

The Hindu Important News Articles & Editorial For UPSC CSE

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Nearly 6 million trees disappeared from farmlands: study

Jacob Koshy
NEW DELHI

In a mere three years, from 2019 to 2022, India may have lost close to 5.8 million full-grown trees in agricultural lands, says a satellite-imagery-based analysis by researchers at the University of Copenhagen, Denmark, published this week in the peer-reviewed journal *Nature Sustainability*.

Additionally, 11% of such trees detected via satellite during 2010-2011 were no longer visible when reviewed from 2018 to 2022, leading the researchers to conclude that these trees had “disappeared”.

However, this doesn't necessarily imply that India's overall tree cover, or

trees outside forest, is declining as the analysis was specific to only large trees above a certain size.

The Forest Survey of India (FSI) conducts regular surveys of tree cover (both inside and outside forests) but only publishes data on the changes in acreage and not individual trees. The latest FSI report says that India's tree cover has increased in 2021 over 2019.

The present analysis, however, focuses on Indian farmlands and tracks individual trees, albeit only big ones, relying on maps from multiple ‘micro-satellites’, and machine learning analysis to estimate trends, beginning in 2010.

About 56% of India is covered by farmland and 22% by forest. With the largest



Green tracker: The study focused on Indian farmlands and it tracked individual trees over the past three years. FILE PHOTO

agricultural area in the world, changes in tree cover here, while critical, have been largely “overlooked”, the authors say.

For their analysis, the researchers combined satellite-imagery from two

repositories – RapidEye and PlanetScope – to estimate changes in tree number from 2010 to 2022. These have resolutions of three to five metres, meaning that the satellite can “see” large trees, three to

five metres apart, as individual trees.

The FSI relies on data from the Sentinel satellite that has a coarser resolution of 10 metres – implying that they can tell apart blocks of trees but not individual ones.

Hotspots

Trees detected by RapidEye had an average crown size (the leafy outgrowth of tree) of 96.sq.m and such a high loss rate of mature trees over less than a decade is “unexpected”, the authors note.

“The disappearance of mature farmland trees was observed in many areas, but numbers rarely exceed five to 10%, except for areas in central India, in particular in the States of

Telangana and Maharashtra, where we document massive losses of large trees. Here, several hotspot areas have lost up to 50% of their large farmland trees, with up to 22 trees per square kilometre disappearing. Smaller hotspot areas of loss are also observed, such as in eastern Madhya Pradesh around Indore.”

The tree loss estimate was on the “conservative” side and most of the losses were likely between 2018 and 2020, they noted.

One of the authors told *The Hindu* that the absolute number of trees lost since 2010 could not be estimated as “.. images from 2010 to 2011 are not always good and it was not a wall-to-wall mapping exercise”.

Deforestation impact on India's ecological balance in the following ways

- ➡ **Loss of Biodiversity:** The clearing of forests in ecologically sensitive zones leads to the destruction of habitats for countless species, thereby reducing biodiversity. For example, the deforestation in the Western Ghats threatens endangered species like the lion-tailed macaque.
- ➡ **Water Cycle Disruption:** Forests are vital in maintaining the water cycle by aiding in cloud formation and groundwater recharge. Removal of forests in the catchment areas of rivers like the Ganges and the Yamuna can lead to reduced water levels, affecting millions.
- ➡ **Soil Erosion:** Forests act as natural buffers against soil erosion. Deforestation in hilly areas such as Himachal Pradesh can result in landslides and soil degradation, making the land less arable, impacting agricultural sector.
- ➡ **Climate Change Acceleration:** Forests act as carbon sinks, absorbing CO₂ from the atmosphere. Deforestation releases this stored carbon, contributing to global warming. For example, the loss of forests in the Eastern Himalayas adds to India's carbon footprint.
- ➡ **Impact on Livelihood:** Forests support the livelihoods of millions, especially tribal communities. Their loss affects these communities directly, as seen in the forced migration of tribes like the Baigas in Madhya Pradesh due to deforestation.
- ➡ **Disruption in Local Climate:** The loss of green cover in cities like Bangalore has led to an increase in local temperatures, affecting the quality of life.

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- ➡ **Increased Flood Risk:** Forests act as natural barriers that slow down water runoff during rains. Their absence can increase the risk of flash floods, as witnessed in the floods in Kerala in 2018, partly attributed to deforestation.
- ➡ **Air Pollution:** Forests act as natural air purifiers. Their removal increases the level of pollutants in the air, contributing to air quality decline, as observed in cities like Delhi, where the loss of the Aravali forest cover is a concern.

