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Institute of Civil Services

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS



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S.NO.	TOPIC
1.	ECONOMIC INEQUALITY IN INDIA
2.	ROLE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) IN POLITICS
3.	PRELIMS POINTERS

ECONOMIC INEQUALITY IN INDIA

SOURCE: [THE HINDU](#)

TAG: GS Paper II- *Poverty, Social Justice*, GS Paper III – *Inclusive Growth, Inequalities*.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

Mains

Q. In light of the declining Gini coefficient and simultaneous income polarization in India, evaluate the role of various socio-economic factors, including gender, caste, religion, and ethnicity, in perpetuating inequalities. (150 words)

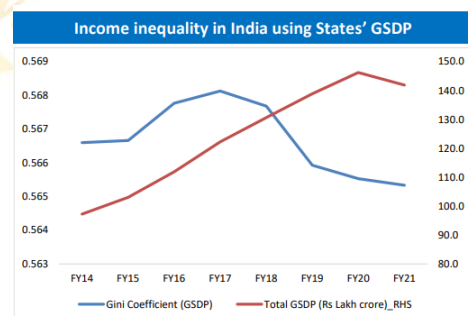
Q. Due to rising economic inequality and its effects on human well-being and prosperity, the concept of "inclusive growth" has become central to economic development. Explain (150 words)

WHY IN NEWS?

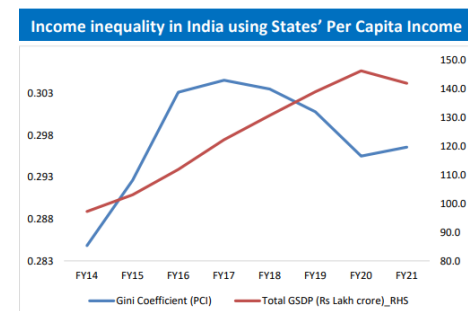
- ❖ A recent report from the State Bank of India (SBI) delves into taxpayer data, **revealing a substantial decline in the Gini coefficient. The Gini coefficient, a standard measure of income inequality, has decreased from 0.472 in 2014-15 to 0.402 in 2022-23.**
- ❖ Contrary to the positive Gini coefficient trend, the report highlights income polarization, suggesting a growing gap between income groups.
- ❖ The polarization phenomenon is not evident in taxpayer data, emphasizing that **the bottom 10% of income earners, who do not fall within the taxable threshold, are not considered in this analysis.**

KEY OBSERVATIONS OF THE REPORT

- ❖ **Gini Coefficient Decline:**
 - ☛ The report shows a **15% fall in India's Gini coefficient** from 2014-15 to 2022-23, indicating **reduced income inequality.**
 - ☛ Gini Coefficient is a statistical measure representing **the distribution of income within a population.** It ranges from **0 to 1**, with **higher values indicating greater inequality.**
 - ☛ Gini measures overall inequality, it can decrease while specific income groups diverge, as seen in India's case.
 - ☛ **Gini coefficient reduction masks income divergence**, emphasizing the need for **rigorous studies to comprehend contradictory changes** and their implications for future growth
- ❖ **Polarization in Incomes:** In India, **top 10% income growth surpasses the bottom 30%**, leading to income polarization, notably among self-employed individuals.



Source: SBI Research



Source: SBI Research



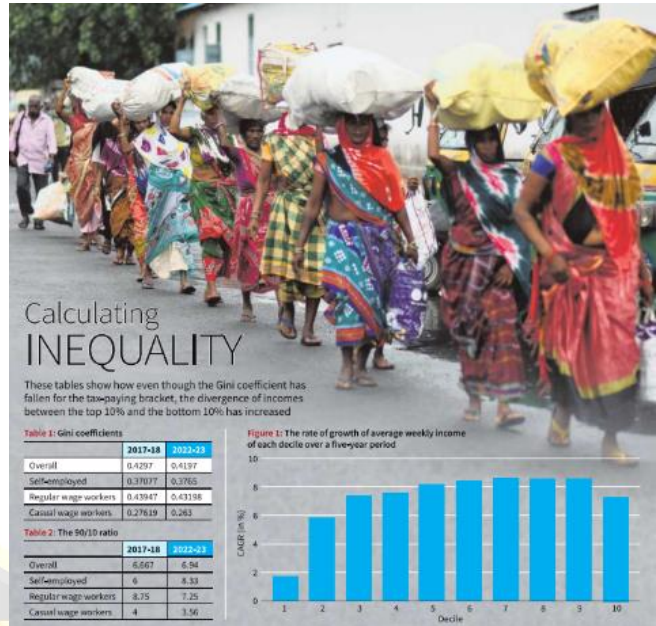
- Income Polarization is a phenomenon where there is a growing disparity in income levels between different segments of the population, often leading to a more pronounced division between the wealthy and less affluent.

