

1. Desh ke Mentor Programme

Why in News?

- The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) has recently suggested that the Delhi government suspend its flagship ‘Desh ke Mentor’ Programme till “the time when all the loopholes pertaining to the safety of the children are overhauled.

Highlights:

- It was launched In October 2021, aiming at connecting students in classes IX to XII with voluntary mentors.
- People between the ages of 18 and 35 can sign up to be mentors through an app created by a team at the Delhi Technological University and will be connected with students based on mutual interests.
- The mentorship entails regular phone calls for a minimum of two months, which can optionally be carried on for another four months.
- The Idea is for the young mentors to guide students through higher education and career options, preparation for higher education entrance exams, and dealing with the pressure of it all.
- So far, 44,000 people have signed up as mentors and have been working with 1.76 lakh children.
- Assigning children to a mentor of the same gender as them does not necessarily assure their safety from abuse.
- Lack of police verification of the mentors.
- A psychometric Test Is not a full proof assessment of a person in terms of potential threat to any child.
- Limiting interactions to phone calls also does not ensure the safety of children since “child related crime can be initiated through phone calls as well.”
- The responsibility and accountability of preventing children from such situations lies with the Department. The consent of parents cannot be used as a cushion in case of any Untoward Incident.

2. Domestic Hazardous Waste

Why in News?

- Recently, Segregation of domestic hazardous waste remains a distant dream for most Indian cities in absence of robust framework and infrastructure.

Highlights:

- Domestic Hazardous Waste is any chemical or product that can cause serious illness or pose an environmental or health threat if improperly stored, transported or disposed of.
- Indore is the only city in the country that safely handles its domestic hazardous waste.
- When hazardous waste is disposed of in the trash, down the drain, or on the ground, our water and soils can be contaminated or trash collectors can be harmed.
- Most products labelled dangerous, flammable, poison, combustible and corrosive are considered Hazardous Waste.
- **Examples:** Auto batteries, Fertilizers, Batteries (non-alkaline), Paint.
- In 2020, a significant level of toxic heavy metals and persistent organic contaminants like Pesticides have been found by the researchers from the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Delhi and IIT Bombay.
- They analysed fine particles from eight dump sites across the country.
- Household waste is governed by the rules outlined in the Solid Waste Management Rules 2016. These rules divide household waste into dry and wet waste.
- Wet waste is categorised as any waste that decomposes or degrades by itself.
- All other waste falls into dry waste according to the rules.

3. Web 3.0

Why in News?

- Recently, The concept of Web3, also called Web 3.0, used to describe a potential next phase of the internet, created quite a buzz in 2021.

Highlights:

- World Wide Web, which is also known as a Web, is a collection of websites or web pages stored in web servers and connected to local computers through the internet.
- These websites contain text pages, digital images, audios, videos, etc. Users can access the content of these sites from any part of the world over the internet using their devices such as computers, laptops, cell phones, etc.

- Web 3.0 is a decentralized internet to be run on blockchain technology, which would be different from the versions in use, Web 1.0 and Web 2.0.
- In Web3, users will have ownership stakes in platforms and applications unlike now where tech giants control the platforms.
- Gavin Wood, founder of Ethereum, a block chain technology company, used the term Web3 first in 2014 and in the past few years many others have added to the idea of Web3.
- Web3 will deliver a decentralized and fair internet where users control their own data.
- With block chain, the time and place of the transaction are recorded permanently.
- Thus, Web3 enables peer to peer (seller to buyer) transactions by eliminating the role of the intermediary. This concept can be extended to
- The spirit of Web3 is Decentralized Autonomous Organization (DAO).
- DAO is all about the business rules and governing rules in any transaction are transparently available for anyone to see and software will be written conforming to these rules.
- With DAO, there is no need for a central authority to authenticate or validate.

4. India's Watchwords in a not so Bright 2022

Why in News?

- In this article, the author examines the uncertainties and impermanence India would face in the context of domestic and geopolitical world affairs for the year 2022.

What are the Geopolitical Challenges and Risks for India in 2022?



China as Disruptor:

- The role of China in 2022 is possibly the most disrupting one, given the challenge it poses to the existing international order.

- Militarily, China is openly challenging U.S. supremacy in many areas, including ‘state-of-the-art weaponry’ such as hyper-sonic technology.
- China has abandoned the ‘one country two systems’ policy, stripping Hong Kong of its freedom and inviting international opprobrium.
- It is now threatening Taiwan, which could well become one of the flash points of conflict in 2022.
- Concerns in Indo-Pacific: China might well be tempted to demonstrate its ability in the Indo-Pacific region. This, in the context of US ambitions in the same region, could constitute a serious risk.
- Russia-Ukraine Conflict: The Russia and Ukraine conflict has grave possibilities and could result in a series of cyclical outcomes with considerable damage potential.
- Kazakhstan Crisis: The current unrest in Kazakhstan demonstrates a sharper cleavage between the U.S.-led West and its principal opponents, Russia and China.
- Return of the Taliban: Taliban’s return to power in Afghanistan has led to a material shift in the balance of power in an already troubled region on India’s periphery.
- Taliban’s return to power represents a significant victory for Pakistan.
- Developments in Afghanistan have fuelled the ambitions of quite a few ‘anti-state militant Groups’ across the region.
- Concerns with Indonesia: In Indonesia, a resurgence of radical activities is taking place which provides fertile ground for other radical groups to enlarge their activities across the Asian region.
- Border issues with China: The Chinese transgressions across the Line of Actual Control in different sectors in Ladakh could well be expanded in 2022 at many more points on the Sino-Indian border.
- Challenges in Central Asia: In Central Asia, India will be challenged on how best to manage its traditional friendship with Russia with the pronounced tilt seen more recently in India-U.S. relations.
- Challenges in West Asia: In West Asia, the challenge for India is how to manage its membership of the Second Quad (India, Israel, the United Arab Emirates and the U.S.) with the conflicting interests of different players in the region.

