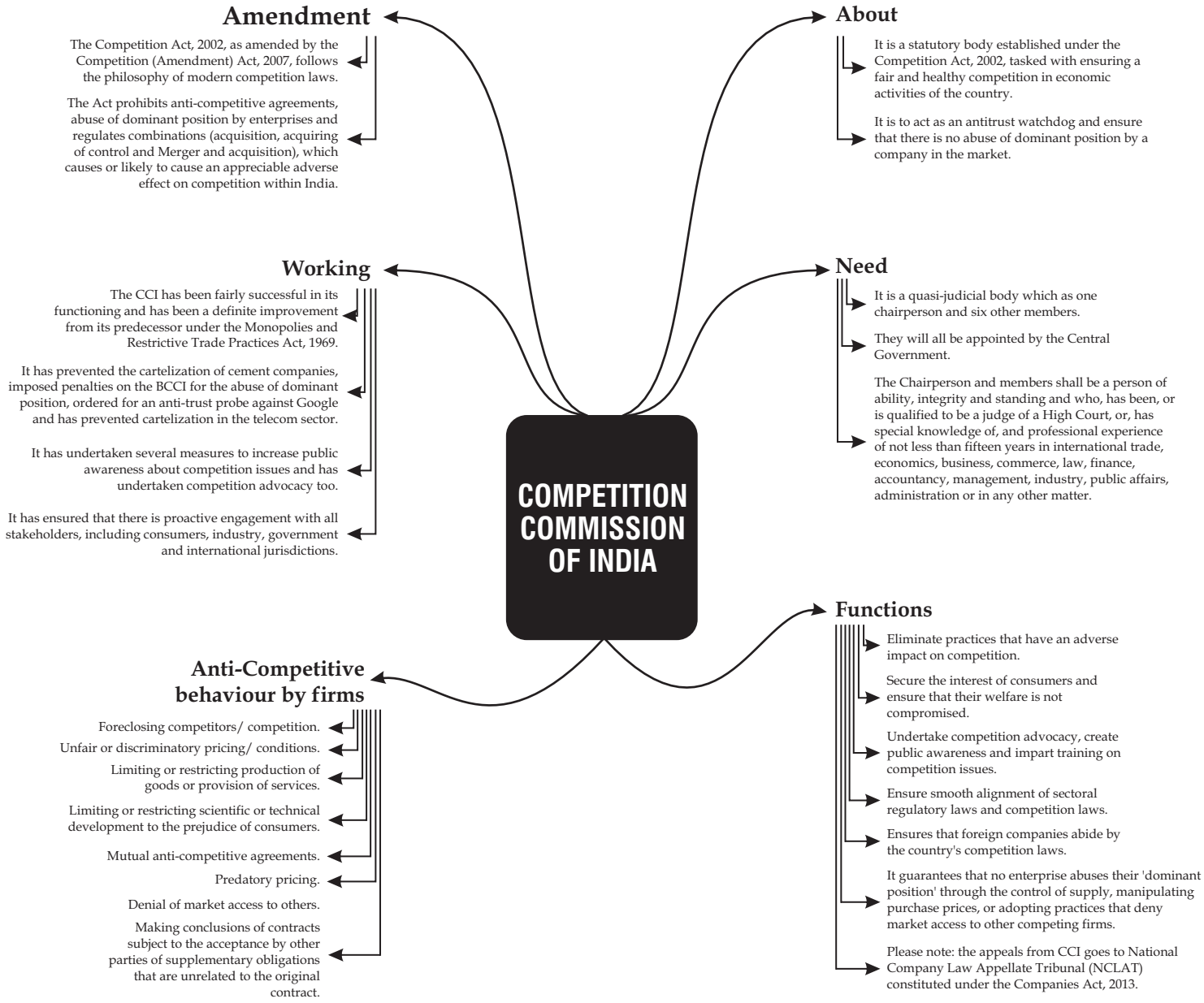
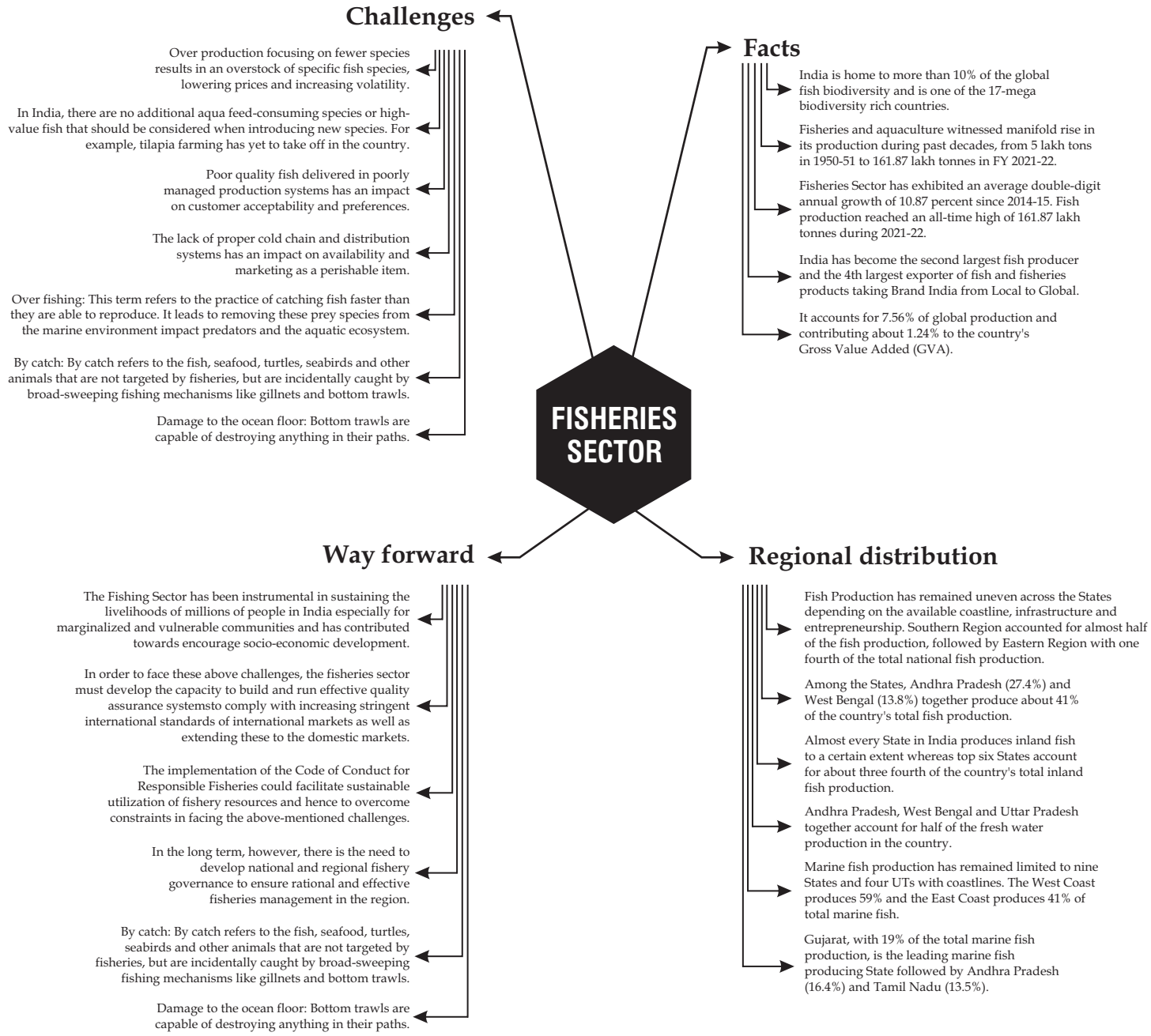