❖ **PLFS Data Analysis:**

- Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) data reveals **income disparities, especially among self-employed, contrary to taxpayer data.**
- Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) is a comprehensive survey conducted by the government to collect data on various labour force-related parameters, including employment and unemployment.

❖ **90/10 Ratio Increase:**

- Income disparity between the top 10% and bottom 10% rises, seen in the 90/10 ratio, increasing **from 6.7 to 6.9.**
- 90/10 Ratio** is a measure indicating the ratio of incomes between the top 10% and bottom 10% of the income distribution.



❖ **Self-Employed Polarization:**

- Significant polarization observed among self-employed, with **the top 10% earning 8.3 times more than the bottom 10% in 2022-23.**

❖ **Factors Contributing to Polarization:**

- Rise in women's low-paid, part-time self-employed work contributes to income gaps, especially in the self-employed sector.

❖ **Limitations of Taxpayer Data:**

- Polarization is not evident in taxpayer data, **as the bottom 10% often falls outside the tax net.**

TYPES OF INEQUALITIES IN INDIA

❖ **Gender Inequality:**

- India's **Global Gender Gap Report 2018 ranking at 142** reflects substantial gender disparities. Women face a **34% gender wage gap**, and their ownership of agricultural land is disproportionately low.

❖ **Caste Inequality:**

- Upper caste households in India earn nearly 47% more than the national average. **The top 10% within these castes own 60% of the wealth**, indicating significant caste-based economic disparities.

❖ **Religious Inequality:**

- Religious identities can lead to economic exclusion and discrimination.** Minority groups like Muslims and Buddhists experience lower access to economic resources compared to others.

❖ **Ethnic Inequality:**

- Tribal communities in India, identified by unique cultural aspects, face disparities in wealth, as indicated by the **National Family Health Survey 2015-16.**



❖ **Income Inequality:**

- The **Oxfam report in 2019** highlights that India's top 10% holds a substantial 77.4% of the total national wealth, **while the bottom 60% holds only 4.8%**. The Gini coefficient in 2017 indicates high overall economic inequality.

CAUSES OF INCOME INEQUALITY IN INDIA

❖ **Unemployment:**

- **High unemployment rate in India, around 6%.**
- Contributes to the widening economic gap between the wealthy and the poor.

❖ **Inflation:**

- Rising prices create challenges for lower-income individuals to maintain their cost of living.
- Higher-income individuals can afford more goods and services without feeling the same financial strain.

❖ **Tax Evasion:**

- Prevailing issue in **India's corrupted economy.**
- Wealthy individuals and companies can avoid or minimize tax payments, exacerbating financial inequality.

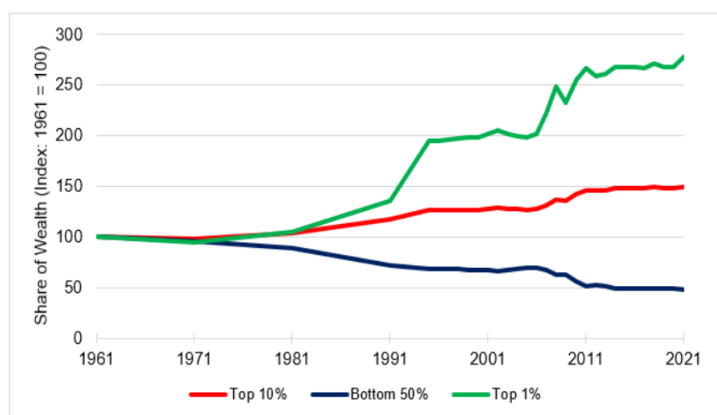
❖ **Regressive Tax Policies:**

- Taxing lower-income households at higher rates than wealthier households.
- Results in a **disproportionate financial burden on those with less income.**

❖ **Underemployment:**

- Many workers are underemployed, working fewer hours than desired and earning insufficient income.
- Contributes to increased poverty levels among those unable to make ends meet despite having jobs.