Legal frameworks that India has to counter deforestation

- ➡ **Indian Forest Act, 1927:** One of the oldest pieces of legislation aimed at forest conservation, it gives the government the power to declare any area as reserved forest, protected forest, or village forest.
- ➡ **Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980:** This landmark Act prohibits the diversion of forest land for non-forest purposes by the state governments without prior central government approval.
- ➡ **Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers Act, 2006 (Forest Rights Act):** It recognizes the rights of the forest-dwelling communities, aiming to make conservation more inclusive. Eg: The rejection of Vedanta's mining project in the Niyamgiri Hills of Odisha was under this Act.
- ➡ **Wildlife Protection Act, 1972:** This Act not only focuses on animal protection but also includes plants. Under this Act, no one can occupy or cultivate any land in a sanctuary, indirectly safeguarding forests.
- ➡ **National Forest Policy, 1988:** This policy aims for a minimum of one-third of India's land area to be under forest or tree cover. It prioritises maintaining ecological balance and conserving natural heritage.
- ➡ **Environment Impact Assessment (EIA), 1994:** Any developmental project that involves deforestation has to undergo an EIA to weigh the environmental costs. For example, the expansion of the coal mines in Chhattisgarh was put on hold until the EIA was scrutinised.
- ➡ **National Green Tribunal Act, 2010:** The National Green Tribunal hears cases relating to environmental issues, including illegal deforestation. It has the power to provide relief and compensation to the victims of environmental damage.
- ➡ **The Compensatory Afforestation Fund Act, 2016:** This act ensures that any industrial project leading to deforestation must involve a compensatory afforestation program. For example, industries in Jharkhand have been made to adopt compensatory afforestation measures.
- ➡ **State-specific Legislations:** Apart from national laws, many states have their own forest laws and policies that cater to local needs. For instance, the Tamil Nadu Preservation of Private Forest Act, 1949, aims to preserve private forests in the state.

GS-2: [IR : Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.]**India-Iran Chabahar Port Agreement:****Background and Agreement Details:**

- India signed a 10-year agreement with Iran to develop and operate the Chabahar port, despite tensions in West Asia.
- The agreement involves an investment of \$120 million by India and a credit facility of \$250 million to further develop the terminal in Chabahar's Shahid Beheshti port and related projects.
- Previously, American sanctions on Iran had delayed the project, which was conceived in 2003 but did not take off for years due to sanctions imposed by the U.S. and the UN over Tehran's nuclear program.
- India signed a memorandum of understanding in 2015 after Washington eased sanctions on Iran following the nuclear agreement, with the contract executed in 2016 during Prime Minister's Iran visit.
- Despite the U.S.'s unilateral withdrawal from the nuclear deal in 2018 and reimposition of sanctions on Iran, India managed to win a carve-out from U.S. sanctions to operate the port through ad hoc measures.

Strategic Importance of Chabahar Port:

- Chabahar port is crucial for India's connectivity plans, offering an alternative route to Afghanistan and Central Asia by bypassing Pakistan, thus enhancing trade prospects with Central Asia.
- The port is expected to be connected to the International North-South Transport Corridor (NSTC), facilitating trade between India and Europe through Iran, Azerbaijan, and Russia, reducing time and costs associated with intercontinental trade.
- Positioned roughly 200 km from Pakistan's Gwadar port, where China is developing a port as part of its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), Chabahar enables India to expand its geopolitical influence in Central Asia.
- However, with the Taliban replacing the Islamic Republic and U.S. troops withdrawing from Afghanistan, America's focus has shifted towards containing Iran, potentially impacting its view on the Chabahar project.

Stay invested

India should not tailor its ties with Iran to U.S. foreign policy changes

By signing a 10-year agreement with Iran to develop and operate the Chabahar port, India has taken its infrastructure and trade partnership with the Islamic Republic to the next level despite tensions in West Asia. India will invest \$120 million and offer a credit facility of \$250 million to further develop the terminal it operates in Chabahar's Shahid Beheshti port and related projects. However, after the deal was signed, the U.S. State Department said entities considering business deals with Iran "need to be aware that they are opening themselves up to and the potential risk of sanctions". In the past, American sanctions on Iran had delayed the project. Conceived in 2003, the project did not take off for years after the U.S. and the UN imposed sanctions on Tehran over its nuclear programme. India signed a memorandum of understanding in 2015 after Washington eased sanctions on Iran following that year's nuclear agreement, and in 2016, the contract was executed during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Iran visit. The U.S.'s unilateral withdrawal from the nuclear deal in 2018 and reimposition of sanctions on Iran raised questions on India's continued cooperation with Tehran. But India managed to win a carve-out from U.S. sanctions that allowed it to operate the port through ad hoc measures.