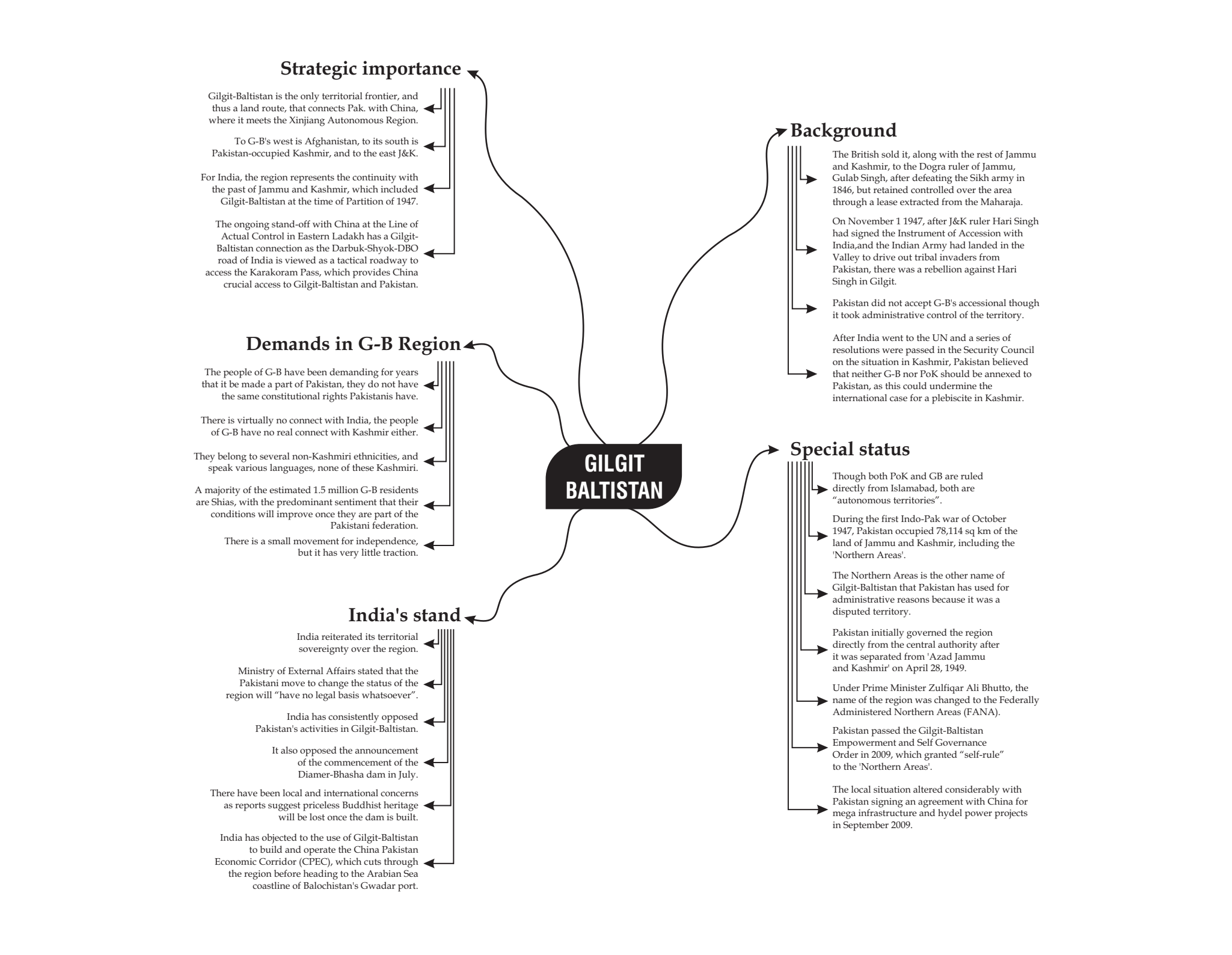