Figure 1: Wealth Inequality in India (1961-2021)



IMPACT OF INCOME INEQUALITY

❖ **Economic Growth:**

- Decreased economic growth as people with limited financial resources struggle to contribute to the nation's GDP.

❖ **Poverty Levels:**

- Increased poverty levels, particularly among those lacking access to basic resources like healthcare and education.

❖ **Social Unrest:**

- Growing social unrest due to perceived injustices arising from income disparities.

❖ **Opportunity Disparities:**

- Limited opportunities for those in poverty to escape, hindering social and economic mobility.

❖ **Resource Deprivation:**

- Lack of access to essential resources for many Indian citizens, impacting their overall well-being.



STRATEGIES TO TACKLE INEQUALITIES IN INIDA

❖ Constitutional Safeguards:

- Effectively implementing constitutional guarantees of equality, enshrined in fundamental rights (**Articles 14, 15, and 16**), becomes imperative.

❖ Empowering Civil Society:

- Empowering traditionally oppressed groups through **civil society organizations**, unions, and associations is pivotal for **fostering inclusivity**.

❖ Empowering Women:

- Deploying policies like affirmative action, seat reservations, and awareness campaigns aims to bridge gender gaps in various spheres.

❖ Inclusion of Religious Minorities:

- Ensuring representation in government jobs, provision of institutional credit, and protecting human rights contributes to the inclusion of religious minority groups.

❖ Progressive Taxation:

- Rolling out progressive taxes on wealth and corporations, coupled with expanding the tax base, can generate additional public resources for essential services.

❖ Economic Policy Tweaks:

- Guaranteeing universal access to high-quality, publicly funded services, including public health and education, and prioritizing employment generation can substantially mitigate inequality.

CONCLUSION

- ❖ *In conclusion, while the SBI's report signals a decline in the Gini coefficient, income polarization persists, notably among self-employed individuals. The 90/10 ratio increase and disparities revealed by the Periodic Labour Force Survey highlight the nuanced nature of income distribution.*
- ❖ *India faces multi-faceted inequalities, including gender, caste, religion, ethnicity, and overall income disparities.*
- ❖ *Addressing the root causes, such as unemployment, inflation, tax evasion, and underemployment, requires targeted strategies like constitutional safeguards, empowering civil society, promoting women's empowerment, progressive taxation, and economic policy adjustments for fostering an inclusive and equitable society in line with sustainable development goals.*



ROLE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) IN POLITICS

SOURCE: [INDIAN EXPRESS](#)

TAG: GS Paper III- **Awareness in the fields of IT, emerging technologies.**

UPSC PYQs

Prelims

Q. With the present state of development, Artificial Intelligence can effectively do which of the following? (2020)

1. Bring down electricity consumption in industrial units
2. Create meaningful short stories and songs
3. Disease diagnosis
4. Text-to-Speech Conversion
5. Wireless transmission of electrical energy

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1, 2, 3 and 5 only
- (b) 1, 3 and 4 only
- (c) 2, 4 and 5 only
- (d) 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5

Ans: (b)

WHY IN NEWS?

- ❖ *A recent instance of the use of HeyGen, an AI video generator, exemplified by "cool dude frank" delivering a political message in fluent Hindi on X, **highlights AI's transformative impact on global politics, prompting a call for people-powered grassroots movements and resilience against disinformation in India's expanding digital landscape.***

PROS OF INTEGRATION OF AI IN POLITICS:

- ❖ **AI in Legislative Contributions:**
 - ☛ AI has been involved in **drafting legislation**. For example, the early bills introduced in the US House of Representatives using AI-generated content.
- ❖ **Micro legislation Through AI:**
 - ☛ **AI's immediate impact on legislation could extend to microlegislation**, involving subtle tweaks to existing laws or bills.
 - ☛ This discreet form of legislation, often implemented surreptitiously, provides a potential pathway for AI-generated policies to become law.
- ❖ **AI-Generated Political Messaging:**
 - ☛ Political messaging developed by AI could surpass traditional campaign consultant recommendations in poll testing.
 - ☛ Behind closed doors, AI is expected to play a significant role in shaping political messages, leveraging its analysis of public discourse and campaign rhetoric.
- ❖ **AI-Founded Political Party:**