The Chabahar port is critical for India's connectivity plans. First, it offers an alternative route to Afghanistan and Central Asia by bypassing Pakistan, allowing better trade with Central Asia. And, Chabahar is expected to be connected to the International North-South Transport Corridor (NSTC), bringing India closer to Europe through Iran, Azerbaijan and Russia. An alternative to the Suez route, a fully operational NSTC would reduce the time and money spent on inter-continental trade. The port, roughly 200 km from Pakistan's Gwadar, where China is developing a port as part of its BRI, would also help India expand its geopolitical influence in Central Asia. But the U.S. seems to have taken a narrow view of the project over its hostility with Iran. America's interests in the region have also changed. In 2018, when U.S. forces were backing the Islamic Republic government in Afghanistan, it gave a sanctions waiver to India as Kabul also stood to benefit from the port project. Today, U.S. troops are out of Afghanistan, the Taliban has replaced the Islamic Republic, and the U.S.'s focus is on containing Iran. India, in the past, had taken U-turns in its Iran engagement depending on the policy changes in Washington DC. It should not do that any more. It should stay invested in Chabahar and seek to improve its trade and connectivity projects with Central Asia, which is essential for India's continued rise.

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► Importance of port for India:

- **Strategic Access:** Chabahar Port provides India with direct access to Afghanistan and Central Asia, bypassing Pakistan, thus reducing dependence on the volatile Pakistan-Afghanistan route.
- **Trade Routes Diversification:** It diversifies India's trade routes, offering an alternative to the congested and politically sensitive Strait of Hormuz and the Gulf of Oman.
- **Regional Connectivity:** Chabahar Port is a crucial component of India's efforts to enhance connectivity and promote economic integration with Afghanistan, Central Asia, and beyond.
- **Energy Security:** Chabahar Port opens avenues for energy cooperation, including access to hydrocarbon resources in Central Asia and the Middle East, enhancing India's energy security.
- **Humanitarian Assistance:** It facilitates the delivery of humanitarian aid and reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan, showcasing India's commitment to regional stability and development.



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GS 3 : [Indian Economy : Effects Of Liberalization On The Economy, Changes In Industrial Policy and their effects on Industrial Growth]**Manufacturing in India**

- ➔ Due to performance of key sectors like automotive, engineering, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, and consumer durables, manufacturing has emerged as an integral pillar in the country's economic growth.
- ➔ With 17% of the nation's GDP and over 27.3 million workers, the manufacturing sector plays a significant role in the Indian economy.
- ➔ The Indian government hopes to have 25% of the economy's output come from manufacturing by 2025.
- ➔ India has the capacity to export goods worth US\$ 1 trillion by 2030 and is on the road to becoming a major global manufacturing hub.

Dependency ratio

- ➔ The dependency ratio is a measure that compares the number of dependents (people who are either too young or too old to work) to the working-age population.

Demographic Dividend

- ➔ According to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)-

The demographic dividend is the economic growth potential that arises from changes in a population's age structure, particularly when the proportion of the working-age population (15 to 64 years) surpasses that of the non-working-age groups (those aged 14 and younger, and 65 and older).

India's demographic dividend

- ➔ According to the Economic Survey 2018-19, India's Demographic Dividend will peak around 2041, when the share of working-age, i.e. 20-59 years, population is expected to hit 59%.

Manufacturing in India needs more sophistication: FM

Nirmala Sitharaman said India's demographic dividend with the lowest dependency ratio will bolster consumption; highlights opportunities

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Indian manufacturing must develop greater sophistication in its products and the government will find ways to provide policy support in this endeavour, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said on Friday, dismissing "some economists' advice that India should no longer look to ramp up manufacturing."

"Manufacturing must increase, and with the help of policies, India must increase its share in manufacturing and global value chains," Ms. Sitharaman said, adding that this will also help India be more self-reliant. Citing a recent Capgemini Research Institute report, the Minister said 65% of almost 760 senior executives surveyed in the U.S. and Europe were planning to increase manufacturing investments significantly in India, with an eye on reducing their dependence on China.

Addressing the annual business summit of the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), Ms. Sitharaman also pointed to an S&P Global Market Intelligence assessment that the Indian market could throw up trillions of dollars of opportunities by 2031, with the consumer market expected to double by then.



CII summit: Ms. Sitharaman ascribes India's high growth to "policy stability" at the CII's Annual Business Summit in New Delhi. ANI

While the consumer market presents a \$2.9 trillion opportunity, spending on food is expected to rise to \$1.4 trillion while financial services will climb to \$670 billion by 2031, which together would create another \$1.39 trillion of opportunities, the Minister said, citing the S&P report.

'Ramping up skilling'

"Skilling is really being ramped up in India so the demographic dividend, which will persist for the next 30 years [and] comes with an added advantage of a historically lowest dependency ratio, means the net benefit is going to be towards more increase in consumption," she said. She emphasised that investments and expansion plans to tap these opportunities can help push faster economic growth, es-

pecially with bank and corporate balance sheets "in the pink of health".