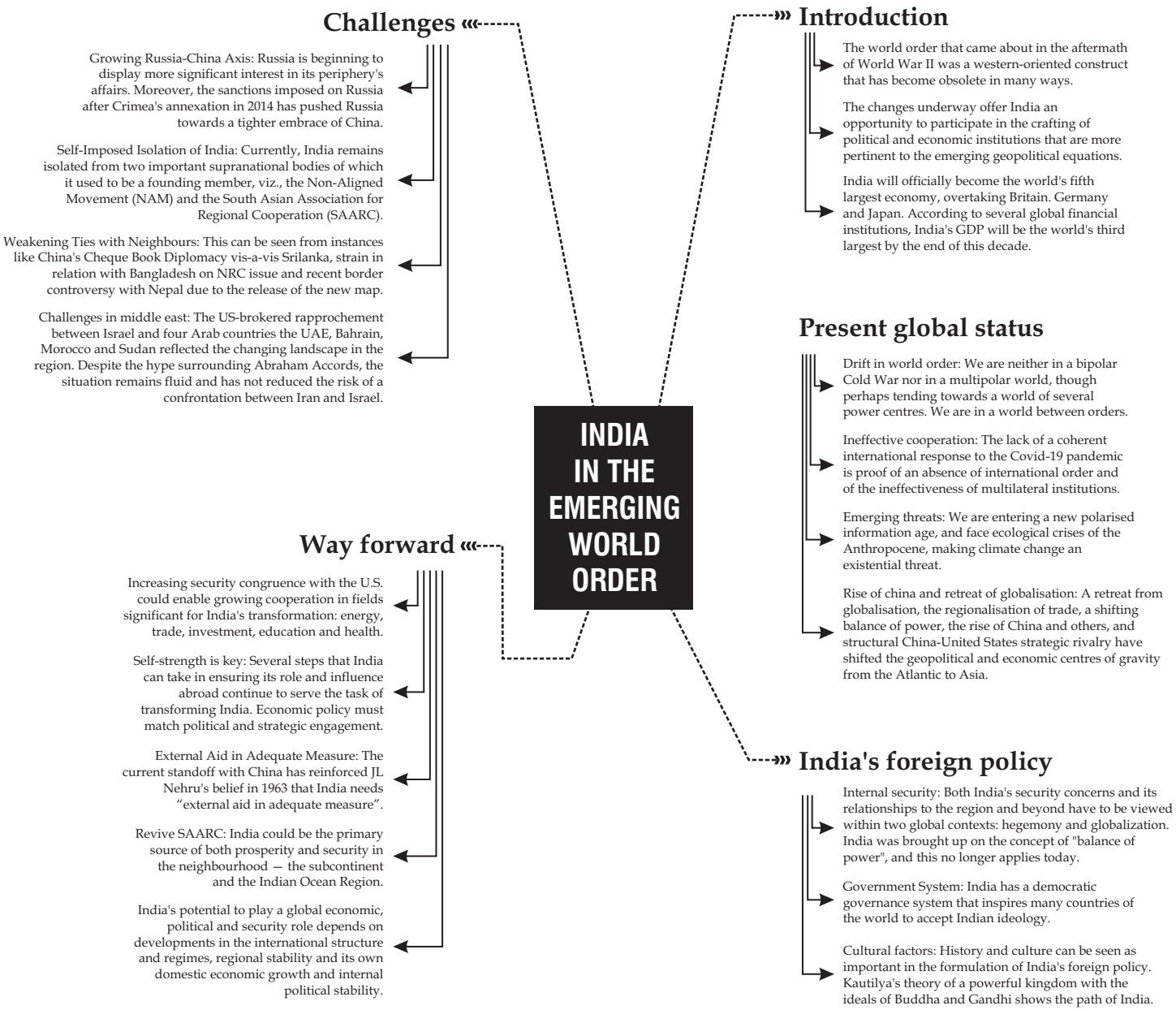
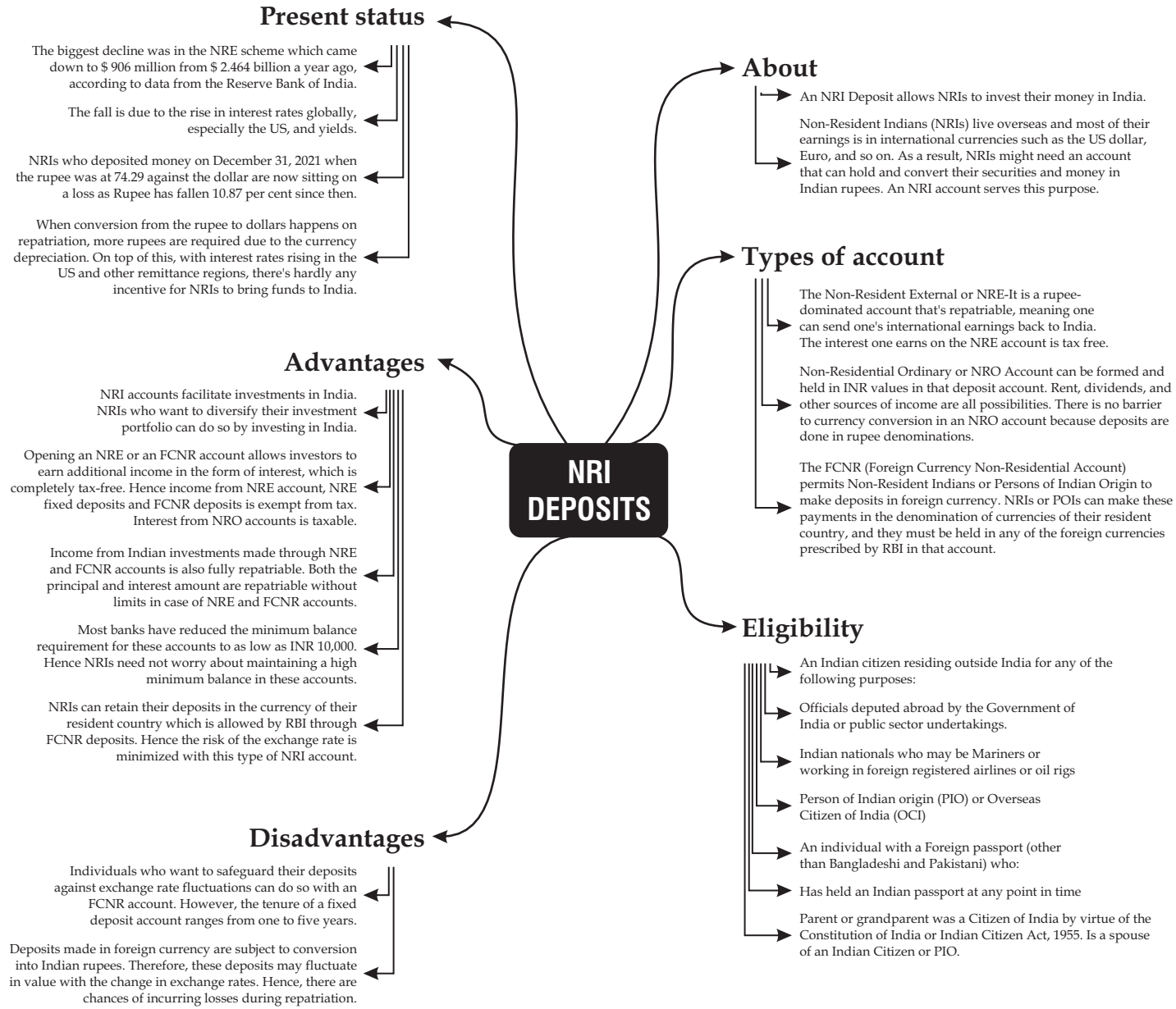