- The possibility arises for AI to create a political party with its own platform, attracting human candidates who win elections.
- The **Danish Synthetic Party's attempt in 2022, though unsuccessful**, showcases the initial steps toward this milestone.
- ❖ **AI's Role in Fundraising:**
 - **AI could autonomously generate profit** and make political campaign contributions, either by investing funds or creating businesses that generate revenue.
 - The focus is on the capability of AI to influence political campaigns by directing contributions, a defining feature of political actors.
- ❖ **Coordinated Policy Outcome Across Jurisdictions:**
 - A significant milestone involves AI achieving a coordinated policy outcome across multiple jurisdictions.
 - AI, programmed with specific goals, can utilize various tools—**advocacy, lobbying, and spending**—to influence policy changes simultaneously in diverse locations.

CONS OF INTEGRATION OF AI IN POLITICS

• SHAPING POLITICAL NARRATIVES

- ❖ **Use of AI Technologies:**
 - "HeyGen allows for the creation of realistic fake videos with translated content, showcasing the technological prowess of AI."
- ❖ **Political Figures and AI-Generated Content:**
 - Political figures utilize AI-generated content to deliver messages in **multiple languages**, marking a shift in how politicians communicate.
- ❖ **Concerns about AI Impact:**
 - There are valid concerns about how **generative AI fuels online disinformation campaigns and facilitates voter manipulation, posing ethical and democratic integrity challenges.**
- ❖ **Vulnerability of Democratic Processes:**
 - Democratic processes are vulnerable due to the ease with which hyper-realistic fake content can be generated, potentially influencing public opinion and electoral outcomes.

• THREATS ASSOCIATED WITH DEEPFAKES

- ❖ **Pervasive Use of AI-Generated Deepfakes in Indian Elections:**
 - There is a widespread adoption of artificial intelligence in political campaigns, with manipulative deepfake videos targeting young voters across the country.
- ❖ **Political Parties' Involvement in Deepfake Propaganda:**
 - Both ruling and opposition parties are **employing private-sector agencies for their electoral prospects**, utilizing deepfake videos to create positive sentiment around endorsed candidates and spread **misinformation about opponents.**
- ❖ **Targeted Misinformation through Deepfake Videos:**
 - Deepfakes are categorized into **two types**: those aimed at creating positive sentiment and those designed to spread misinformation. Specific demographics, especially vulnerable groups, are targeted through WhatsApp groups, known as '**scratch groups.**'
- ❖ **Strategic Circulation on Closed Messaging Platforms:**



- Deepfake videos are strategically designed for sharing primarily on closed platforms like WhatsApp. The exploitation of **limitations in content moderation on closed platforms allows for wider circulation.**
- ❖ **Challenges Faced by Election Commission and Regulatory Bodies:**
 - The Election Commission of India is grappling with the swift action against deepfake-induced misinformation. Concerns are raised about potential collusion between ruling parties and regulatory bodies.
- ❖ **Dilemma for Social Media Companies and Legal Implications:**
 - **Social media companies face detection challenges and high costs.** There is a risk of losing legal protections if platforms fail to control the spread of deepfakes.
- ❖ **Need for Regulatory Measures and Ethical Guidelines:**
 - There is a pressing need for regulatory measures and ethical guidelines as the general elections approach. Ensuring safeguards against the impact of AI-generated deepfake content on the electoral process is crucial.

