- **Global Problem:** Food waste is **not just a 'rich country' problem**.
- High-income, upper-middle income, and lower-middle income countries differ in observed average levels of household food waste by just 7 kg/capita/year.

**The Impact of Food Waste:**

- Food waste has severe **environmental, social, and economic** impacts.
- **Environmentally**, food waste contributes to 8-10% of global greenhouse gas emissions.
- **Socially**, it exacerbates food insecurity and hunger.
- **Economically**, it costs the global economy over \$940 billion.

- **Urban-Rural Disparities:** Middle-income countries display variations between urban and rural populations, with rural areas generally wasting less.
- **Environmental Impact:** Food loss and waste generate 8-10% of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, almost five times the total emissions from the aviation sector.
  - ♦ Hotter countries appear to have more food waste per capita in households, potentially due to increased consumption of fresh foods with substantial inedible parts and lack of robust cold chain.

**Food Wastage in India**

- As per the **United Nations Food Waste Index Report**, 78.2 million tonnes of food every year despite India housing the world's largest hunger-population.
  - ♦ It points out **India's per capita food waste at 55 kg per year**.
  - ♦ It also underlines rural India waste food less compared to urban areas.
- In South Asia, **Bhutan (19 kg per year)** has the **lowest** per capita food waste in the country while **Pakistan** has the **highest (130 kg per year)**.
- As per **Global Hunger Index Report (2023)**, food wastage became a serious issue in India as India housed 233.9 million out of the world's 783 million populations.
  - ♦ India **ranked 111 out of 125 countries**, indicating a hunger severity level of **'serious'** for the country.

**Solutions Highlighted in the Report**

- **Measurement:** The report emphasises the **need for improved data on food waste**. Accurate measurement of food waste is the **first step towards effective management**.

- ♦ **India**, along with Indonesia and the Republic of Korea (South Korea) have **only 'subnational estimates' regarding food waste**.
- ♦ **India**, along with China, South Africa, Indonesia, and Mexico, needs representative national food waste studies given **variance in data**.
- **Policy Interventions:** Governments are encouraged to establish national targets, policies, and initiatives to reduce food waste. This includes implementing the **UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 12.3**, which aims **to halve per capita global food waste** at the retail and consumer levels **by 2030**.
  - ♦ At present, **only four G-20 countries** (Australia, Japan, U.K., U.S.) and the European Union have food waste estimates suitable for tracking progress to 2030.
- **Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs):** The report highlights the role of PPPs in reducing food waste. By working together, governments and businesses can develop and implement effective strategies to prevent and reduce food waste.
- **Consumer Awareness:** Raising awareness among consumers about the impacts of food waste and ways to prevent it is crucial.
  - ♦ It can be achieved through education and awareness campaigns.
- **Innovation and Technology:** The report underscores the potential of innovative solutions and technologies in reducing food waste.
  - ♦ It includes advancements in food storage and packaging, improved supply chain management, and the use of apps to connect consumers with surplus food.
- **Sustainable Practices:** The report encourages the adoption of sustainable practices at all levels of the food supply chain.
  - ♦ It includes improving harvesting, storage, processing, and distribution processes to minimise food loss and waste.

**Conclusion**

- Tackling global food waste requires concerted, collaborative effort. It involves developing national strategies for food waste reduction, creating national public-private partnerships, launching supply chain initiatives, reducing small-holder losses, and shifting consumer social norms.

- By addressing this issue, we can make a significant contribution to mitigating climate change, enhancing food security, and promoting sustainable development.

Source: DTE

## NEW COLLECTIVE QUANTIFIED GOAL ON CLIMATE FINANCE

### Context

- A crucial meeting for the post-2025 **climate finance goal** is to be held in April in Colombia.

### About

- Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) have made new submissions on what they want discussed at Colombia and beyond for the **New Collective Quantified Goal on Climate Finance (NCQG)**.

### What is Climate Finance?

- Climate finance refers to **large-scale investments** required for actions aiming to **mitigate or adapt** to the consequences of climate change.
- **Adaptation:** It involves anticipating the adverse effects of climate change and taking appropriate action to prevent or minimise the damage they can cause.
- **Mitigation:** It involves reducing the emission of greenhouse gases (GHG) into the atmosphere so that impacts of climate change are less severe.