COMPETITION COMMISSION OF INDIA
Amendment
The Competition Act, 2002, as amended by the Competition (Amendment) Act, 2007, follows the philosophy of modern competition laws.
The Act prohibits anti-competitive agreements, abuse of dominant position by enterprises and regulates combinations (acquisition, acquiring of control and Merger and acquisition), which causes or likely to cause an appreciable adverse effect on competition within India.
About
It is a statutory body established under the Competition Act, 2002, tasked with ensuring a fair and healthy competition in economic activities of the country.
It is to act as an antitrust watchdog and ensure that there is no abuse of dominant position by a company in the market.
Working
The CCI has been fairly successful in its functioning and has been a definite improvement from its predecessor under the Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices Act, 1969.
It has prevented the cartelization of cement companies, imposed penalties on the BCCI for the abuse of dominant position, ordered for an anti-trust probe against Google and has prevented cartelization in the telecom sector.
It has undertaken several measures to increase public awareness about competition issues and has undertaken competition advocacy too.
It has ensured that there is proactive engagement with all stakeholders, including consumers, industry, government and international jurisdictions.
Need
It is a quasi-judicial body which as one chairperson and six other members.
They will all be appointed by the Central Government.
The Chairperson and members shall be a person of ability, integrity and standing and who, has been, or is qualified to be a judge of a High Court, or, has special knowledge of, and professional experience of not less than fifteen years in international trade, economics, business, commerce, law, finance, accountancy, management, industry, public affairs, administration or in any other matter.
Anti-Competitive behaviour by firms
Foreclosing competitors/ competition.
Unfair or discriminatory pricing/ conditions.
Limiting or restricting production of goods or provision of services.
Limiting or restricting scientific or technical development to the prejudice of consumers.
Mutual anti-competitive agreements.
Predatory pricing.
Denial of market access to others.
Making conclusions of contracts subject to the acceptance by other parties of supplementary obligations that are unrelated to the original contract.
Functions
Eliminate practices that have an adverse impact on competition.
Secure the interest of consumers and ensure that their welfare is not compromised.
Undertake competition advocacy, create public awareness and impart training on competition issues.
Ensure smooth alignment of sectoral regulatory laws and competition laws.
Ensures that foreign companies abide by the country's competition laws.
It guarantees that no enterprise abuses their 'dominant position' through the control of supply, manipulating purchase prices, or adopting practices that deny market access to other competing firms.
Please note: the appeals from CCI goes to National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) constituted under the Companies Act, 2013.