Ascribing India's consistent high growth to "policy stability, absence of flip-flops, corruption-free decision-making" combined with "facilitation in legislative and legal frameworks" based on industry feedback for rapid changes in the compliance regime, Ms. Sitharaman said the government looks at the private sector as a partner in development while acting as a facilitator.

"We are confident Prime Minister Narendra Modi is coming back with a good majority. Soon after the government is formed, we look forward to a more pointed engagement with the CII to see what best can be done in the July budget, which will be the full year Budget," she said.

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- ➡ **Demographic Dividend:** India's young population and low dependency ratio will persist for the next 30 years, offering a significant advantage in terms of labour force and consumption.

Need to Skill up the demograph:

- ➡ **Importance of Skilling:** To leverage this demographic advantage, there is a strong focus on ramping up skills in the Indian workforce. Skilling initiatives are crucial to ensuring that the working-age population is equipped with the necessary competencies to meet the demands of modern industries.
- ➡ **Opportunities in the Market:** Specific sectors such as food spending and financial services are projected to grow substantially, highlighting the need for a skilled workforce to capitalize on these opportunities.
- ➡ **Skilling Initiatives:** Ongoing efforts to enhance skills among the population will further capitalize on the demographic dividend, leading to increased productivity and consumption.
- ➡ **Expand Skill Development Missions:** Strengthen and expand initiatives like the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) to cover more sectors and regions.
- ➡ **Industry-Academia Collaboration:** Foster partnerships between educational institutions and industries to create industry-relevant curriculum and training programs.

GS 3 : [Indian Economy : Growth and Development]

RBI Deputy Governors flag supervisory concerns at asset reconstruction firms

The Hindu Bureau

MUMBAI

Amid various allegations of their indulgence in unethical practices, including providing backdoor entry to defaulting promoters of insolvent companies, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Friday asked top bosses of asset reconstruction companies (ARCs) to focus on governance and adhere to ethical conduct while doing business.

Deputy Governor J. Swaminathan, while urging ARCs to foster a culture of integrity and ethical conduct, highlighted sev-



eral supervisory concerns in the functioning of ARCs.

He asked the entities to adopt a “regulation plus” approach where “there is compliance with both the letter of the regulation and also its spirit.”

“Boards should accord due importance to assu-

rance functions, namely, risk management, compliance and internal audit,” he said. “These functions play a critical role in identifying and mitigating risks, ensuring compliance with laws and regulations as well as safeguarding the organisation’s reputation,” Mr. Swaminathan added.

‘Sound governance’

Deputy Governor M. Rajeshwar Rao highlighted the importance of sound governance which would provide a strong foundation for the ARCs to build a robust business model.

“The onus in this regard

lies largely with the Boards of the ARCs and the top functionaries who will have to develop a strong and institutional culture based on these principles,” he said.

He also stressed the need for responsible conduct in recovery process and emphasised that ARCs should follow transparent and non-discriminatory practices in line with the comprehensive fair practice code put in place by the Reserve Bank.

The RBI had on Friday organised the conference for the directors and MD/CEOs of ARCs in Mumbai.

Amid allegations of unethical practices by ARCs, including aiding defaulting promoters, the RBI intervened, with the Deputy Governor urging integrity and ethical conduct in their operations.

Regulation plus Approach:

Deputy Governor Swaminathan J. emphasized the need for ARCs to adopt a “**Regulation plus Approach**”: compliance with both the letter and the spirit of the regulation.

➡ Urged boards to prioritize assurance functions:

- Risk management.
- Compliance.
- Internal audit.

➡ Stressed these functions’ role in identifying and mitigating risks, ensuring compliance with laws and regulations, and safeguarding the organization’s reputation.

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- ➡ Advocated for transparent and non-discriminatory practices aligned with the comprehensive fair practice code (FPC) established by the Reserve Bank.

Asset Reconstruction Company (ARC)

ARC is a special financial institution that acquires debtors from banks at a mutually agreed value and attempts to recover the debts or associated securities.

- ➡ **Regulation**
 - ARCs are registered under the RBI.
 - Regulated under the SARFAESI Act, 2002 (Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Securities Interest Act).
- ➡ **Objective** : ARCs take over a portion of the bank's non-performing assets (NPAs) and engage in asset reconstruction or securitization, aiming to recover the debts.
- ➡ **Functions**
 - **Asset Reconstruction:** Acquisition of bank loans or other credit facilities for realization.
 - **Securitization:** Acquisition of financial assets by issuing security receipts.

Interim Bail

What is Bail?

- ➡ Bail is the conditional release of a defendant with the promise to appear in court when required.
- ➡ The term also means the security that is deposited in order to secure the release of the accused.
- ➡ In India's legal world, the term offense has been categorized as bailable offenses and non-bailable under the Code of Criminal Procedure.

