FWD

FORTUNE WEEKLY DIGEST

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EDITOR'S NOTE

As UPSC aspirants, it is essential to stay updated on current affairs to excel in the examination. This **Fortune Weekly Digest (ForWarD)** brings you the latest news and developments from around the world, carefully curated and analyzed to help you prepare for the Civil Services (Main) Examination.

We understand that time is precious, and we have made sure to present the information in a concise and easy-to-understand manner.

The magazine is divided into different sections. Mains relevant topics have been covered in detail with a UPSC previous year question perspective. The jot downs are examples and interesting facts to enrich your answer writing. Cherrypicks has some key words from the week, helpful again in answer writing and essay. We have also included essay topics and sample questions to help you guage your preparation.

We have designed this magazine to best supplement the daily current affairs notes we have launched by the name of **FIND (Fortune IAS News Daily)** and **FINDER (Fortune IAS News Daily Explainer)** and the **Fortune Prelims Precise** monthly compilation. This magazine will be explained in detail and your queries addressed in a live class we conduct.

At a time when there is no dearth of current affairs materials, our hope is help you get a one-stop solution for all your current affairs needs.

This magazine is a work in progress and your feedback will be appreciated.

We hope that this magazine will serve as a valuable resource for your exam preparation and contribute to your success in the UPSC examination.

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INDORE, THE CLEANEST CITY

Syllabus: GS II - Government Policies & Interventions and Health

PYQ MAPPING

Q) How could social influence and persuasion contribute to the success of Swachh Bharat Abhiyan? **(2016)**

Q) "To ensure effective implementation of policies addressing the water, sanitation and hygiene needs the identification of the beneficiary segments is to be synchronised with anticipated outcomes." Examine the statement in the context of the WASH scheme. **(2017)**

SHORT TAKE

Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM), the world's largest sanitation initiative was launched in 2014 to achieve an **Open Defecation Free India** by October 2, 2019, as a **tribute to Mahatma Gandhi.**

- The programme led to sanitation coverage from **39% in 2014 to 100% in 2019.**

- Around 6 lakh villages declared themselves Open Defecation Free (ODF).

- **Open Defecation Free (ODF)** is defined by :
  - » **No visible faeces** found inthe environment/village; and
  - » Every household as well as public/community institutions use **safe technology options for disposal of faeces.**

- It also led to the achievement of **SDG 6.2 (Sanitation and Hygiene)**, 11 years ahead of the stipulated timeline.

- Phase-II of the SBM-Gramin focused on the sustainability of the ODF status and to cover the villages with **Solid and Liquid Waste Management (SLWM)** to transform villages from ODF to **ODF Plus by 2024-25.**

WHY IN NEWS?

Recently, the Central government's annual Swachh Survekshan Awards 2023 was announced. For the **seventh year in a row**, Indore has been ranked as the cleanest city in India. **Howrah of West Bengal** is the **dirtiest city in India** according to the survey.

INTRODUCTION

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) presents the Swachh Survekshan Awards. The methodology for measuring cleanliness rests on two main criteria – **citizen feedback and field assessment**.

THE CASE OF INDORE: HOW DID THE CITY EXCEL?

When the Awards first began in 2016, Indore was ranked at number 25.

- ➡ **Segregation and disposal of waste: Indore Municipal Corporation (IMC)** took up complete responsibility from the private contract. The wastes are segregated under six categories.
  - » Corporation workers refused to collect households' garbage bags **unless they had been segregated.**

- ➡ **Non-Profits:** A number of NGOs were employed to spread awareness.
  - » NGOs did the **groundwork for identifying areas** in the city for **installing new toilets, dustbins** to tackle the challenge of open defecation.

- ➡ **Humanpower:** In 2016, 3,000 dustbins were installed every 500 metres.
  - » This disrupted the livelihood of local **garbage collectors (jagirs)** and the ragpickers and so they were **absorbed as the new 'Safai Mitras'** who were tasked with collecting and transporting waste.

- ➡ **Issue of legacy waste:** These are the waste collected over the years and left untreated. And for a five-star rating in Swachh Bharat, one of the criteria is that **75% of the waste be treated at the dumping site.**
  - » To achieve this criteria, nearly 13 lakh mt of waste was cleared and treated in just six months.

- ➡ **Funds:** Diversified sources of funds were used. This includes the funds from the Smart Cities Mission, Swachh Bharat Mission and a part of IMC's property tax. The funds were used effectively.
  - » Funds were used to construct **transfer stations to collect waste before it was transported to the dumping ground**.
  - » The wet waste was entirely converted into **compost and sold by the IMC**.
  - » A new **treatment plant** was set up to tackle dry waste.

- An **ODF Plus village** maintains its ODF status and integrates either solid or liquid waste management. Key components of SBM Phase II encompass sustaining ODF status and integrating waste management, and community education.

- Union Jal Shakti Minister informed that **75% of India's village**s, or over 4.43 lakh, have been declared **Open Defecation Free (ODF) Plus** as on Sept 2023.

The theme of the cleanliness survey 2023 was **"Waste to Wealth"**, while for 2024 it is **"Reduce, Reuse and Recycle".**

Swachh Survekshan awards 2023

Indore and Surat were declared the joint cleanest cities of India as part of the Swachh Survekshan Awards. A look at the highlights

TOP 10 CITIES

Rank	Urban local body, State
1	Indore, Madhya Pradesh
1	Surat, Gujarat
3	Navi Mumbai, Maharashtra
4	Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh
5	Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh
6	Vijaywada, Andhra Pradesh
7	New Delhi (NDMC), Delhi
8	Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh
9	Greater Hyderabad, Telangana
10	Pune, Maharashtra

BOTTOM 3

Rank	ULB, State
1	Kolkata, West Bengal
2	Asansol, West Bengal
3	Haora, West Bengal

TOP STATES

Rank	State	No of ULBs
1	Maharashtra	411
2	Madhya Pradesh	378
3	Chhattisgarh	169

THE MOST IMPROVED

PANAJI, GOA	NOWROZABAD, MP
Fastest moving city with population of over 100,000	Fastest moving city with population less than 100,000

➡ **Special Vehicles:** 850 **specially designed vehicles** employed.

» It has different compartments for bio-waste items like diapers and sanitary napkins.

➡ **Building Habits:** The success is also attributed to the officials who conducted various campaigns and the people's participation in it.