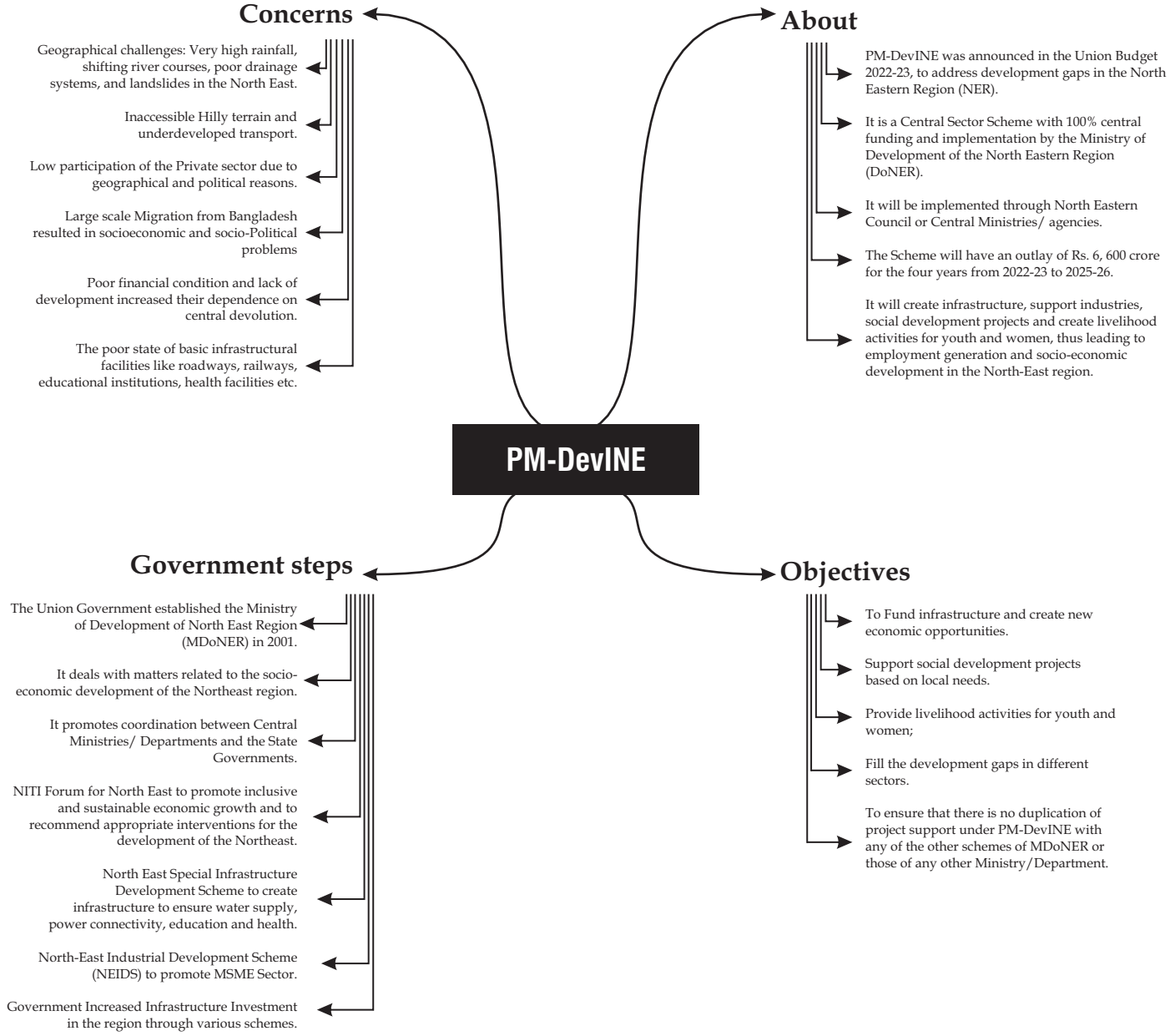

PROHIBITION OF CHILD MARRIAGE AMENDMENT BILL 2021
Concerns
About a quarter of 20-24-year-old women are married before the age of 18 years, despite that being the minimum age of marriage since 1978.
The limited success of the current law raises the question of whether an increase in the minimum age would have any significant impact on reducing the incidence of child marriage
According to NFHS-5 (2019-21), the prevalence of underage marriages remains high, with 23% of women between 20 and 24 years of age married before the age of 18. At the same time, the detection of such marriages remains low, with only 785 cases registered under the law in 2020.
This raises the question of whether the increase in the minimum age would have any significant impact on reducing child marriages.
Increasing the legal age for marriage for women will increase the number of marriages performed underage and render young adults without legal protection.
Government steps
Beti Bachao Beti Padhao to address the declining Child Sex Ratio.
PM MatruVandanaYojana (PMMVY) Providing Cash incentives for improved health and nutrition to pregnant and nursing mothers.
Scheme for Adolescent Girls aims at girls in the age group 11-18, to empower and improve their social status through nutrition, life skills, home skills and vocational training
Pradhan MantriMahila Shakti Kendra scheme promotes community participation through the involvement of Student Volunteers for the empowerment of rural women
National Crèche Scheme to provide daycare facilities to children of the age group of 6 months to 6 years of working women who are employed.
RashtriyaMahilaKosh (RMK) to provide micro-credit to poor women for various livelihood support and income-generating activities at concessional terms
Way forward
The practice of child marriages is largely due to the overall social customs, tradition, illiteracy, poverty, low status of women in society, and lack of awareness. These issues cannot be tackled by legislative interventions alone.
There is a need for improved access to education, skill training and employment opportunities, safety for women and strengthening maternal health services to reduce maternal and infant mortality rates.
The issue of raising the age of marriage for women must be supported with measures that help delay underage marriages such as access to education and improving women's safety.
About
According to the National Family Health Survey 2019-21 (NFHS-5), 23% of women between the age of 20 and 24 were married before 18 years of age.
In India, the practice of child marriage was first legally prohibited in 1929 through the Child Marriage Restraint Act, of 1929. As per the 1929 Act, marriage of girls below the age of 14 years and boys below the age of 18 years was prohibited.
This Act was amended in 1978 to increase the minimum age to 18 years for females, and 21 years for men.
The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, of 2006 replaced the 1929 Act, with the same minimum age limits. It seeks to increase the minimum age of marriage for females to 21 years.
The 2021 Bill is going to increase this to five years (23 years of age).
The Bill was introduced to amend the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, of 2006.
The main objective is to increase the minimum age of marriage for females to 21 years.
Under the 2006 Act, a person married below the minimum legal age (18 years) may apply for dissolution within two years of reaching majority (before 20 years of age).
Significance
Increasing the minimum age of marriage for females to 21 years, ensures gender equality, as the legal marriage age for males is already 21 years, different ages of marriage promote the Stereotype that wives must be younger than their husbands.
The Bill increases the minimum age of marriage for females to 21 years. This signifies that a person married between 18 and 21 years may also apply for voiding the marriage.
Increasing the age of marriage will help in achieving various goals including improvement of maternal and infant mortality rates (IMR and MMR), nutrition levels, the sex ratio at birth (SRB), female labour force participation, and gender equality, and will lead to the empowerment of women.