'RESPONSIBLE AI' IN GOVERNANCE

- ❖ Addressing concerns such as unfair decisions, job displacement, and privacy issues, **Responsible AI in Government aims to make AI systems accountable and secure.** It focuses on adapting regulations to the unique challenges posed by responsible AI.
- ❖ **Need for Responsible AI:**
 - AI models operate within systems to **automate tasks**, making decisions with limited human involvement.
 - Potential issues arise from **AI's autonomous decision-making**, requiring a clear approach to ensure responsibility and accountability.
- ❖ **Positive Impact of AI in Government:**
 - AI has the potential to tackle major challenges faced by governments, improving citizens' lives.
 - Automation of tasks, informed decision-making, and enhanced user experiences are benefits experienced globally.
- ❖ **AI's Role in Government Challenges:**
 - AI technologies, including **machine learning and natural language processing**, can analyze vast data sets efficiently.
 - Governments can use **AI to coordinate services effectively, predict citizen needs, and prevent crises.**
- ❖ **AI's Three Main Areas of Contribution:**
 - **Detecting:** AI enhances or replaces **human sensory capabilities**, speeding up tasks like **real-time visual detection** in areas such as traffic management.
 - **Thinking:** **AI, powered by deep learning** and natural language processing, analyzes and manages large data volumes more efficiently than humans.
 - **Acting:** AI and intelligent automation take on decision-making tasks, freeing human workers for more impactful activities.
- ❖ **Government and Public Sector Applications:**
 - **Building future Cities:** Singapore's Smart Nation initiative uses **AI to promote self-driving cabs, reduce emissions, and enhance urban mobility.**
 - **Enhancing Public Safety:** Japan's Kanagawa Prefectural Police leverage AI for **predictive policing, anticipating and preventing crimes** before they occur.
 - **Strengthening Security:** MIT collaborates on an AI system that identifies 85% of cyberattacks, aiding authorities in early intervention and **improving overall security.**



- **Improving Citizen Experience:** Denmark's local governments employ AI to analyze social media posts, proactively addressing citizens' concerns and using **predictive analytics to resolve issues** in advance.
- **Supporting Vulnerable Citizens:** A London borough uses an **AI-based system to identify at-risk children**, achieving an 85% success rate and identifying 1,700 families in need of targeted services

WAY FORWARD

- ❖ **GPAI Summit and New Delhi Declaration:**
 - At the GPAI summit, India endorsed the **New Delhi Declaration, recognizing the need to balance innovation and risks associated with AI on a global scale.**
- ❖ **Need for International cooperation:**
 - There's a genuine concern about the effectiveness of domestic regulations in addressing challenges posed by transboundary AI applications, emphasizing **the need for international cooperation.**
- ❖ **Proposal for IAAI:**
 - **Creation of an International Agency for AI (IAAI)** as a potential solution for establishing global AI governance principles, acknowledging the geopolitical challenges involved.
- ❖ **Advocacy for Grassroots Movements:**
 - Return to grassroots movements is advocated, recognizing their potential to counter dehumanizing and monetizing political influences.
- ❖ **Emphasis on Collective Action:**
 - It's crucial to emphasize collective action beyond voting; this is the cornerstone of building a resilient civic infrastructure and empowering citizens.
- ❖ **Analyse the Funded Organizations:**
 - Funded organizations tend to dominate in shaping political narratives, and the need is to critically analyze their impact, pointing out potential biases and external influences.
- ❖ **Call for People-Powered Models:**
 - Creation, participation, and funding of **people-powered models of civic action** should be encouraged, urging citizens to actively shape their communities and political landscapes."
- ❖ **Role of Sector-Specific SSOs:**
 - **Sector-specific Standard-Setting Bodies (SSOs)**, could offer a more pragmatic approach to global AI governance, building on their historical success.



TOPIC	DISCRIPTION
<p>GOBARDHAN: "WASTE TO WEALTH" INITIATIVE</p>	<p>WHY IN NEWS?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Government released year end review of of GOBARDhan: "Waste to Wealth" initiative <p>ABOUT GOBARDHAN INITIATIVE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Galvanising Organic Bio-Agro Resources Dhan (GOBARDhan) is a major multi-ministerial initiative of GoI, aimed at converting biodegradable/ organic waste, including cattle dung and agricultural residues and other biomass, into valuable resources such as biogas, compressed biogas (CBG), and organic manure and to promote circular economy through a novel "Whole of Government" approach. ❖ Dept of Drinking Water & Sanitation , Ministry of Jal shakti has launched the GOBAR (Galvanizing Organic Bio-Agro Resources) – DHAN scheme. ❖ Part of the SWACHCH bharat scheme, 2018. ❖ Recently, the Unified Registration Portal for GOBARDhan was launched as a part of the Government of India's initiative to convert waste to wealth and promote a circular economy. <p>ADVANTAGES –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☛ Promotes circular economy ☛ An eco-friendly fuel ☛ Effective waste management ☛ Protects health and environment ☛ Reduces GHG emission ☛ Increases employment ☛ Saves foreign exchange ☛ Generates organic manure ☛ Improves savings <p>IMPLEMENTATION –</p> <p>Four implementation models under the GOBAR-DHAN guidelines:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Model-A (Gram Panchayat): Rs 7 lakh to 20 lakhs depending on the number of households. ❖ Model-B (SHG Federation) - Rs 7 lakh to 20 lakhs depending on the number of households. ❖ Model-C (Bulk Waste Generator/Entrepreneur) - Rs 7 lakh to 20 lakhs depending on the number of households.