» For instance, former Mayor Malini Gaud held about **400 meetings** of citizens and administered the **oath of cleanliness** to more than **four lakh people.**

» Fines from Rs 250 to Rs 500 against people spitting on roads, urinating in the open, or littering was imposed.

WHAT IS THE STATE OF KERALA WHICH EXCELS IN EVERY GOVERNANCE ASPECT?

The city of Kochi has slipped its position in the ranking to **416 in 2023** from **298 in 2022**. Only 446 cities had participated in the survey. **Fire mishap on the solid waste treatment plant** premises at **Brahmapuram** in 2023 led to halt of disposal and the treatment system.

Other reasons:

➤ **Corruption and lack of efficiency** as blamed by the Ernakulam Development Committee.

➤ **Lack of public toilets** in the city and garbage piles accumulated in different parts of the city.

ISSUES WITH SWACHH SURVEKSHAN AWARDS

➡ **A predictable exercise:** For many years now, the top cities are consistent. This is suggestive of a degree of stagnation in the whole process.

» For instance, Over the years, the city of Indore has always been adjudged as cleanest city. The only change is that it has to share honours with Surat. Bhopal, Indore, Surat and Visakhapatnam have always been in the top over the years.

➡ **Parochialism:** The term means narrow-mindedness and local-area focused.

» For instance, there is a subcategory of 'Cleanest Ganga town', which was given to Varanasi and Prayagraj this year.

» But there is no subcategory as cleanest Cauvery or Narmada town.

» Hence, it can be inferred that the awards concentrate on Northern India.

➡ **Ranking scheme:** The award has several ranking schemes put in place to **motivate sections** like cities, villages, schools. This is aimed to pull themselves up with their own strength.

» But this is not as easy as a competitive factor like sports.

» Public sanitation is not the result of a town or city actively choosing to be lazy or industrious in improving themselves.

» States and cities are influenced by their **history, economic conditions and proximity to power.**

HOW TO IMPROVE AND DEMOCRATISE THE AWARDS?

✳ **Retire Top Cities:** The countries finishing in the top 10 for the past 5 years must be retired for some given years and kept aside as inspiring models. And future rankings must focus on the challenges faced by other cities.

✳ **Bring in Inclusive Categories:** The government must bring more subcategories and diversify them so that all the aspects are covered equally, whether North or South or East or West.

    »   For instance, towns along other rivers like Cauvery or Narmada must be brought as subcategories.

✳ **Address the Issues:** The Focus must be on factors like economic conditions and history, which significantly impact a city's sanitation, rather than just rankings.

CONCLUSION

The Indore model can be adopted by other states as well to make the cities clean. The change always comes with the people's behaviour towards the society. The government has taken the best step as far as the idea of cleanliness is concerned. Now it is time for the government to give equal importance to every state when planning categories for surveys.

SAMPLE QUESTION

Q) During his travels, Mohandas Gandhi lamented India's low sanitation levels. Discuss the pros and cons of Swachh Bharat Mission's ranking system that have transformed India in recent years. **(10 M)(150 W)**

INDIA & BHUTAN

Syllabus: GS II - India and its Neighbourhood- Effect of politics of developing countries on India's interests.

PYQ MAPPING

Q) *India is an age-old friend of Sri Lanka.' Discuss India's role in the recent crisis in Sri Lanka in the light of the preceding statement.* *(2022)*

Q) *The protests in Shahbag Square in Dhaka in Bangladesh reveal a fundamental split in society between the nationalists and Islamic forces. What is its significance for India?* *(2013)*

WHY IN NEWS?

Recently Tshering Tobgay, considered to be pro-India and the People's Democratic Party (PDP) won the Bhutan elections. The Indian Prime Minister congratulated Tobgay and promised **to strengthen the unique ties of friendship and cooperation.**

INTRODUCTION

India and Bhutan share **unique and exemplary bilateral relations**, which are based on mutual trust, goodwill and understanding. Formal diplomatic relations between India and Bhutan were established in 1968.

Bhutan and India formally demarcated their 699 km boundary in 2006 · *Map not to scale*

THE ALL-WEATHER FRIENDS

For most of the 20th century, Bhutan embraced **isolationism** from the rest of the world to preserve its unique culture and to avoid being dragged into great power politics.

» But at the same time Bhutan signed the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with India in 1949.

» Nehru's visit to Bhutan in 1958 and China's annexation of Tibet in 1959 convinced Thimphu to close its borders with its Northern neighbour and **embrace a special relationship with India.**

» According to **Article 2 of the 1949 Treaty** India will not interfere in the internal affairs of Bhutan and Bhutan will be **guided by India in external affairs.** This "guidance" part was updated in 2007 to **cooperation between both nations in external matters.** As part of this special relation Bhutan based on Indian guidance **does not have formal diplomatic relations with China and has not joined the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).**

Trade: The India-Bhutan Agreement on Trade, Commerce and Transit signed in 1972 establishes **a free trade regime** between the two countries.

» The Agreement also provides for **duty free transit of Bhutanese exports to third countries.**

» India's total exports to Bhutan in 2022-23 were USD 1070.37 Million and India's total imports from Bhutan in 2022-23 were USD 535.61 Million.

Educational, Cultural Cooperation and People-to-People Exchanges: Over 950 scholarships are being provided annually by GoI for Bhutanese students to study in India.

» A number of **Bhutanese pilgrims** travel to Bodh Gaya, Rajgir, Nalanda, Sikkim, Udayagiri, and other Buddhist sites in India.

» About 50,000 Indian citizens are working in Bhutan, mainly in the construction sector, education and technical consultants involved in **infrastructure projects.**

» Some Indian **daily-workers also enter and exit Bhutan every day** in the border towns, as a sign of the close economic interdependence between both countries.

Economy: Bhutan became the second country to launch the **BHIM app**, further deepening the financial linkages between our two countries.

» India provided development assistance for Bhutan's 12th Five-Year plan, (2018-2023).

Science: ISRO and Department of Information and Technology (DITT) of Bhutan collaborated on the joint development of a **nano satellite** (less than 10kg) for Bhutan, with the intention of sharing knowledge on building and operating a small satellite.

» **The India-Bhutan SAT** was launched in 2022 by ISRO's Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV).

» **The Ground Earth Station** was inaugurated at Thimbhu, Bhutan in 2023 to receive data from India-Bhutan SAT, pertaining to its territory, directly from the satellite and process **in real-time.**

Energy: Mutually beneficial hydro-power cooperation with Bhutan is a key pillar in the partnership. India has so far constructed four Hydroelectric Projects in Bhutan.