FISHERIES SECTOR
Challenges
Over production focusing on fewer species results in an overstock of specific fish species, lowering prices and increasing volatility.
In India, there are no additional aqua feed-consuming species or high-value fish that should be considered when introducing new species. For example, tilapia farming has yet to take off in the country.
Poor quality fish delivered in poorly managed production systems has an impact on customer acceptability and preferences.
The lack of proper cold chain and distribution systems has an impact on availability and marketing as a perishable item.
Over fishing: This term refers to the practice of catching fish faster than they are able to reproduce. It leads to removing these prey species from the marine environment impact predators and the aquatic ecosystem.
By catch: By catch refers to the fish, seafood, turtles, seabirds and other animals that are not targeted by fisheries, but are incidentally caught by broad-sweeping fishing mechanisms like gillnets and bottom trawls.
Damage to the ocean floor: Bottom trawls are capable of destroying anything in their paths.
Facts
India is home to more than 10% of the global fish biodiversity and is one of the 17-mega biodiversity rich countries.
Fisheries and aquaculture witnessed manifold rise in its production during past decades, from 5 lakh tons in 1950-51 to 161.87 lakh tonnes in FY 2021-22.
Fisheries Sector has exhibited an average double-digit annual growth of 10.87 percent since 2014-15. Fish production reached an all-time high of 161.87 lakh tonnes during 2021-22.
India has become the second largest fish producer and the 4th largest exporter of fish and fisheries products taking Brand India from Local to Global.
It accounts for 7.56% of global production and contributing about 1.24% to the country's Gross Value Added (GVA).
Way forward
The Fishing Sector has been instrumental in sustaining the livelihoods of millions of people in India especially for marginalized and vulnerable communities and has contributed towards encourage socio-economic development.
In order to face these above challenges, the fisheries sector must develop the capacity to build and run effective quality assurance systemsto comply with increasing stringent international standards of international markets as well as extending these to the domestic markets.
The implementation of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries could facilitate sustainable utilization of fishery resources and hence to overcome constraints in facing the above-mentioned challenges.
In the long term, however, there is the need to develop national and regional fishery governance to ensure rational and effective fisheries management in the region.
By catch: By catch refers to the fish, seafood, turtles, seabirds and other animals that are not targeted by fisheries, but are incidentally caught by broad-sweeping fishing mechanisms like gillnets and bottom trawls.
Damage to the ocean floor: Bottom trawls are capable of destroying anything in their paths.
Regional distribution
Fish Production has remained uneven across the States depending on the available coastline, infrastructure and entrepreneurship. Southern Region accounted for almost half of the fish production, followed by Eastern Region with one fourth of the total national fish production.
Among the States, Andhra Pradesh (27.4%) and West Bengal (13.8%) together produce about 41% of the country's total fish production.
Almost every State in India produces inland fish to a certain extent whereas top six States account for about three fourth of the country's total inland fish production.
Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh together account for half of the fresh water production in the country.
Marine fish production has remained limited to nine States and four UTs with coastlines. The West Coast produces 59% and the East Coast produces 41% of total marine fish.
Gujarat, with 19% of the total marine fish production, is the leading marine fish producing State followed by Andhra Pradesh (16.4%) and Tamil Nadu (13.5%).


GILGIT BALTISTAN
Strategic importance
Gilgit-Baltistan is the only territorial frontier, and thus a land route, that connects Pak. with China, where it meets the Xinjiang Autonomous Region.
To G-B's west is Afghanistan, to its south is Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, and to the east J&K.
For India, the region represents the continuity with the past of Jammu and Kashmir, which included Gilgit-Baltistan at the time of Partition of 1947.
The ongoing stand-off with China at the Line of Actual Control in Eastern Ladakh has a Gilgit-Baltistan connection as the Darbuk-Shyok-DBO road of India is viewed as a tactical roadway to access the Karakoram Pass, which provides China crucial access to Gilgit-Baltistan and Pakistan.
Demands in G-B Region
The people of G-B have been demanding for years that it be made a part of Pakistan, they do not have the same constitutional rights Pakistanis have.
There is virtually no connect with India, the people of G-B have no real connect with Kashmir either.
They belong to several non-Kashmiri ethnicities, and speak various languages, none of these Kashmiri.
A majority of the estimated 1.5 million G-B residents are Shias, with the predominant sentiment that their conditions will improve once they are part of the Pakistani federation.
There is a small movement for independence, but it has very little traction.
India's stand
India reiterated its territorial sovereignty over the region.
Ministry of External Affairs stated that the Pakistani move to change the status of the region will “have no legal basis whatsoever”.
India has consistently opposed Pakistan's activities in Gilgit-Baltistan.
It also opposed the announcement of the commencement of the Diamer-Bhasha dam in July.
There have been local and international concerns as reports suggest priceless Buddhist heritage will be lost once the dam is built.
India has objected to the use of Gilgit-Baltistan to build and operate the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which cuts through the region before heading to the Arabian Sea coastline of Balochistan's Gwadar port.
Background
The British sold it, along with the rest of Jammu and Kashmir, to the Dogra ruler of Jammu, Gulab Singh, after defeating the Sikh army in 1846, but retained controlled over the area through a lease extracted from the Maharaja.
On November 1 1947, after J&K ruler Hari Singh had signed the Instrument of Accession with India,and the Indian Army had landed in the Valley to drive out tribal invaders from Pakistan, there was a rebellion against Hari Singh in Gilgit.
Pakistan did not accept G-B's accessional though it took administrative control of the territory.
After India went to the UN and a series of resolutions were passed in the Security Council on the situation in Kashmir, Pakistan believed that neither G-B nor PoK should be annexed to Pakistan, as this could undermine the international case for a plebiscite in Kashmir.
Special status
Though both PoK and GB are ruled directly from Islamabad, both are “autonomous territories”.
During the first Indo-Pak war of October 1947, Pakistan occupied 78,114 sq km of the land of Jammu and Kashmir, including the 'Northern Areas'.
The Northern Areas is the other name of Gilgit-Baltistan that Pakistan has used for administrative reasons because it was a disputed territory.
Pakistan initially governed the region directly from the central authority after it was separated from 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' on April 28, 1949.
Under Prime Minister Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, the name of the region was changed to the Federally Administered Northern Areas (FANA).
Pakistan passed the Gilgit-Baltistan Empowerment and Self Governance Order in 2009, which granted “self-rule” to the 'Northern Areas'.
The local situation altered considerably with Pakistan signing an agreement with China for mega infrastructure and hydel power projects in September 2009.