### Who should Finance?

- Developing countries have argued that **developed nations** should provide financial assistance to tackle climate change because it was due to the (now) rich world's **emissions over the last 150 years** that caused the climate problem in the first place.
- **The 1994** United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) required high-income countries to provide climate finance to the developing world.
  - ♦ In **2009**, developed countries pledged to provide **\$100 billion** a year to developing countries by 2020.
  - ♦ In 2010, the **Green Climate Fund (GCF)** was established as a key delivery mechanism.
  - ♦ The 2015 Paris Agreement reinforced this target, and extended it to **2025**.

- However, the high income countries are yet to fulfil their pledge.

### New Collective Quantified Goal on Climate Finance (NCQG)

- In 2015, the financial assistance goal of collective mobilisation of \$100 billion by developed countries was extended to 2025.
- It was also decided that year that a new climate finance goal to succeed this one would have to be decided prior to 2025, amounting to at least **\$100 billion per year**, and 'taking into account the needs and priorities of developing countries'.
  - ♦ This is the NCQG, also called the **post-2025 climate finance goal / new goal**.
- **Need of NCQG**
  - ♦ The figure of \$100 billion is inadequate for the climate finance needs of developing countries, which, by varying estimates, range from \$1-2.4 trillion per year until 2030.
  - ♦ The goal of \$100 billion was not a negotiated one – it was a political one.

### India's Stand

- India is the only country that has put forth a figure in this round of submissions, **\$1 tn per year**, to be considered the quantum of money that developed countries must provide to developing countries as part of the new goal.
- For this, India has suggested a **timeframe of 10 years**, with separate annual mobilisation targets for each five year period to be in line with the cycles of **updating the Nationally Determined Contributions**.

### The Road Ahead

- The process on NCQG so far has foregrounded what is already known: Developing countries, for serving whom this goal is to be created to begin with, call upon a focus on the actual amount of money, time frame for disbursement and non-debt creating instruments to be the central pillar of the NCQG.
- Developed countries have focused more on who should contribute and on bringing the need to align all financial flows into the conversation.
- These distinctions in approach are reflective of the **stark difference between the needs and priorities** of countries who have contributed to and are impacted by the climate crisis in very different ways.

- The need to **scrutinise the process** to ensure it truly considers the principles of **equity and justice** in its implementation remains significant.

#### About UN Climate Change Conference

- The United Nations Climate Change Conferences, often referred to as COP (Conference of the Parties), are international gatherings where countries come together to discuss and negotiate global efforts to address climate change.
- These conferences are organized under the **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)**, an international treaty came into force in **1994** with the objective of stabilizing greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere.
- The COP meetings are held **annually**, and each conference is numbered sequentially.
- The conferences provide a platform for countries to assess progress in dealing with climate change, negotiate agreements, and make decisions on a wide range of issues related to climate action.

Source: DTE

## NEWS IN SHORT

### WHO CORONAVIRUS NETWORK (COVINET)

#### Context:

- Recently, the World Health Organisation (WHO) launched the **'CoViNet'** — a global laboratory to monitor emerging coronaviruses.

#### About the CoViNet:

- CoViNet is a network of global laboratories with expertise in human, animal, and environmental coronavirus surveillance.
  - ♦ The network currently includes 36 laboratories from 21 countries in all 6 WHO regions.
- It expands on the **WHO COVID-19 reference laboratory network** established during the early days of the pandemic.
- Initially, the lab network was focused on SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19.
  - ♦ However, the network will **now address a broader range of coronaviruses**, including MERS-CoV and potential new coronaviruses.

#### The Objectives of CoViNet:

- It aims to facilitate and coordinate global expertise and capacities for **early and accurate detection, monitoring**, and assessment of SARS-CoV-2, MERS-CoV, and novel coronaviruses of public health importance.
- It aims to monitor the global circulation and evolution of these viruses, recognizing the need for a **'One Health' approach**.
- It aims to provide timely risk assessment for these viruses to inform WHO policy related to a range of public health and medical countermeasures.

Source: DTE

### INDIA-LED GROUP OF FRIENDS (GOF)

#### Context:

- Recently, the India-led Group of Friends (GOF) deliberated on strategies to strengthen legal frameworks against perpetrators of malicious acts targeting Peacekeepers, focusing on supporting measures for ensuring accountability.

#### About the India-led Group of Friends (GOF):

- It is a significant initiative **launched in 2022 by India** during its presidency of the UN Security Council (UNSC).
- It represents the 'political will' of member states, particularly of the troop and police contributing countries, to champion the implementation of the provisions of **UNSC Resolution 2589**.
- It comprises 40 member states, and **India, Bangladesh, Egypt, France, Morocco, and Nepal serve as co-chairs** of the GOF.