» For instance, for the Mangdechhu Hydroelectric Project of Bhutan, India has provided a 70% loan and a 30% grant.

- **Defence:** In 2003, Operation All Clear was conducted by the Royal Bhutan Army against Assam separatist insurgent groups in the southern regions of Bhutan.

  » **Treaty of 1949** gives India control over the Bhutanese Defence matters. India has soldiers in Bhutan protecting its borders. The **Indian Military Training Team (IMTRAT)** is a training mission of the **Indian Army in Bhutan since 1961.** India's

assistance in defence and communication to Bhutan has helped it to maintain sovereignty and territorial integrity.

- **Connectivity:** In November 2023, India and Bhutan made a decision to go ahead with the **final survey for the 58 km cross-border rail link** between Gelephu and Kokrajhar in Assam to be built by India.

  » The two sides also agreed on a **second rail link** for about 18 km between Samtse in Bhutan and Banarhat in West Bengal tea gardens area.

WHAT ARE THE ISSUES THAT BHUTAN FACES?

➡ **Tourism industry:** It is still reeling from the lingering effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. Also Bhutan has a policy of **"High Value, Low Volume",** which promotes sustainable tourism based on the carrying capacity of its nature and socio-cultural and infrastructural reality.

➡ **Unemployment:** The youth unemployment **rate is at 29%.** And over half of Bhutan's population is under 30 years old. Hence a record number of young people are **emigrating from Bhutan** to places like Australia in pursuit of better opportunities.

➡ **Poverty:** Bhutan is best known for its philosophy of promoting **Gross National Happiness over Gross Domestic Product (GDP).**

» Since the 1980s, Bhutan has recorded an average growth in annual GDP of 7.5% and poverty levels have declined from **36% in 2007 to 10% in 2019.**

» Even Though Bhutan is to graduate from **least developed country (LDC) status,** it is **lagging to attract foreign direct investment (FDI).**

➡ **GDP:** Over the past five years, Bhutan's GDP has grown at a snail's pace of about 1.7 per cent on average. **Low forex reserves and a major public debt**, with an estimated **125% Government Debt to GDP ratio** in 2022(largest debt to India) are Bhutan's major worries.

» **Bhutan's GDP growth** has been hovering around **4%** for many years now (in the **Covid year it declined to -10%**).

CHALLENGES

➤ **Connectivity:** The Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal (BBIN) Economic Corridor must be materialised.

  » The **Motor Vehicles Agreement** by the four countries was signed in 2015 and still the agreement has not been rectified.

  » According to a **2021 World Bank report**, regional trade can boost India's national income by 7.6%.

➤ **Trade Imbalance:** Currently there is a huge trade deficit with India, as over 80% of Bhutan's total imports and exports is with India. This has become a cause of concern for Bhutan.

➤ **China, a cause of concern for India:**

➤ **Diplomacy:** Bhutan, despite bordering China, has un-demarcated borders and no diplomatic relations with the latter.

  » This makes it the only neighbouring country of China to have no diplomatic relations with Beijing.

  » But recently in the Expert Group Meetings **(EGM) of 2023**, China and Bhutan **discussed the possibility of opening up diplomatic relations.**

➤ **Border Dispute:** India and Bhutan share a 699 km long border. There have been border incursions by Chinese forces in recent years. For instance, the **Doklam standoff** (2017) was a major flashpoint in the India-China-Bhutan tri-junction.

➤ **Economic Cooperation:** Recently, the Chinese government is providing financial assistance to Bhutan, mainly towards infrastructure development. In 2020, the two countries signed an agreement to establish a sister city relationship between Xining, the capital of Qinghai province in China, and Thimphu, the capital of Bhutan.

➤ **India's Strategic Interest:** China's increasing influence in Bhutan is a threat to India's security and strategic interests. It will give China a strategic advantage in the region.

WAY FORWARD

- ✳ India must **continue supporting** the Bhutanese five years plans as per their best interests.
- ✳ India must try to go beyond the **hydro energy support** to other **renewable energy and electric transportation** in Bhutan.
- ✳ India must **extend more seats for Bhutanese students.** Especially, MBBS seats in Assam medical colleges.
- ✳ India must **complete the projects on time** including the hydro and rail link projects.
- ✳ India must **increase the concessional skill training missions** to Bhutan especially in latest technology like space.
- ✳ India must help Bhutan in its **ecology protection activities.**

CONCLUSION

The relations between India and Bhutan have been good for many years. This relationship must be nurtured as it will help both to sail smoothly given the geopolitical implications in the region.

SAMPLE QUESTION

Q) The India-Bhutan relationship has crystallised over the decades. How does China affect this position? Suggest measures to strengthen India-Bhutan relation.**(15 M)(250 W)**

REPUBLIC DAY TABLEAUX

Syllabus: GS II - Functions & responsibilities of the Union and the States; issues and challenges of federal structure.

PYQ MAPPING

Q) How far do you think cooperation, competition and confrontation have shaped the nature of federation in India? Cite some recent examples to validate your answer. (2020)

Q) While the national political parties in India favour centralisation, the regional parties are in favour of State autonomy." Comment. (2022)

SHORT TAKE

Tableaux: It is a group of models or motionless figures representing an idea, a narrativefrom a story or from history.

दिल्ली

WHY IN NEWS?

Recently, four opposition-ruled states — Delhi, Karnataka, Punjab, and West Bengal — have had their **Republic Day tableaux proposals rejected** by the Ministry of Defence.

INTRODUCTION

Led by the President from the Kartavya Path in New Delhi, the annual Republic Day parade exhibits tableaux rolled out by States, Union Territories, Central ministries and departments. The colourful tableaux showcases India's **rich and diverse cultural heritage**, and our **military might.**

OVERVIEW

- ➤ The **Ministry of Defence (MoD)** is responsible for conducting the Republic Day parade and coordinating arrangements with States and other agencies.
- ➤ The ministry provides one tractor and one trailer for the tableau to each state.
- ➤ The overarching theme chosen by MoD for this year's tableaux is **'Viksit Bharat'** (Developed India) and **'Bharat-Loktantra ki Matruka'** (India-Mother of Democracy).

CRITERIA FOR TABLEAUX

- ➡ The **sketch or design** must be simple, colourful, easy to comprehend and avoid statistical data and unnecessary details.

➡️ **Writing or use of logos on the tableaux** is not allowed except for the name of State/UT presenting, which can be in Hindi in the front, English at the back and in the regional language on the sides of the tableau.