**INDIAN –
KYRGYZSTAN
JOINT SPECIAL
FORCES EXERCISE**

- ❖ **Model-D (Any Eligible Enterprise):** No incentive is provided under this model.

STAKEHOLDERS IN THE SCHEME

- ❖ Dept of Agricultural Research and Education
- ❖ Dept of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers' Welfare
- ❖ Dept of Rural Development
- ❖ Ministry of New and Renewable Energy
- ❖ Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship
- ❖ Dept of Drinking Water and Sanitation
- ❖ Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas
- ❖ Dept of Animal Husbandry and Dairying
- ❖ Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
- ❖ Dept of Science and Technology
- ❖ Dept of Fertilizers

WHY IN NEWS?

- ❖ *The 11th edition of India-Kyrgyzstan Joint Special Forces Exercise KHANJAR has commenced at the Special Forces Training School in Bakloh, Himachal Pradesh. The exercise is scheduled to be conducted from 22nd January to 3rd February 2024.*

ABOUT THE EXERCISE

- ❖ The Indian Army contingent is being represented by The Parachute Regiment (Special Forces) and the Kyrgyzstan contingent is represented by Scorpion Brigade.
- ❖ **Aim** - To exchange experiences, best practices in Counter Terrorism and Special Forces Operations in Built-up Area and Mountainous Terrain under Chapter VII of United Nations Charter.
- ❖ The exercise will emphasise on developing Special Forces skills, advanced techniques of insertion and extraction.



Eighth edition of Indian and Kyrgyz special forces exercise '**khanjar**' begins in Bishkek

INDIA-KYRGYZ REPUBLIC BILATERAL RELATIONS

- ❖ The Kyrgyz leaderships have been **largely supportive of India's stand on Kashmir.**
- ❖ They also support India's bid for a permanent seat at the UNSC and **India's role in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).**
- ❖ India and Kyrgyzstan are building the **Kyrgyz-Indian Mountain Training Centre** together in the city of Balykchy in Kyrgyzstan's Issyk-Kul District.
- ❖ This **centre will teach and train members** of the Armed Forces of the Kyrgyz Republic. It will also host joint mountain training **drills between the Kyrgyz Republic and India.**



SOCIAL AUDIT ADVISORY BODY

- ❖ The **Central Asia region (CAR)** is rich in minerals, especially hydrocarbons.

WHY IN NEWS?

*The 1st meeting of the **Social Audit Advisory Body (SAAB)** was held on **18th January 2024 at conference hall, Dr Ambedkar International Centre, New Delhi. The Meeting was chaired by the Secretary, Department of Social Justice & Empowerment.***

ABOUT SOCIAL AUDIT

- ❖ A social audit is a **structured and impartial evaluation** of the social impact and ethical conduct of an organization or program.
- ❖ It assesses the degree to **which their actions and policies are in harmony with their declared values** and objectives, specifically concerning their influence on communities, employees, and the environment

KEY FEATURES OF SOCIAL AUDIT

- ❖ **Multi-Perspective/Polyvocal:** Reflect the views of all the stakeholders.
- ❖ **Comprehensive:** Report on all aspects of the organisation's work and performance.
- ❖ **Participatory:** Encourage participation of stakeholders and sharing of their values.
- ❖ **Multidirectional:** Stakeholders share and give feedback on multiple aspects.
- ❖ **Regular:** Produce social accounts on a regular basis so that the concept and the practice become embedded in the culture of the organisation covering all the activities.
- ❖ **Comparative:** Provide a means whereby the organisation can compare its performance against benchmarks and other organisations' performance.
- ❖ **Verified:** Social accounts are audited by a suitably experienced person or agency with no vested interest in the organisation.
- ❖ **Disclosed:** Audited accounts are disclosed to stakeholders and the wider community in the interests of accountability and transparency.