Why need Bail?

- ➡ Bail is a fundamental aspect of any criminal justice system.
- ➡ A person can defend himself/herself better when he/she is free, thus ensuring free trial.
- ➡ The practice of bail grew out of the need to safeguard the fundamental right to liberty.
- ➡ Liberty is the right of one whose guilt has not yet been proven.

Types of Bail in India

Depending upon the stage of the criminal matter, there are commonly three types of bail in India:

- ➡ **Regular Bail:** Granted to a person who has already been arrested and is in custody. This type of bail is provided under Sections 437 and 439 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 (CrPC). It allows the accused to be released from custody while the trial is ongoing.
- ➡ **Anticipatory Bail:** Under Section 438 of the CrPC, anticipatory bail is a pre-arrest legal process. It is granted when a person apprehends arrest on an accusation of having committed a non-bailable offence. This type of bail ensures that the accused will be released on bail in the event they are arrested.
- ➡ **Interim Bail:** This is temporary bail granted for a short period. Interim bail is often granted to allow the accused some relief until a final decision on their regular or anticipatory bail plea is made.

Legal Provisions for Interim Bail

Interim bail in India is NOT explicitly defined under a specific statute but is derived from the discretionary powers granted to courts under various legal provisions.

Constitutional Provisions: The Constitution of India under Article 21, which guarantees the right to life and personal liberty, is often interpreted to include the right to bail as part of the fair and just legal process.

The hyperpoliticisation of Indian higher education

Indian higher education has always been political. Politicians started colleges and universities to advance their careers and build support. State and central government authorities sometimes placed new post secondary institutions in politically advantageous locations. Many of them were established to cater to the demands of the electorate based on various socio-cultural factors as well. The naming and renaming of universities, especially by State governments, are often influenced by politics. Academic appointments or promotions were sometimes made for reasons other than the quality of the professor, vice-chancellor or principal. And, especially in many undergraduate colleges, the norms of academic freedom were not always firmly followed – and teachers were careful in what they taught or wrote.

Yet, overall, Indian higher education, especially in the universities, adhered to international norms of academic freedom. Generally, professors were free to teach without fear of being disciplined or fired for their views. They were able to do research and to publish their work freely, and to speak and write in public forums and the media. The universities, while often mired in bureaucracy, occasionally faced allegations of political interference in the recruitment of faculty members. However, they enjoyed relative autonomy when it came to the promotion of existing faculty.

Fundamental political change

It is fair to say that Indian higher education has become fundamentally politicised. This is a grave danger to academic institutions, the academic profession, and intellectual life generally. These trends can, of course, be seen as part of the “illiberal” trends in society generally – and, of course, India is not alone in these developments. And, at some point, the rest of the world, including India's potential academic partners, will notice this deterioration in academe, and it may affect their decisions at a time when India



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There is a grave threat to academic institutions, the academic profession, and intellectual life in general

seeks to join the top levels of global higher education.

Examples of change

Not long ago, Congress Party leader Rahul Gandhi made some comments about politically appointed vice chancellors – and received much criticism. But the fact is that Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) authorities throughout the country have been replacing university vice chancellors with politically pliable appointees, many of whom have little or no higher education experience. And, these appointees have been reshaping the universities with politically allied faculty and through other changes. This is the first time in India's post-independence history that such direct interference in academe has become common. It is so egregious that the non-BJP governments in Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Punjab are trying to remove the centrally-appointed State Governors as chancellors of the State universities, which give them power to control the vice-chancellor appointment process.

Academic freedom is also under attack. Perhaps the most sinister aspect is that self-censorship has become common, especially in the social sciences and humanities. Even senior academics are afraid to publish work that they think might create problems for them from state authorities or pro-BJP media. There have been several widely reported cases where well-known professors have published controversial material and their universities have not protected them. It was reported that in his resignation letter to Ashoka University in 2021, prominent political scientist Pratap Bhanu Mehta wrote that his public writing in support of a politics that tries to honour constitutional values of freedom and equal respect for all citizens was perceived to carry risks for the university.

Respected journals known for their independence have become off limits. The fact that these pressures are being felt even at the top

of India's academic system says a lot about the situation throughout Indian higher education. Professor Sameena Dalwai, a faculty member at the O.P. Jindal Global University, encountered an online smear campaign recently, orchestrated by right-wing groups alongside the lodging of a police complaint against her.

Even students have become embroiled in campus politicisation. Recently, the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) suspended a PhD student over alleged “anti-national activities”. However, the Progressive Students Forum, formerly led by the student, claimed that his suspension was due to participating in a protest march against the central government's “anti-student policies”.