➡️ The tableaux of two different states/ UTs **must not be too similar,** and **eco-friendly material** must be used for their construction.

➡️ A **State can pitch multiple proposals** to the committee, but only one is chosen for the final parade.

TABLEAUX SELECTION PROCESS

➡️ The application process begins with MoD inviting tableau proposals.

➡️ The interested parties submits a concept note, along with design blueprints

➡️ A **committee of experts appointed by the MoD,** comprising padma awardees and prominent persons in the field of art, culture, painting, sculpture, music, architecture, choreography, etc. as recommended by Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts and the Indian Council of Cultural Research evaluates the received tableaux proposals.

➡️ The proposal then goes through a blueprint and later 3-D model evaluation for final selection.

ISSUES RAISED BY STATES

- **Final authority:** Although the selection process is envisioned to be collaborative, the Committee has the final say.

- **Political bias:** Several opposition-ruled States governments have raised accusations of 'discrimination'.

  » Karnataka has hit out at the Centre over the rejection of the state's tableau, saying the government has "insulted seven crore Kannadigas.

- **Exclusion without reasons:** Several opposition ruled governments, like Delhi, alleged that their tableaux were rejected without giving any official reasons.

MOD'S RESPONSE

➤ The MoD responded that the committee finalises the **theme and aesthetics** and the government, Minister or Secretary are not in the picture of the process.

➤ Due to **time constraints** and to get the best tableaux approximately **16 tableaux are selected for the Republic Day parade every year** due to which very State and UT cannot be accommodated each year.

➤ **Non-selected tableaux can be showcased at Bharat Parv at Delhi's Red Fort**. (celebrated this year from 23-31 January)

WAY FORWARD

✳️ The ministry of Defence has now proposed a 3 year rollover plan whereby every state/UT will get accommodated and has been approved by 28 states.

✳️ The Ministry must ensure that the Minister or Secretary or any political agent do not have any role in the selection process.

✳️ The reason for non-selection must also be conveyed to the state/UT concerned.

CONCLUSION

The annual Republic Day celebrations are incomplete without colourful tableaux cantering down the Rajpath. While the selection process must be made more inclusive and transparent to accommodate the aspirations and participation of every State and UTs, the State and UTs must respect the decisions of the selection committee.

SAMPLE QUESTION

Q) Lack of representation at the republic day parade can blotch the Indian identity of unity in diversity. In the context of the tableaux selection issue, suggest how to overcome the representation dilemma. **(10 M)(150 W)**

2023, A DIFFICULT YEAR FOR START-UPS

Syllabus: GS III - Growth & Development

PYQ MAPPING

Q) *Account for the failure of the manufacturing sector in achieving the goal of labour-intensive exports rather than capital-intensive exports. Suggest measures for more labour-intensive rather than capital-intensive exports.* **(2017)**

Q) *There is a clear acknowledgement that Special Economic Zones (SEZs) are a tool of industrial development, manufacturing and exports. Recognizing this potential, the whole instrumentality of SEZs requires augmentation. Discuss the issues plaguing the success of SEZs with respect to taxation, governing laws and administration.* **(2015)**

SHORT TAKE

The Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) is a measure of an investment's average annual growth over a given period. It shows you the average rate of return on your investments over a year.

Unicorn: is a term that describes **a privately-owned startup** with a valuation of **over $1 billion**.

Venture capital: It is a form of financing where capital is invested into a company—a startup or small business—in exchange for equity in the company
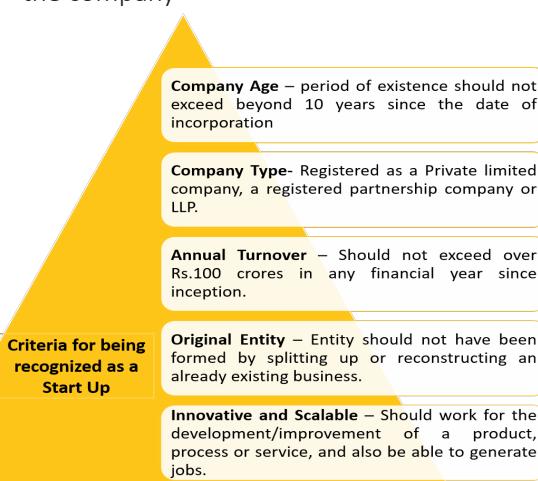
WHY IN NEWS?

The year 2023 was not all good for the start-up ecosystem. Indian express article had explained the reasons and a forecast on how the new year will turn out for the startups.

INTRODUCTION

The year 2021, after the COVID-19 crisis saw the story of India's start-up ecosystem coming into its own and establishing the country **as a credible hub** for building successful businesses.

However, the funding slowed, jobs were lost, and only 2 unicorns were created in 2023.

WHY WAS 2023 A BAD YEAR FOR THE STARTUPS?

➤ **The Funding:** Last year, Indian start-ups raised a total of $8.3 billion. This is the lowest they have raised since 2016, when there were much fewer of these firms.

➤ **The growth rate:** There was a decline of 72% in the compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of funding in the last three years. This is a signal that the **venture capital-fueled boom** that followed the Covid-19 pandemic has ended.

Indian Startup Funding – Mega Deals Fail To Pick Pace

Source: Inc42

Inc42

➤ **The Unicorns:** In 2022, the country added 23 unicorns. In 2023, only two firms could attain that status.

➤ **The Jobs:** More than 20,000 people working at various start-ups lost their jobs in 2023.
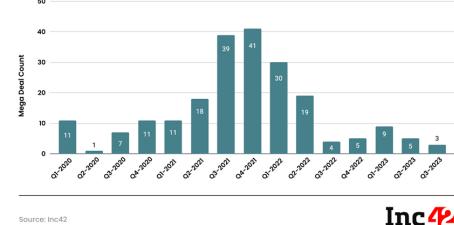
BUT, NOT ALL HOPE IS LOST

➡ **Automotive tech start-ups:** The sector grew by 16% in 2023, resulting in a 4.5x increase in the sector's share of total funding as compared to 2022.

➡ **Supply chain and Logistics sector:** Q3 2023 saw the emergence of India's 111th unicorn – Zepto, Mumbai-based quick commerce delivery startup.

  » The growth of the **Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC)** ecosystem has given hope for investors as this will boost the growth of start-ups in the logistics space.

➡ The **AI and EV** sector also saw an increase in investments.