TYPES OF SOCIAL AUDITS

- ❖ **Organisational:** Assessing a company's overall social responsibility efforts.
- ❖ **Program-Specific:** Focusing on a particular program's impact and effectiveness.
- ❖ **Financial:** Reviewing the social and environmental implications of financial decisions.
- ❖ **Stakeholder-Driven:** Involving various stakeholders in the auditing process.

LIMITATIONS OF SOCIAL AUDIT:



BHARAT RATNA TO KARPOORI THAKUR

- ❖ **Non-Adherence to Rules:** In numerous states, Gram Panchayats fail to provide Social Audit Units with essential records related to project completion and expenditures. Additionally, Gram Sabhas do not receive social audit reports in their local languages.
- ❖ **Lack of Independence:** Transparent selection procedures for the director of Social Audit Units, as outlined in requirements, are often overlooked by several governments. Insufficient personnel in many units hinder the annual coverage of all panchayats.
- ❖ **Absence of Institutionalization:** Social Audit is not effectively regulated, leading to auditors facing resistance and intimidation from implementing agencies. Limited access to original data for verification is a common struggle.
- ❖ **Knowledge Gaps:** Gram Sabha members remain unaware of their legal entitlement to social audits due to a lack of awareness.

WHY IN NEWS?

- ❖ The Indian government has announced that it will **posthumously award the Bharat Ratna, the country's highest civilian honor, to Karpoori Thakur**, the former chief minister of Bihar, in the year marking his birth centenary.

ABOUT BHARAT RATNA FOR KARPOORI THAKUR

- ❖ **Recipient:** Karpoori Thakur, also known as 'Jannayak' (leader of the people), will be honoured with the Bharat Ratna.
- ❖ **Significance:** Thakur is recognized for his efforts in advocating for **dignity, self-respect, and development** for the most disadvantaged sections of society.

ABOUT KARPOORI THAKUR

- ❖ **Birth and Death:** January 24, 1924 - February 17, 1988.

Political Journey:

- ❖ Thakur, born in Bihar, actively participated in the freedom struggle and served as an MLA from 1952 until his death.
- ❖ He briefly served as an MP in 1977 and faced an electoral setback in 1984.
- ❖ Thakur held the position of Bihar's Chief Minister twice but for short tenures.



KARPOORI THAKUR'S POLICY DECISIONS:

- ❖ Despite belonging to a **minority caste (nai or barber)**, he emerged as a prominent backward caste leader in Bihar.
- ❖ **Removal of English** as a compulsory subject for matriculation exams.
- ❖ Implementation of **prohibition of alcohol**.
- ❖ Preferential treatment for unemployed engineers in government contracts.
- ❖ Introduction of a layered reservation system, known as the '**Karpoori Thakur Formula**,' with significant impact.

BHARAT RATNA

- ❖ Established in **1954**, Bharat Ratna is India's **highest civilian award**.



PLACES IN NEWS: GILGIT-BALTISTAN

- ❖ Open to individuals **without distinction of race, occupation, position, or gender.**
- ❖ Awarded for **exceptional service/performance** of the highest order in any field.
- ❖ Restricted to a maximum of **three awards in a given year.**

WHY IN NEWS?
Leh Apex Body and Kargil Democratic Alliance seek Ladakh's territorial expansion to Gilgit-Baltistan for strategic advantages and internal stability.

- GILGIT-BALTISTAN OVERVIEW:**
- ❖ **Indo-Pak War (1947):** Pakistan occupied 78,114 sq. km, including Gilgit-Baltistan.
 - ❖ **Administrative Changes:** Separated in 1949, named FANA in 1963, granted "self-rule" in 2009.
 - ❖ **China-Pakistan Agreement (1963):** 5,180 sq km ceded to China, altering geography.



- GEOGRAPHICAL SIGNIFICANCE:**
- ❖ **K-2 Mountain:** Home to the world's second-tallest peak.
 - ❖ **Tourism Challenges:** Limited by military hostility, ancient artifacts present.
 - ❖ **Current Governance:** Divided regions, governed by a Governor and elected Chief Minister. Became Pakistan's fifth state in 2020.

VAIBHAV SCHEME

- WHY IN NEWS?**
- ❖ The **Department of Science and Technology (DST)** has introduced the **Vaibhav scheme**. The first batch of Fellows for this scheme was announced recently.