Of course, traditional campus politics continues, although rightist organisations such as the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad are more active than in the past even at traditionally leftist universities such as Jawaharlal Nehru University. But what is new is that students are reporting to campus administrators on their professors if they disagree with the content of their classes. And, sometimes, this leads to faculty members being disciplined.

The implications

These trends are extraordinarily dangerous for Indian higher education and civic life in general. Most important, an independent and free academic sector is important for any society. The academic profession must be free to engage in unfettered research and have the ability to publish, and to speak out, in areas of their academic expertise. This is as true for the “soft sciences” as it is for STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) fields. This may be especially the case in India, where many top intellectuals and analysts are in the universities. Further, as India seeks to build world-class universities and to engage with the best universities worldwide, academic freedom and autonomy is a necessary prerequisite.

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GS Paper 02 : Social Justice – Education

PYQ: (UPSC CSE (M) GS-1 2020) : How have digital initiatives in India contributed to the functioning of the educational system in the country? Elaborate your answer.

(250 words/15m)

Practice Question: How has the politicisation of Indian higher education affected academic freedom and autonomy? Discuss the implications of this trend on intellectual life and India's pursuit of global academic recognition. (150 words/10m)

Context:

- ➡ The article discusses the politicisation of Indian higher education, highlighting historical trends and contemporary challenges.
- ➡ It outlines instances of political interference in academic appointments, attacks on academic freedom, and student involvement in campus politics.
- ➡ The erosion of academic autonomy poses risks to intellectual life and India's aspirations for global academic recognition..
- ➡ There is a grave threat to academic institutions, the academic profession, and intellectual life in general.

The issue

- ➡ **Politicisation:** Indian higher education has always been political. Politicians started colleges and universities to advance their careers and build support.
 - State and central government authorities sometimes placed new post secondary institutions in politically advantageous locations.
 - Many of them were established to cater to the demands of the electorate based on various socio-cultural factors as well.
- ➡ **Naming and Renaming of Higher Education Institutions:** Universities' names and renaming processes, particularly by State governments, are influenced by political agendas.
 - Such decisions are often made to align with prevailing political sentiments or to appease specific interest groups.

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- ➡ **Academic appointments or promotions :** Academic appointments and promotions sometimes prioritise political allegiance over professional merit.
 - Despite occasional interference and bureaucratic hurdles, Indian universities generally adhere to international norms of academic freedom.
 - Indian higher education has undergone a fundamental politicisation, posing risks to academic institutions and intellectual life.
 - These trends align with broader societal illiberal shifts, and India risks repercussions on the global academic stage.

Fundamental political change

- ➡ **Fundamentally Politicised:** It is fair to say that Indian higher education has become fundamentally politicised. These trends can, of course, be seen as part of the “illiberal” trends in society generally — and, of course, India is not alone in these developments.
 - And, at some point, the rest of the world, including India’s potential academic partners, will notice this deterioration in academe, and it may affect their decisions at a time when India seeks to join the top levels of global higher education.
- ➡ **Attacks on Academic Freedom:** Academic freedom is also under attack. Perhaps the most sinister aspect is that self-censorship has become common, especially in the social sciences and humanities.
 - There have been several widely reported cases where well-known professors have published controversial material and their universities have not protected them.
- ➡ **Journals Limitation:** Respected journals known for their independence have become off limits. The fact that these pressures are being felt even at the top of India’s academic system says a lot about the situation throughout Indian higher education
- ➡ **Politicisation of Campus:** Even students have become embroiled in campus politicisation.
 - But what is new is that students are reporting to campus administrators on their professors if they disagree with the content of their classes. And, sometimes, this leads to faculty members being disciplined. The implications

Implications for Higher Education and Civic Life:

- ➡ These trends are **extraordinarily dangerous for Indian higher education** and civic life in general.
- ➡ Most important, an independent and free academic sector is important for any society.
- ➡ The academic profession must be free to engage in unfettered research and have the ability to publish, and to speak out, in areas of their academic expertise.

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- ➡ This is as true for the "soft sciences" as it is for STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) fields.
- ➡ This may be especially the case in India, where many top intellectuals and analysts are in the universities.

Conclusion

- ➡ Further, as India seeks to build world-class universities and to engage with the best universities worldwide, academic freedom and autonomy is a necessary prerequisite.

Potential Impact of Politicisation of Higher Education:

- ➡ **Undermining Academic Integrity:** Politicisation can compromise academic freedom, leading to biased research, censorship, and ideological indoctrination.
- ➡ **Quality of Education:** Prioritising political agendas over academic merit can degrade the quality of education, research, and teaching standards.
- ➡ **Polarisation:** Politicisation can exacerbate polarisation among students, faculty, and administrators, fostering a divisive and hostile academic environment.
- ➡ **Erosion of Trust:** Perceived politicisation erodes public trust in higher education institutions, undermining their credibility and legitimacy.
- ➡ **Brain Drain:** Political interference may drive talented scholars, researchers, and students away, resulting in brain drain and loss of intellectual capital.
- ➡ **Impact on Innovation:** Political pressures can stifle innovation, creativity, and critical thinking, hindering progress and advancement in academic fields.