Criteria for being recognized as a Start Up

Company Age – period of existence should not exceed beyond 10 years since the date of incorporation

Company Type- Registered as a Private limited company, a registered partnership company or LLP.

Annual Turnover – Should not exceed over Rs.100 crores in any financial year since inception.

**Original Entity** – Entity should not have been formed by splitting up or reconstructing an already existing business.

Innovative and Scalable – Should work for the development/improvement of a product, process or service, and also be able to generate jobs.

THE GOOD NEWS

- **India was 4th in raising money,** the first 3 being the United States, the United Kingdom, and China.
- **Kerala** has been recognised as the best performer in the **fourth edition** of the **States' Startup Ranking (2022).**
  - » It was released by the Union Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
  - » During 2022, more than 1,700 start-ups were registered in the State. Out of these, 40 were working in the fields of renewable energy, sustainability and climate change.

The Reasons:

- » The State **updated Startup Policy of 2022** which offered a range of incentives and support mechanisms for start-ups.
- » This includes a **dedicated fund** for early-stage start-ups, tax breaks to mobilise private investors, streamlined and **fast-track approvals** for licences and approvals and the implementation of the Startup Procurement Policy to facilitate start-ups' access to government contracts.
- » State's initiatives like **'IGNITE',** aimed at connecting start-ups to investors at the local level in every district, provided good outcomes.
- » **Sector-specific innovation hubs** such as the Aerospace and Defence Innovation Hub and Health Innovation Hub were created.

STARTUPS SPLIT BY REGION
- 24% DELHI/NCR
- 6% PUNE
- 17% MUMBAI
- 8% HYDERABAD
- BANGALORE
- 27%

STARTUPS SPLIT BY INDUSTRIES

20K+ TOTAL STARTUPS

E-Commerce, B2B, Consumer Internet, Mobile Apps, SaaS, Other, Engineering, Construction, Agri Products, Textile, Print & Packaging, Transport & Logistics, Outsourcing & Support, Other

Tech — Non-Tech
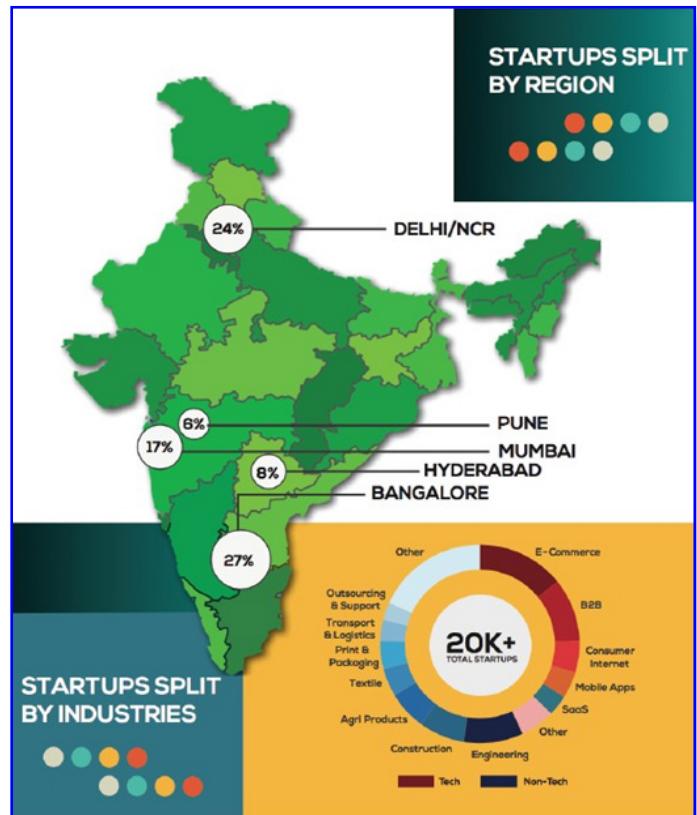
...And the bad: Byju's Issue

Byju's, a edtech firm which was launched in 2011 by Byju Raveendran and Divya Gokulnath revolutionised online education. With a $22 billion valuation, it became the most valuable edtech business globally by 2020.

The fall:

- The business took out **large loans** from banks and private equity companies, but it was **unable to produce enough cash flow to pay** off its debts on schedule.
  - » For instance, It failed to repay a $300 million loan from the Singaporean firm, Redwood Global Investments.
  - » Redwood Global Investments' lawsuit for breach of contract and fraud relating to its loan default, BYJU's experienced legal issues and reputational harm.
  - » It moved away from its primary objective of delivering high-quality education to selling hardware items to students and parents, sometimes through pushy and dishonest sales techniques.
- **Poor governance and communication**: The company ignored employee, customer, and investor feedback and suggestions.
  - » The company's poor standards of corporate governance have been exposed through the **resignation of auditors** and independent directors on its board, as well as investigations by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs and **the Serious Fraud Investigation Office.**
- As as a result it experienced a 75% drop in stock price and valuation.

*The company initially aimed to make students love learning and this led to a **Strong Brand Value.** But it became a **money-making machine (MMM)** and neglected the values delivered to customers.*
The company added features to make it attractive and attract investors and buyers, but these features did not serve their purpose.

REASONS WHY STARTUPS STRUGGLED

- ➤ **Lack of a well developed business plan:** The investor's are not pleased by the startup business plans as many lack understanding of the target market, lack a proper financial plan, etc..

- ➤ **Poor management:** Many startups are founded by individuals who are not experienced in running a business. They may have a great idea for a product or service, but they lack the business skills to make their startup successful.

- ➤ **Lack a brand identity:** The startups do not have the time or resources to invest in marketing initiatives and will not have a strong brand value.
  - » Without a well-defined brand identity, it will be difficult for startups to stand out from the crowd and attract the attention of potential investors.

- ➤ **Lack of sales:** Sales are the **lifeblood of any business**, but they're especially important for startups.
  - » Without sales, there's no revenue coming in, which means there's no money to fund operations or pay investors back.

- ➤ **High burn rate:** It means that they are **spending more money than they are bringing in.**
  - » This is **not a sustainable business model** and will eventually lead to the startup going out of business.

- ➤ **Insufficient capitalization:** Startups often underestimate the amount of money they need to get started, and as a result, they run out of funds quickly.
  - » This leaves them unable to continue operating their business, let alone grow it.

WAY FORWARD

- ✳ **A good business plan:** Every startup needs a good plan. A plan that focuses on long term development with deep knowledge on customer and investor preferences.