INDIA IN THE EMERGING WORLD ORDER
Introduction
The world order that came about in the aftermath of World War II was a western-oriented construct that has become obsolete in many ways.
The changes underway offer India an opportunity to participate in the crafting of political and economic institutions that are more pertinent to the emerging geopolitical equations.
India will officially become the world's fifth largest economy, overtaking Britain. Germany and Japan. According to several global financial institutions, India's GDP will be the world's third largest by the end of this decade.
Present global status
Drift in world order: We are neither in a bipolar Cold War nor in a multipolar world, though perhaps tending towards a world of several power centres. We are in a world between orders.
Ineffective cooperation: The lack of a coherent international response to the Covid-19 pandemic is proof of an absence of international order and of the ineffectiveness of multilateral institutions.
Emerging threats: We are entering a new polarised information age, and face ecological crises of the Anthropocene, making climate change an existential threat.
Rise of china and retreat of globalisation: A retreat from globalisation, the regionalisation of trade, a shifting balance of power, the rise of China and others, and structural China-United States strategic rivalry have shifted the geopolitical and economic centres of gravity from the Atlantic to Asia.
India's foreign policy
Internal security: Both India's security concerns and its relationships to the region and beyond have to be viewed within two global contexts: hegemony and globalization. India was brought up on the concept of "balance of power", and this no longer applies today.
Government System: India has a democratic governance system that inspires many countries of the world to accept Indian ideology.
Cultural factors: History and culture can be seen as important in the formulation of India's foreign policy. Kautilya's theory of a powerful kingdom with the ideals of Buddha and Gandhi shows the path of India.
Way forward
Increasing security congruence with the U.S. could enable growing cooperation in fields significant for India's transformation: energy, trade, investment, education and health.
Self-strength is key: Several steps that India can take in ensuring its role and influence abroad continue to serve the task of transforming India. Economic policy must match political and strategic engagement.
External Aid in Adequate Measure: The current standoff with China has reinforced JL Nehru's belief in 1963 that India needs “external aid in adequate measure”.
Revive SAARC: India could be the primary source of both prosperity and security in the neighbourhood — the subcontinent and the Indian Ocean Region.
India's potential to play a global economic, political and security role depends on developments in the international structure and regimes, regional stability and its own domestic economic growth and internal political stability.
Challenges
Growing Russia-China Axis: Russia is beginning to display more significant interest in its periphery's affairs. Moreover, the sanctions imposed on Russia after Crimea's annexation in 2014 has pushed Russia towards a tighter embrace of China.
Self-Imposed Isolation of India: Currently, India remains isolated from two important supranational bodies of which it used to be a founding member, viz., the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).
Weakening Ties with Neighbours: This can be seen from instances like China's Cheque Book Diplomacy vis-a-vis Srilanka, strain in relation with Bangladesh on NRC issue and recent border controversy with Nepal due to the release of the new map.
Challenges in middle east: The US-brokered rapprochement between Israel and four Arab countries the UAE, Bahrain, Morocco and Sudan reflected the changing landscape in the region. Despite the hype surrounding Abraham Accords, the situation remains fluid and has not reduced the risk of a confrontation between Iran and Israel.


NRI DEPOSITS
Present status
The biggest decline was in the NRE scheme which came down to $ 906 million from $ 2.464 billion a year ago, according to data from the Reserve Bank of India.
The fall is due to the rise in interest rates globally, especially the US, and yields.
NRIs who deposited money on December 31, 2021 when the rupee was at 74.29 against the dollar are now sitting on a loss as Rupee has fallen 10.87 per cent since then.
When conversion from the rupee to dollars happens on repatriation, more rupees are required due to the currency depreciation. On top of this, with interest rates rising in the US and other remittance regions, there's hardly any incentive for NRIs to bring funds to India.
Advantages
NRI accounts facilitate investments in India. NRIs who want to diversify their investment portfolio can do so by investing in India.
Opening an NRE or an FCNR account allows investors to earn additional income in the form of interest, which is completely tax-free. Hence income from NRE account, NRE fixed deposits and FCNR deposits is exempt from tax. Interest from NRO accounts is taxable.
Income from Indian investments made through NRE and FCNR accounts is also fully repatriable. Both the principal and interest amount are repatriable without limits in case of NRE and FCNR accounts.
Most banks have reduced the minimum balance requirement for these accounts to as low as INR 10,000. Hence NRIs need not worry about maintaining a high minimum balance in these accounts.
NRIs can retain their deposits in the currency of their resident country which is allowed by RBI through FCNR deposits. Hence the risk of the exchange rate is minimized with this type of NRI account.
Disadvantages
Individuals who want to safeguard their deposits against exchange rate fluctuations can do so with an FCNR account. However, the tenure of a fixed deposit account ranges from one to five years.
Deposits made in foreign currency are subject to conversion into Indian rupees. Therefore, these deposits may fluctuate in value with the change in exchange rates. Hence, there are chances of incurring losses during repatriation.
About
An NRI Deposit allows NRIs to invest their money in India.
Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) live overseas and most of their earnings is in international currencies such as the US dollar, Euro, and so on. As a result, NRIs might need an account that can hold and convert their securities and money in Indian rupees. An NRI account serves this purpose.
Types of account
The Non-Resident External or NRE-It is a rupee-dominated account that's repatriable, meaning one can send one's international earnings back to India. The interest one earns on the NRE account is tax free.
Non-Residential Ordinary or NRO Account can be formed and held in INR values in that deposit account. Rent, dividends, and other sources of income are all possibilities. There is no barrier to currency conversion in an NRO account because deposits are done in rupee denominations.
The FCNR (Foreign Currency Non-Residential Account) permits Non-Resident Indians or Persons of Indian Origin to make deposits in foreign currency. NRIs or POIs can make these payments in the denomination of currencies of their resident country, and they must be held in any of the foreign currencies prescribed by RBI in that account.
Eligibility
An Indian citizen residing outside India for any of the following purposes:
Officials deputed abroad by the Government of India or public sector undertakings.
Indian nationals who may be Mariners or working in foreign registered airlines or oil rigs
Person of Indian origin (PIO) or Overseas Citizen of India (OCI)
An individual with a Foreign passport (other than Bangladeshi and Pakistani) who:
Has held an Indian passport at any point in time
Parent or grandparent was a Citizen of India by virtue of the Constitution of India or Indian Citizen Act, 1955. Is a spouse of an Indian Citizen or PIO.