#### Objectives and Functions:

- It aims to promote accountability for all **acts of violence against United Nations (UN) peacekeepers** and provide capacity building and technical assistance to the host state authorities.
  - ♦ It serves as an **informal platform** at the UN to exchange information, share best practices, and mobilise resources directed at facilitating accountability for crimes committed against peacekeepers.
  - ♦ It monitors progress on bringing accountability for crimes against peacekeepers.
- It convenes two meetings of its members per year and organises one event per year involving Permanent Missions and other stakeholders to take the plan forward, thereby ensuring greater safety and security for peacekeepers.

**India's Role in UN Peacekeeping:**

- India has been one of the largest contributors to UN peacekeeping operations.
- Since its first commitment in Korea in 1950, Indian troops have supervised complex, unmanageable peace operations, earning universal admiration for their professional excellence.
- More than 250,000 Indian troops have served in 49 of the 71 UN peacekeeping operations so far.
- At present, India is currently the second-largest troop contributor with 5,506 personnel deployed in nine UN peacekeeping missions.

Source: PIB

**WHITE RABBIT COLLABORATION****Context**

- **The European Organization for Nuclear Research or CERN** has launched the **White Rabbit Collaboration**.

**About**

- **White Rabbit:** The technology is developed to **synchronise devices** in the **accelerators down to sub-nanoseconds** and solve the challenge of establishing a common notion of time across a network.
  - ♦ At a scale of billionths of a second, the time light takes to travel through a fibre-optic cable and the time the electronics take to process the signal are no longer negligible. **To avoid potential delays**, the co-inventors of White Rabbit designed a **new ethernet switch**.
- **Application:** White Rabbit is used in the **finance sector** as well as in many **research infrastructures**, and it is currently being evaluated for application in the **future quantum internet**.
  - ♦ The technology could also play a key role in the future landscape of **global time dissemination technologies**, which currently rely heavily on satellites.
- **White Rabbit Collaboration:** It is a membership-based global community whose objective is to maintain a **high-performance open-source technology** that meets the needs of users and to facilitate its uptake by industry.

- ♦ The WR Collaboration will provide dedicated support and training, facilitate R&D projects between entities with common interests and complementary expertise and establish a testing ecosystem fostering trust in products that incorporate the open-source technology.

Source: CERN

**EXERCISE TIGER TRIUMPH****In News**

- Exercise Tiger Triumph commenced on the Eastern seaboard.

**Exercise Tiger Triumph**

- It is India- U.S tri-Service Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) exercise
- The exercise is scheduled to include a **harbour phase** followed by a **sea phase** where U.S. and Indian forces will practise combined operational manoeuvre, command and control, and joint sustainment operations. Service members will also participate in cultural and athletic events.
- **Objectives :** The exercise is aimed at developing interoperability for conducting HADR operations and refine Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to enable rapid and smooth coordination between forces of both countries.
  - ♦ It will build trust and confidence in the ability to work together and to respond as an integrated joint force.

**PRESENTATION OF BHARAT RATNA AWARDS****In News**

- President Droupadi Murmu presented the **Bharat Ratna Awards** at Rashtrapati Bhavan to following awardees.

**Awardees**



- Former Prime Minister's Chaudhary Charan Singh and P V Narasimha Rao, Former Bihar Chief Minister Karpoori Thakur and Eminent Scientist M. S. Swaminathan will be given Bharat Ratna posthumously. Former Deputy Prime Minister and Veteran BJP leader L K Advani will also be given the top civilian award of the country.

### Bharat Ratna

- It is the highest civilian award of the country. It is awarded in recognition of exceptional service/performance of the highest order in any field of human endeavour.
- The recommendations for Bharat Ratna are made by the Prime Minister to the President of India.
- No formal recommendations for Bharat Ratna are necessary.
- The Award does not carry any monetary grant.

Source: [Air](#)

### IMT TRILAT 24 EXERCISE

#### Context

- The second edition of IMT TRILAT 24 Exercise was concluded at Nacala, Mozambique.

#### About

- It is a **joint trilateral maritime exercise** between **India, Mozambique and Tanzania**.
- The **first edition** of the exercise was conducted in **2022**.
- The joint operation was conducted in line with the **vision of SAGAR (Security & Growth for All in the Region) off the southeast African coast**.

Source: [PIB](#)