Way Forward:

- India’s foreign policy needs to demonstrate more flexibility to manage the contradictions that exist.

- India needs to develop a strategy on how to counter the publicity given by China to its low-yield nuclear weapons meant for battlefield use even during conventional military operations and against conventional targets.
- India would need to strengthen its military posture to convince India's neighbours that it can stand up to China.

5. Pakistan's New National Security Policy

Why in News?

- The National Security Policy statement issued last week by the Government of Pakistan acknowledges the need for change.

Why does it Matter for India?

- India's stakes in a stable Pakistan are higher than anyone else in the world.
- Therefore, Delhi must pay close attention to the internal debates within Islamabad on the imperatives of major change in Pakistan's national direction.
- But as critics in Pakistan insist, the policy offers no clues on how to go about it.
- The classified version probably has a clear strategy on how to accelerate economic growth, build national cohesion, and revitalise its foreign and security policies.

Overview of India's Transformation after 1990s:

- The crises that Pakistan confronts today are quite similar to those Delhi faced at the turn of the 1990s.
- **Economic Challenge:** India's post-Independence old economic model was on the verge of collapse.
- **Political Instability:** The era of massive domestic political mandates was over and weak coalitions government were in place.
- Challenges in International relations: The Soviet Union, India's best friend in the Cold War, fell off the map and the Russian successor was more interested in integrating with the West.
- India found that its political ties with all other major powers — the US, Europe, China and Japan — were underdeveloped at the end of the Cold War.
- Pakistan, meanwhile, was running proxy wars in India even as it mobilised international pressures against Delhi on Kashmir.
- Within a decade, though, India was on a different trajectory.

- Its reformed economy was on a high growth path.
- India was hailed as an emerging power that would eventually become the third-largest Economy in the world and a military power to reckon with.
- Delhi also cut a deal with Washington to become a part of the global nuclear order on Reasonable Terms.
- This involved a series of structural economic reforms, the recasting of foreign policy, and developing a new culture of power-sharing within coalitions and between the Centre and the states.

The Economic Transformation of Bangladesh

- The economic transformation of Bangladesh has been equally impressive.
- Since Sheikh Hasina returned to power in 2009, Bangladesh focused on economic development, stopped support to terrorism, and improved ties with the larger of its two neighbours – India.
- As a result, Bangladesh's economy in 2021 (GDP at \$350 billion) is well ahead of Pakistan (\$280 billion).
- How Pakistan missed the opportunity
- Pakistan chose a different path.
- Having ousted the Soviet superpower from Afghanistan in the late 1980s, Pakistan was ready to apply the model of cross-border terrorism to shake Kashmir loose from India and turn Afghanistan into a protectorate.
- Supporting jihadi groups was seen as a low-cost strategy to achieve Pakistan's long-standing Strategic objectives in the neighbourhood.
- These Grand Geopolitical obsessions left little bandwidth for the much-needed economic Modernisation of Pakistan.
- Islamabad, which relentlessly pursued parity with Delhi, now finds that the Indian Economy at \$3.1 trillion is more than 10 times larger than that of Pakistan.

Factors that Explain Change in Pakistan's policy

- Diminishing role in geopolitics: In the past, Pakistan had much success in pursuing a Foreign policy that not only balanced India with the support of the West, but also carved out a large role for itself in the Middle East and more broadly the Muslim world.
- Today, barring the United Kingdom, Pakistan's equities in the West have steadily diminished.

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- Weakened ties in the Middle East: Meanwhile, it has weakened its traditionally strong ties in the Middle East with Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.
 - Weakened ties with the US: Although its all-weather ties with China have gone from strength to strength, the unfolding conflict between Washington and Beijing has put Pakistan in an uncomfortable strategic situation.
 - Pakistan's support for violent religious extremism has also begun to backfire.
 - A permissive environment for terrorism has now attracted severe financial penalties from the International System.

India's Changed Approach towards Pakistan

- Delhi, which was prepared to make concessions on Kashmir in the 1990s and 2000s, has taken Kashmir off the table and is ready to use military force in response to major terror attacks.
- Delhi's attitude towards Islamabad now oscillates between Insouciance and Aggression.
- Unlike in the past, the West is no longer pressuring India to Accommodate Pakistan on Kashmir.
- The US is eager for India's support in balancing China in the Indo-Pacific.