- ✳ **A strong management:** There must be a strong management with specialised departments to provide the needed focus. This necessitates talented employees in each field to make sure that all wings of the company will work efficiently.

- ✳ **Proper estimates:** The entrepreneurs need to chart the exact amount needed not only for the initial start of business, but also for its day-to-day working till the firm has started making enough profits.

- ✳ **Marketing:** A proper marketing strategy with the right targets can help businesses plan their trajectory of growth. This part also builds the Brand value in the society.

- ✳ **Values and ethics:** The products which reach the public must have a value based strength to be accepted. For instance, BYJU's was value focused and once it became profit focused, it lost its value and got degraded.

- ✳ **Government intervention:** A supportive environment can help startups to reach a long way in growth. For instance, Kerala's IGNITE initiative has helped many individuals to excel.
  - » Also, the government must reduce red-tape and become more efficient in providing approvals.
  - » The schemes in supportive of startups and Infrastructure developments are other the need of the hour.

CONCLUSION

2024 can be the year for the startup ecosystem to rebounce. Sectors such as AI, fintech and EVs, buoyed by **investor interest and government support**, are poised to lead this resurgence. The entrepreneurs on the other hand must balance innovation with financial prudence, while investors are expected to continue their judicious allocation, focusing on startups with long-term viability.

SAMPLE QUESTION

Q) There is a clear acknowledgement that the Startup ecosystem in India can act as a tool of industrial development, manufacturing and exports. Based on the above statement, discuss why the startup growth fell in 2023 and suggest ways to overcome the challenges. **(15 M)(250 W)**

INDIA'S REMISSION POLICY

Syllabus: GS II - Structure, Organization & Functioning of the Judiciary

PYQ MAPPING

Q) What was held in the Coelho case? In this context, can you say that judicial review is of key importance amongst the basic features of the Constitution? **(2016)**

Q) Judicial Legislation is antithetical to the doctrine of separation of powers as envisaged in the Indian Constitution. In this context justify the filing of large number of public interest petitions praying for issuing guidelines to executive authorities. **(2020)**

WHY IN NEWS?

The Supreme Court (SC) has **struck down the remission granted to 11 men convicted in the Bilkis Bano gangrape case of 2002.** Supreme Court reviewed its own verdict and accepted the petition under article 32 by the victim.

INTRODUCTION

Remission or premature release is the reduction of the term of a prison sentence without affecting the nature of the sentence. It refers to a structured system with criteria for prisoners to meet in order to encourage good behaviour, rehabilitation and self-improvement, with the ultimate benefit being the release of the prisoner.

March 3, 2002: A mob descended upon the family of Bilkis Bano, 21, at Randhikpur village near Ahmedabad. She was gang-raped and seven members of her family were murdered

December 16, 2003: Supreme Court orders a CBI inquiry

January 21, 2008: A special court convicts 11 men and sentences them to life imprisonment

May 4, 2017: Bombay High Court upholds the sentence

May 13, 2022: Supreme Court directs Gujarat government to consider the plea of a convict for pre-mature release under its policy of July 9, 1992

August 15, 2022: As part of the Gujarat government's remission policy, 11 convicts are released from the Godhra sub-jail

August 25, 2022: Top court issues notice to the Centre and Gujarat government on a PIL plea against the premature release

November 30, 2022: Bilkis moves SC challenging the remission

December 17, 2022: Court dismisses her plea seeking a review of its May 13 verdict in which it had said the State of Gujarat was the "appropriate government" competent to examine the application for the pre-mature release

March 27, 2023: Court notice to Centre, Gujarat government and others on a plea filed by Bilkis Bano

August 7, 2023: Court starts final hearing on petitions challenging the remission

January 8, 2024: Court quashes remission to 11 convicts

OVERVIEW

- **One of the convicts** approached the Supreme Court in 2022 seeking a mandamus to the Gujarat government to use its 1992 **remission policy and release them.**

- They argued, and the court allowed, that the Gujarat government has the **right to decide the remission** (though the trial and sentencing happened in Maharashtra) and must use the 1992 policy since that was the existing policy when the crime was committed in 2002.

- The policy allowed **premature release based on a Jail Advisory Board recommendation** after 14 years of imprisonment which they had completed. They were later released following the procedure by the Gujarat government.

- However, later a number of review petitions under various PILs and one under **Article 32** was filed by the victim herself making the Supreme Court to closely examine the 2022 verdict and then overturn it.

- The Supreme Court now said the convicts had s**uppressed facts and played fraud** with the SC earlier to get a favourable verdict. Court also said the Gujarat government was complicit and acted in tandem with the convicts. It failed to seek review of the 2022 verdict and usurped the power which it did not have.

- SC also observed that the appropriate Government failed to obtain the opinion (with reasons) of the **presiding judge of the convicting or confirming Court.**

- SC ordered the convicts to **surrender in two weeks to undergo the remaining punishment.** The convicts are allowed to request remission from Maharashtra government. However, the **Maharashtra remission policy does not allow remission request for such crimes until atleast 28 years of incarceration.**

- Interestingly, CBI (the investigating agency) as well as the special CBI court (the sentencing court) had in 2019 an 2020 recommended **no leniency of any form to the culprits.** What remains to be seen if the culprits will approach the Maharashtra government and whether it will update its remission laws.

LAW GOVERNING REMISSION OF SENTENCES

➡️ **Constitution**: The President and Governors of states, under **Articles 72 and 161** respectively**,** can pardon a convict, and can suspend, remit, or commute a sentence passed by the courts.

➡️ **Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC)**:

» **Section 432** of the CrPC allows the State governments to have the power to remit sentences, as prisons is a State Subject. The law requires that the appropriate Government, before actually exercising the power of remission, must obtain the opinion (with reasons) of the presiding judge of the convicting or confirming Court.

» **Section 433** empowers States to set up a Sentence Review Board to exercise the powers of remission. However, according to the SC, states cannot exercise the power of remission arbitrarily, and must follow due process

» **Section 433A** places restrictions on remission such that prisoners under life imprisonment can seek remission only after imprisonment for 14 years is completed.

➡️ **The Prison Act, 1894** defines remission system as a set of rules regulating the award of marks to, and the consequent shortening of sentence of, prisoners in Jail.

SUPREME COURT CASES

➡️ **Sher Singh v. State of Punjab (1983)**:The top court had laid down a timeline of three months from the date of receiving such petitions to decide on the matter.