- OBJECTIVE OF VAIBHAV SCHEME:**
- ❖ Attract **Indian-origin scientists residing abroad** for **short-term collaborations** with Indian institutes and **build long-term research connections with Indian institutes.**
 - ❖ **Foster research connections, collaboration, and the exchange of ideas** between Indian and foreign institutions.
 - ❖ Fellows are expected to **initiate projects or technology start-ups within three years** in collaboration with the host institute.



- FELLOWSHIP DETAILS:**
- ❖ **Twenty-two scientists**, primarily from **North American and European institutes**, including renowned institutions have been selected.
 - ❖ The **fellowship duration is for a maximum of three years**, with fellows spending one to two months annually at Indian institutes.



**COALITION
FOR EPIDEMIC
PREPAREDNESS
INITIATIVES
(CEPI)**

**DIRECT TAX TO
GDP RATIO**

- ❖ Fellows receive a **stipend of ₹4 lakh per month** and accommodation during their stay in India.

HOST INSTITUTIONS:

- ❖ **The Indian Institute of Science, Indian Institutes of Technology, Indian Institutes of Science Education and Research, and the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research.**
- ❖ The host institutions will receive a **research grant** to facilitate the hosting of the fellows and support collaborative projects.

SIMILARITY WITH VAJRA SCHEME:

- ❖ The Vaibhav scheme bears similarities to the **Visiting Advanced Joint Research Faculty (Vajra) scheme initiated in 2018.**
- ❖ Both schemes aim to engage the **Indian diaspora** for the advancement of research and development in India.

WHY IN NEWS?

- ❖ The **Serum Institute of India** joined **CEPI's network** to enhance **rapid, agile, and equitable responses** to future public health outbreaks, aligning with CEPI's goal of developing vaccines within **100 days** of recognizing a pandemic pathogen.

ABOUT CEPI

- ❖ **CEPI, formed in 2017, globally develops vaccines for potential epidemics.**
- ❖ Established in **Davos** by **Norway, India governments, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Welcome Trust, and World Economic Forum.**
- ❖ **India's Department of Biotechnology** oversees the **IndCEPI mission**, concentrating on swift vaccine development for local epidemic diseases.
- ❖ It combines **swift vaccine delivery with improved surveillance and timely interventions like testing and contact tracing.**
- ❖ It focuses on the **Global South targeting regions at high risk**, including Africa, Latin America, Caribbean, Asia (excluding Israel, Japan, South Korea), and Oceania (excluding Australia, New Zealand). Focus on deadly threats like **Lassa Fever, Nipah, Disease X**, and other CEPI-identified pathogens.



WHY IN NEWS?

*The **direct tax-to-GDP (Gross Domestic Product) ratio** reached an **all-time high of 6.11 per cent at the end of FY23**, detailed data released by Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) showed.*

ABOUT –



- ❖ The **tax-to-GDP ratio** is the ratio of tax collected compared to national gross domestic product (GDP).
- ❖ It measures the size of a country's tax revenue compared to its GDP.
- ❖ Higher the **tax to GDP ratio**, better the country's financial position.

- ❖ **TAX TO GDP RATIO = TAX REVENUE OF COUNTRY DURING THE PERIOD / GDP OF THE COUNTRY**

TAX TO GDP OF INDIA –

- ❖ India's Gross tax to GDP which was **11% in FY19**, fell to 9.9% in FY20 > improved, 10.2% in FY21 > **10.8% in FY22**.
- ❖ This is **lower than the emerging market economy** average of 21 percent and OECD average of 34 percent.

REASONS FOR LOW TAX TO GDP RATIO IN INDIA

- ❖ Presence of a **large informal/unorganized sector**.
- ❖ **Low per capita income and high poverty**.
- ❖ Dominance of the **agriculture sector**.
- ❖ "**Generous**" government policy

MEASURES TO INCREASE THE TAX TO GDP RATIO

- ❖ Check on **exemptions**.
- ❖ Widening of the individual tax payers.
- ❖ Attitudinal change in citizens.
- ❖ Need for effective dispute settlement mechanism

Buoyant tax collections

India's direct tax-to-GDP ratio has risen in the past two years to nearly regain its 2008 peak, but its share of overall collections is still below its peak and also less than the emerging-market average.