PM-DevINE
Concerns
Geographical challenges: Very high rainfall, shifting river courses, poor drainage systems, and landslides in the North East.
Inaccessible Hilly terrain and underdeveloped transport.
Low participation of the Private sector due to geographical and political reasons.
Large scale Migration from Bangladesh resulted in socioeconomic and socio-Political problems
Poor financial condition and lack of development increased their dependence on central devolution.
The poor state of basic infrastructural facilities like roadways, railways, educational institutions, health facilities etc.
About
PM-DevINE was announced in the Union Budget 2022-23, to address development gaps in the North Eastern Region (NER).
It is a Central Sector Scheme with 100% central funding and implementation by the Ministry of Development of the North Eastern Region (DoNER).
It will be implemented through North Eastern Council or Central Ministries/ agencies.
The Scheme will have an outlay of Rs. 6, 600 crore for the four years from 2022-23 to 2025-26.
It will create infrastructure, support industries, social development projects and create livelihood activities for youth and women, thus leading to employment generation and socio-economic development in the North-East region.
Government steps
The Union Government established the Ministry of Development of North East Region (MDoNER) in 2001.
It deals with matters related to the socio-economic development of the Northeast region.
It promotes coordination between Central Ministries/ Departments and the State Governments.
NITI Forum for North East to promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth and to recommend appropriate interventions for the development of the Northeast.
North East Special Infrastructure Development Scheme to create infrastructure to ensure water supply, power connectivity, education and health.
North-East Industrial Development Scheme (NEIDS) to promote MSME Sector.
Government Increased Infrastructure Investment in the region through various schemes.
Objectives
To Fund infrastructure and create new economic opportunities.
Support social development projects based on local needs.
Provide livelihood activities for youth and women;
Fill the development gaps in different sectors.
To ensure that there is no duplication of project support under PM-DevINE with any of the other schemes of MDoNER or those of any other Ministry/Department.

TUBERCULOSIS

Global TB Report

This is the first time in many years an increase has been reported in the number of people falling ill with TB and drug resistant TB.

TB services are among many others disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021, but its impact on the TB response has been particularly severe.

Many people with TB were not diagnosed and treated. The reported number of people newly diagnosed with TB fell from 7.1 million in 2019 to 5.8 million in 2020. There was a partial recovery to 6.4 million in 2021, but this was still well below pre-pandemic levels.

The number of people provided with treatment for RR-TB and multidrug-resistant TB (MDR-TB) has also declined between 2019 and 2020.

The report notes a decline in global spending on essential TB services from US$6 billion in 2019 to US$5.4 billion in 2021, which is less than half of the global target of US$13 billion annually by 2022.

About

Tuberculosis (TB) is a potentially serious infectious disease that mainly affects the lungs.

The 'Mycobacterium tuberculosis'bacteria that cause TB are spread when an infected person coughs or sneezes.

Most people infected with the bacteria that cause tuberculosis don't have symptoms. When symptoms do occur, they usually include a cough (sometimes blood-tinged), weight loss, night sweats and fever.

Treatment isn't always required for those without symptoms. Patients with active symptoms will require a long course of treatment involving multiple antibiotics.

As in the previous 10 years, most of the funding used in 2021 (79%) was from domestic sources. In other low- and middle-income countries, international donor funding remains crucial.

Concerns

India has set a target to eliminate TB by 2025.Experts believe that to reach this goal, the country must go beyond the medical aspects.

Undernutrition is a major risk factor that drives TB, acknowledges the World Health Organization. The condition accounts for nearly 34 per cent of all cases.

Present status in India

Tuberculosis is one of India's major public health problems. According to World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates, India has the world's largest tuberculosis epidemic.

In 2020, India accounted for 26% of the incident TB cases across the globe.

India has an incidence rate of 192 cases per 100,000 of population.

India accounted for 38% of global TB deaths among HIV-negative people and for 34% of the combined total number of TB deaths in HIV-negative and HIV-positive people. Further in 2020, India accounted for 24% of the global gap between estimated TB incidence and the number of people newly diagnosed with TB and reported.

Way forward

The government needs to take stock of where the bottlenecks are. There is no point in pouring more money into a failing system.

Drug-resistant tuberculosis remains a public health crisis, and ongoing surveillance of the burden is essential to mounting an effective response. Accurate diagnosis and treatment of tuberculosis, including drug-resistant forms, should be available and accessible to all who need it.

Closing gaps in the detection of drug-resistant tuberculosis requires investment in laboratory capacity, sample transport systems, and data connectivity solutions. To improve detection requires a multistep process, first requiring improved bacteriological confirmation among presumptive cases of pulmonary tuberculosis.

Efforts are needed to minimise the emergence of resistance to the first new drugs to be made available for the treatment of tuberculosis. Early detection of resistance relies on investment in research and development of new molecular tools.

Global targets

In 2014 and 2015, all Member States of WHO and the UN adopted the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and WHO's End TB Strategy. The SDGs and End TB Strategy both include targets and milestones for large reductions in TB incidence, TB deaths and costs faced by TB patients and their households.

In 2018, countries convened at the United Nations (UN) high-level meeting on TB committed to speed up work towards ambitious targets to treat an additional 40 million people with TB and provide preventive treatment to at least 30 million people at risk of developing the disease by 2022.