➡️ **Kehar Singh vs. Union of India (1989)**: The SC observed that Courts cannot deny to a prisoner the benefit to be considered for remission of sentence, as this would not just be against the principles of reformation but will also push the convict into a dark hole without there being a semblance of light at the end of the tunnel.

➡️ **Laxman Naskar v. Union of India' (2000):** The SC laid down five grounds on which remission can be considered:

» Whether the offence is an individual act of crime that does not affect the society.

» Whether there is a chance of the crime being repeated in future.

» Whether the convict has lost the potentiality to commit crime.

» Whether any purpose is being served in keeping the convict in prison.

» Socio-economic conditions of the convict's family.

➡️ **State of Haryana vs. Mahender Singh and Others (2007)**: The SC observed that no convict has a fundamental right of remission or shortening of sentences.

➡️ The court in **Bilkis Bano** laid down the following tests which may apply to consider the application for remission:

» that the order has been passed without application of mind;

» that the order is mala fide;

» that the order has been passed on extraneous or wholly irrelevant considerations;

» that relevant materials have been kept out of consideration;

» that the order suffers from arbitrariness.

ARGUMENTS FOR REMISSION PROVISION

➤ **Addressing overcrowding:** Overcrowding is one of the underlying factors precipitating violence within prisons.

➤ **Improving prison management:** Early release programs based on good behaviour would cost less, reducing high costs of prison maintenance and management, and aids effective resource management.

➤ **Reformation:** It gives the offender the opportunity for growth and reform in prison as opposed to merely serving their time. Remission aids in achieving a humanitarian approach and aims to reform and rehabilitate low-risk prisoners, especially juveniles.

➤ **Prevents recidivism:** It breaks down the cycle of recidivism for long-term good and produces a compelling incentive for prisoners to behave cooperatively and positively while in prison.

➤ **Mental and physical improvements in inmates:** It aids in improving the psychological mindset of prisoners, effectively allowing them the opportunity to take their future into their own hands with the prospect of freedom as the reward.

➤ **Reintegration**: Remissions give prisoners a chance to change and hope, rebuilding their family and get reintegrated back to society.

ARGUMENTS AGAINST REMISSION PROVISION

➡ **Abuse of power:** The implementation of remission provisions are marred by favouritism, political interference, corruption and inconsistency in individual approaches.

➡ **Incomplete rehabilitation:** Premature release, such as sex offenders, who may still be subject to remission by good behaviour, may be released earlier without access to rehabilitative practices.

➡ **Public safety:** Early release of certain offenders involved crimes of heinous nature, such as serial offenders, sex offenders, etc., increases the risk to public safety.

➡ **Concerns of victims and survivors:** Remission of convicts leaves the victims and survivors with a feeling of incomplete justice, and at times a sense of revenge.

➡ **Ineffective deterrence:** The provision of premature release lowers the seriousness of penal actions imposed on crimes and fails to act as a deterrence against future crimes.

WAY FORWARD

✳ **Prioritising human rights and dignity:** The remission provisions should be above political interests- especially when the crime is against marginalised section**s**

✳ **Larger message to the society:** Government decisions should consider societal moral values and the impact it can have in the society.

✳ **Safeguard mechanisms**: Adequate safeguards measures such as increasing the monitoring of prisoners in their progress, following the due process of law is important.

✳ **Coordination:** Supreme Court verdicts in the matter must be strictly followed and the court must show proactiveness while deciding such matters.

CONCLUSION

Remission is a provision that gives the prisoner a ray of hope to be free again, without which s/he would have to live in the prison till his/her last breath. However it must be given only on a case-by-case basis and not in a wholesale manner. There is a need for a comprehensive and remission policy that strikes a considerable balance between the need to encourage better behaviour for prisoners while at the same time ensuring protection needed for members in society, and freedom of the victims, survivors.

SAMPLE QUESTION

Q) A rational remission policy should encompass humanitarian considerations and the convicts' scope for reform without violating the rule of law or societal interests. Critically analyse the statement in the context of India's Remission Policy. **(10 M)(150 W)**

MODEL ESSAY

Science and technology revolutionise our lives, but memory, tradition and myth frames our response

Introduction - Advancements in science and technology have changed humanity in unprecedented ways. Radical and significant changes have brought about in various fields. However, the extent to which such changes are accepted or rejected are largely shaped by our past.

What is science & technology?

» Inventions, discoveries, breakthrough developments, cutting edge technologies.
» Used in various fields.
» Inseparable aspect of human civilization.
» E.g. Wheel, fire, blockchain, quantum technology, superconductors, space technology.

What are memory, tradition and myth?

» Culture, religion and belief systems, history, experiences, knowledge, language, societal backgrounds, superstitions.
» E.g. Traditional medicines, Shamans, Magico-religious practitioners.

How science & technology (S&T) revolutionise our lives?

» Eases different aspects of life. E.g. IoT, CRISPR-Cas9, AI,
» Improves standard of living. E.g. Vaccine development
» Open new avenues. E.g. Space missions
» Address challenges in daily life.

How memory, tradition and myth frames our response?

» Societal acceptance and adaptations depend on past experiences, knowledge etc. E.g. Dongria Khond protest against Vedanta mining
» Fear of the unknown. E.g-Assigning divinity to the uncontrollable. E.g. Lightning and God Zeus

When S&T overlooks memory, tradition and myth..?

» Scientific advancements lose human touch and human values. E.g. The Manhattan project, human clinical trials.
» Biassed outcomes. E.g. AI acquiring human bias and discriminations such as racism.
» Exploitation of the environment. E.g. Industrialisation
» Profit oriented motives and actions leading to irreversible consequences. E.g Climate change and global warming.
» Victims of development. E.g. Yanadi tribes displaced from their land to build Sriharikota launch pad.

When our responses are framed solely based on memory, tradition and myth..?

» Blind rejection based on limited knowledge and misinformation. E.g. Computerphobia in the 1980s
» Resistance to change and adaptations. E.g. Vaccine hesitancy
» Need for S&T to accommodate memory, tradition and myth.
» To promote inclusivity and utilitarianism. E.g. IPR not availed for seatbelts by Volvo.
» A better way to address human challenges. E.g. One health approach
» Outcomes and benefits become sustainable.
» Tapping into the complete potential of scientific advancements.

Conclusion can include how achieving a balance between science & technology and human response is crucial for the advancement of human civilization.

SAMPLE ESSAY TOPICS

❊ Waste isn't a waste until we waste it.