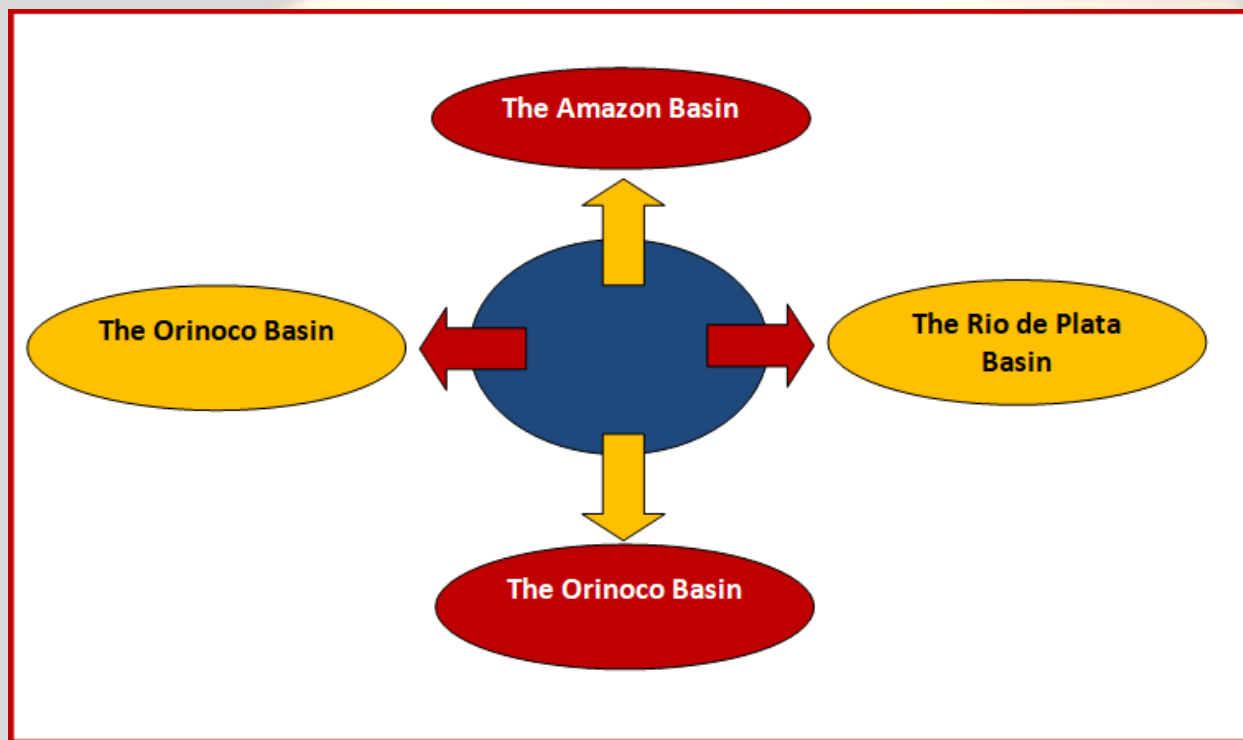
Way Forward to Address Politicisation of Higher Education:

- ➡ **Autonomy and Governance:** Safeguard institutional autonomy and strengthen governance mechanisms to insulate higher education from undue political influence.
- ➡ **Merit-Based Appointments:** Ensure transparent and merit-based processes for appointing faculty, administrators, and governing bodies to uphold academic standards.
- ➡ **Promote Diversity:** Foster diversity of perspectives, ideologies, and disciplines within higher education institutions to encourage open debate and intellectual exchange.
- ➡ **Ethical Guidelines:** Implement and enforce ethical guidelines and codes of conduct to uphold academic integrity and prevent politicisation.

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- ➡ **Dialogue and Engagement:** Foster constructive dialogue and engagement among stakeholders, including students, faculty, administrators, policymakers, and civil society, to address concerns and promote consensus on academic matters.
- ➡ **Public Awareness:** Raise public awareness about the importance of academic freedom, institutional autonomy, and the dangers of politicisation to garner support for safeguarding higher education.

Mapping : Drainage System of South America



The Amazon Basin



- ➡ It is the basin of River Amazon.
- ➡ Its length is second to that of the Nile river of Africa.
- ➡ It has the largest flow of water in the world.
- ➡ The river drains nearly 40 per cent of the area of South America.
- ➡ The major tributaries of the Amazon river are the Caqueta, the Jurua, the Madeira, the Negro, etc.
- ➡ Equatorial rainforest
- ➡ Navigable till Manaus
- ➡ Petroleum at mouth

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- ➡ Natural Rubber
- ➡ Amazon rainforest – deforestation due to cattle ranching and soya beans field.