❊ Silence of the Good is more dangerous than the actions of the Bad

❊ The real problem is not population growth but what population is doing

ETHICS - CASE STUDY

Q) You are in-charge of a stadium in New Delhi. The world athletics championship is to be held in a month. Many athletes representing India are practising in the stadium. This is the only stadium with the required facilities and hence the athletes have divided their time for stadium use as there are events like javelin throw which requires a long and free ground inorder to ensure safety. You have also arranged a medical officer to cater to any emergency. At this time a powerful officer posted in the Finance Ministry asked you to make the stadium free for him to walk his dog along with his family guests. The officer asked for the stadium knowing that it is important for the athletes to train for the upcoming event. When you tried to request the officer to use the stadium without affecting the athletes, he threatened to terminate you from the job if you did not follow the order. A black mark can also affect your promotion and pension as well. **(20 Marks)**

a) Identify the ethical issues involved.   (Answer in 250 words)

b) What are the options available to you to deal with the situation?

c) In the light of the above case, comment upon the bureaucratic privileges versus code of ethics which is required to curb inequality and unfair use of limited resources in the country.

ETHICS - EXAMPLES

1. New Zealand's **first refugee-turned-lawmaker**, Golriz Ghahraman, has apologized and resigned over claims of shoplifting. She cited mental health issues due to work stress and personal trauma.

2. The University Grants Commission (UGC), has introduced **Mulya Pravah 2.0** to instill human values and professional ethics, combating unethical practices like favouritism, sexual harassment, gender discrimination in educational institutions.

3. A farmer couple in Maharashtra has donated the organs of their 11-year-old son - declared brain-dead to 3 teens. This denotes the breakaway from cultural norms against **organ donation and giving primacy to human life.**

4. 2 students were booked by the Madhya Pradesh police for **hijacking a High Court Judge's car** for rushing a heart attack patient to hospital, later the Chief Minister requested the HC to spare them on the basis of their **altruistic act.**

5. The movie **"12th fail"** is based on the true story of **Manoj Kumar Sharma** who was born in the dacoit-infested Chambal region in Bihar. His father was a clerk, an honest man, who got suspended for hitting a corrupt officer. Manoj Kumar Sharma overcame extreme poverty and odds to become an **Indian Police Service officer.** He incidently failed his 12th exams as the then new DSP Dushyant Singh, conducted a drive against **institutionalised cheating in exams.**

MAINS JOT DOWN

GS- II - JUDICIARY

According to a report published by the **Centre for Research and Planning of the Supreme Court of India**, **49.9%** of district courts **did not have ramps,** and **74.3% didn't have wheelchairs** while just **2.8%** have **sign-language interpreters.**

GS- II - BILATERAL RELATIONS

Maldives government suspended three deputy ministers for **derogatory remarks** against Indian **PM Narendra Modi** following his visit to Lakshadweep. The issue erupted when one of the deputy ministers **referred to the Indian prime minister as a 'clown' and a 'puppet of Israel'.**

GS- II - EDUCATION

As per the latest report of **Annual Status of Education Report (ASER)**, titled 'Beyond Basics'- **Females (76%) do better than males (70.9%)** in reading a Standard II level text in their **regional language**, while males do better than females in **arithmetic and English reading.**

GS- II -SOCIAL JUSTICE

As per the latest report of **Annual Status of Education Report (ASER)**, titled 'Beyond Basics'- Males students **(43.7%)** are more than twice as likely to have their **own smartphone** than females students **(19.8%).**

GS- III - INFRASTRUCTURE

India is the **3rd largest dam-owning nation** in the world after the **US and China,** with more than **6000 completed and operational specified dams** and 143 are under various construction stages.

GS- III - CYBER SECURITY

A **critical vulnerability** that exposed the personal details of VVIPs, including top industrialists, celebrities and sports personalities in the country, was **fixed after a delay of 11 months** by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs with the help of **CERT- IN.**

GS- III - SCIENTIFIC DISCOVERY

Researchers at **IIT Madras** and Mandi have metabolically engineered **Nothapodytes nimmoniana plant cells** to increase production of **anticancer drug Camptothecin** (CPT). CPT is an important anti-cancer drug lead molecule for high-value drugs like **irinotecan and topotecan.**

GS- III - CONSERVATION

According to a recent report by **International Energy Agency (IEA)**, emerging **e-fuel technologies** are in need of **cost reductions, resources and infrastructure investments** to achieve a **10% share of e-fuels in aviation and shipping by 2030.**

GS- III - FOOD PROCESSING

India's Food Processing Sector emerged as a **sunrise sector** and attracted FDI investments of about Rs 50,000 crore in the past nine years with roughly **150% increase in processed food exports.**

GS- III - ECONOMY

As per the **SBI research report**, **36.3%** of taxpayers have moved from **lower income to higher income tax** bucket in the **last 8 years.**

CHERRYPICKS OF THE WEEK

Smishing is a type of phishing attack, smishing, often involves sending fraudulent text messages to individuals with the aim of tricking them into divulging sensitive personal information, such as passwords, credit card numbers, or other confidential data.

Gun jumping refers to the situation where parties involved in a proposed merger or acquisition prematurely take actions that could potentially have an impact on competition before obtaining the necessary regulatory approvals.

E-fuels are a type of fuel that is produced by capturing carbon emissions and combining them with hydrogen made from renewable or CO2-free electricity. **For Ex:** e-kerosene, e-methane, and e-methanol.

Paradiplomacy, also known as 'state diplomacy' or 'subnational diplomacy,' denotes the ability of subnational governments or Non governmental organisations to engage in international relations.

Momentum Investing refers to a style of investing wherein investors purchase assets such as stocks or bonds that are consistently rising in price, while selling assets whose prices are falling. The "buy high, sell higher" philosophy of momentum investing is in stark contrast to the traditional "buy low, sell high" advice given to investors.

Ocean Heat Content (OHC) is defined as the total amount of heat absorbed by and stored in the oceans and measurements of water temperature reflect the amount of heat in the water at a particular time and location. Recently, ocean heat content reached 286 Zetajoules (ZJ) in 2023 relative to the 1981–2010 average.

Gini index or Gini coefficient is a statistical measure of the economic inequality across the population in a country or between countries. It measures the dispersion of income or wealth distribution among the members of a population. It helps to gauge the rich-poor wealth divide in a country. As per the latest Oxfam India report, just 5% of Indians own more than 60% of the country's wealth.