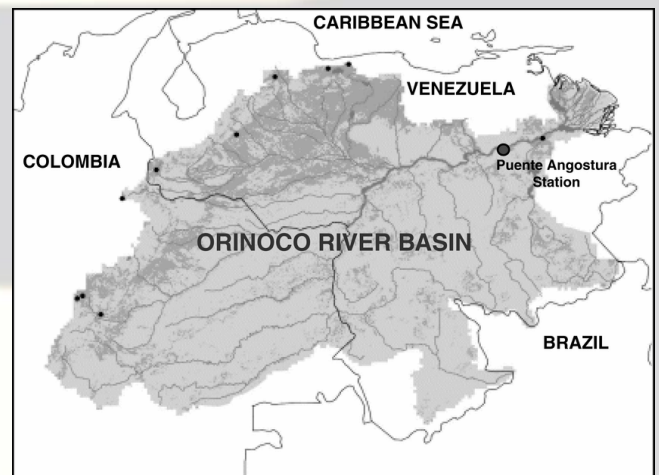
The Rio de Plata basin

- ➡ This basin is second in size to that of the Amazon.
- ➡ The main rivers which form the Basin of Rio de Plata are the river Paraguay, the Parana, and the river Uruguay.
- ➡ River Parana (4,879 km) rises from Minas Gerais from a water divide Carino.



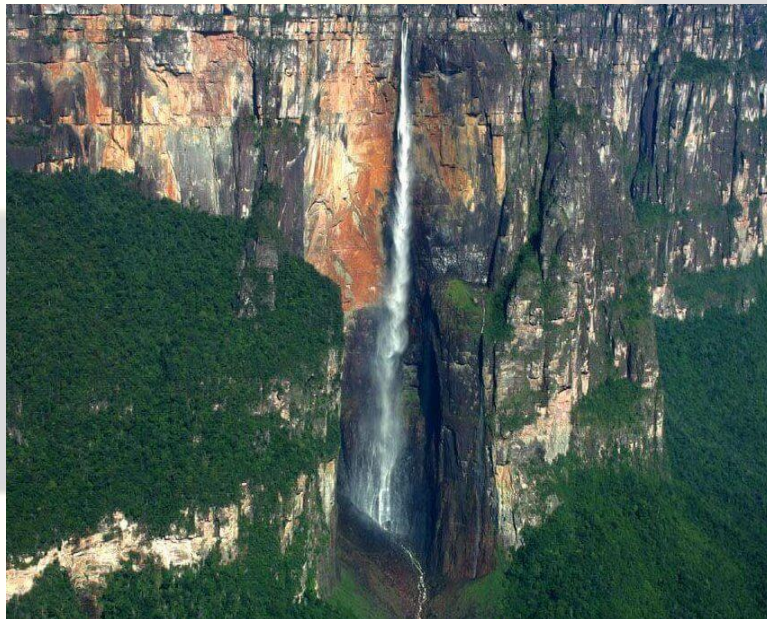
The Orinoco basin

- ➡ This is considered to be the third-largest drainage system of South America.
- ➡ It rises in the Southern end of Sierra Parima near Mount Delgado
- ➡ Chalboud at a height of 1000 meters.
- ➡ It traverses 2,740 km to meet the Atlantic ocean.
- ➡ The word the Orinoco means 'a place to paddle', i.e. a river where navigation is possible.
- ➡ In the North, the Orinoco river passes through a zone called 'Region of Rapids' where there are enormous granite boulders.



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- ➡ The world's highest waterfall Angel (979 m) is situated on river Churun which is a tributary of river Caroni which is further a tributary of river Orinoco.
- ➡ The Orinoco flows through the llanos (savanna grasslands) of Venezuela into the (North Atlantic Ocean).



Parana river system

- ➡ From source to its junction with Paraguay – known as Alto Parana
- ➡ Numerous waterfalls in alto Parana – then navigable
- ➡ Useful for HEP, irrigation
- ➡ Wheat cultivation in Pampas region

Uruguay river system

- ➡ Joins Parana river – to form Rio de la Plata estuary
- ➡ Important for irrigation and HEP
- ➡ Not useful for navigation due to numerous rapids

The Sao Francisco basin

- ➡ The fourth-largest river system of South America is the river Sao Francisco which is about 2,914 km in length. It flows within Brazil.

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- It originates North-west of the city of Belo Horizonte.

Rivers of South America

- Amazon River
- Orinoco River
- Magdalene River
- Parana-Rio de la Plata
- Tocantins-Araguaia
- Sao Francisco River
- Paraguay and Uruguay Rivers.

