

### HOW INDIA CAN BECOME THE BANK FOR THE GLOBAL SOUTH

#### Context

- In 2007, China's GDP was about \$3.6 trillion and today, India's GDP is \$3.7 trillion or perhaps more.
- This comparison sets the stage for a pivotal moment in Indian diplomacy spearheaded by the current dispensation.
- As India concludes its transformative diplomatic year in 2023, marked by its G20 presidency, it's important to assess the lessons from China's geopolitical ascent post-2008 financial crisis.

#### An Analysis of China's rise to Geo-economic Prominence

- **China Provided Institutional Responses During Financial Crisis**
  - In 2007, China was not yet the geo-economic power what it is now. But with a GDP lower than India's today, it became the go-to nation during the global financial crisis a year later.
- **China Offered a Vital Alternative Outside Western World**
  - China utilized its economic promise in 2008 to garner enormous economic and political influence, which has served it well ever since.
  - It did this by offering itself as a vital additionality to the global order.

#### Agendas of India's Next Government in Coming Years

- **Information Technology (IT) and Innovation**
  - The work for the next government should be to demonstrate India's potential on the global stage similar to what China did in 2007 and during 2008 financial crisis.
  - India has established itself as a global IT hub, with a strong presence in software services and technology.
  - This sector contributes significantly to exports and economic growth. It still has a lot of potential which take India's IT export to new level.

- **Further Boost Entrepreneurship and Start-ups**
  - India has witnessed a surge in entrepreneurship and a burgeoning start-up ecosystem.
  - The government has taken initiatives to support start-ups through policies and funding, fostering innovation and economic growth.
  - India has now almost more than 100 Unicorns and the number continues to grow.
- **Leverage Strategic Location**
  - India's geographical location gives it a strategic advantage for international trade.
  - It serves as a gateway between the Middle East, Europe, and Asia, facilitating global economic interactions.
  - With India-Middle East Europe corridor, India's importance is only going to rise and provide an alternate route of trade to ME and further Europe.
- **Take On Key Reforms and Policies**
  - The Indian government has implemented economic reforms to improve the business environment, ease of doing business, and attract foreign investment.
  - Initiatives like Make in India and Goods and Services Tax (GST) aim to streamline processes and boost economic activity.
  - Future governments should build on these reforms.

## Conclusion

- As India stands at the cusp of a transformative period in 2024, its ability to channel its economic momentum into a global force will determine its place in the evolving geopolitical landscape.
- The lessons from China's rise underscore the importance of a strategic roadmap, systematic approach, and visionary diplomacy to reshape the global order.
- India's journey towards becoming the bank of the Global South centres around its capacity to provide additionality in global growth, institutions, and security.

## ECI MEMBERS TO HAVE SAME STATUS AS SC JUDGES

### Why in news?

- The Rajya Sabha has passed a Bill to regulate the appointment of the Election Commission of India.
- The bill retained the status of the CEC and two ECs on par with judges of the Supreme Court.
  - The earlier Bill sought to downgrade their service conditions, aligning them with those of a Cabinet Secretary.

### Election Commission of India:

- Election Commission is a permanent and independent body.
- By **Article 324** of the Constitution of India, it is vested with the power of conducting elections to –
  - **Parliament,**
  - **State Legislatures,**
  - **Office of President and Vice-President of India.**

### Appointment and Tenure of Commissioners:

- The Constitution does not lay down a specific legislative process for the appointment of the Chief Election Commissioner and Election Commissioners.
  - **Article 324(2)** says appointment of CEC and other ECs shall be subject to provisions of any law made by the Parliament.
  - However, no such law has been framed so far.
- **The President makes the appointment on the advice of the Union Council of Ministers headed by the Prime Minister.**
- They have **tenure of six years, or up to the age of 65 years**, whichever is earlier.
- They enjoy the same status and receive salary and perks as available to Judges of the Supreme Court of India.
- The CEC can be removed from office except in same manner and on the same grounds as a judge of the Supreme Court.

- The Constitution has **not debarred the retiring Election Commissioners from any further appointment by the Government.**

## Criticism

- Some Opposition leaders criticised the Bill for replacing the CJI in the selection committee with a Cabinet Minister.
- This effectively means the government will at all times have the majority to ram through its choice of candidate.

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## PARLIAMENT PASSED THE ADVOCATES AMENDMENT BILL

### Why in news?

- On the first day of the Parliament's Winter Session, the Advocates Amendment Bill, 2023 was passed in the Lok Sabha.
  - The bill was already passed in Rajya Sabha's Monsoon Session.

### Advocates (Amendment) Bill, 2023

- The Advocates (Amendment) Bill, 2023, was passed in the Rajya Sabha in August, 2023. Recently, during winter session, the bill was passed from LS.
- Aimed at weeding out touts from the legal system, the Bill:
  - repeals the Legal Practitioners Act, 1879, and
  - amends the Advocates Act, 1961.
- This was done in order to reduce the number of superfluous enactments in the statute book and repeal all obsolete laws.
  - This is in line with the government's policy of repealing all obsolete laws or pre-independence Acts that have lost their utility.

### Key Features of Advocates (Amendment) Bill, 2023:

- **Touts:**
  - The Bill provides that every High Court, district judge, sessions judge, district magistrate, and revenue officer may frame and publish lists of touts.

- The Court or judge may exclude from the premises of the Court any person whose name is included in the list of touts.
- **Preparation of lists:**
  - The authorities empowered to frame and publish the list of touts may order subordinate courts to hold an inquiry into the conduct of persons alleged or suspected to be touts.
  - Once such a person is proven to be a tout, his name may be included by the authority in the list of touts.
  - No person will be included in such lists without getting an opportunity of showing cause against his inclusion.
- **Penalty:**
  - Any person who acts as a tout while his name is included in the list of touts will be punished with imprisonment up to three months, a fine up to Rs 500, or both.

### **Key features of Advocates Act of 1961 (now amended)**

- The Advocates Act, 1961, was enacted to amend and consolidate the law relating to legal practitioners and to provide for the constitution of Bar Councils and an All-India Bar.
- Before this, legal practitioners were governed by three Acts:
  - the Legal Practitioners Act, 1879,
  - the Bombay Pleaders Act, 1920, and
  - the Indian Bar Councils Act, 1926.
- The Law Commission, in its 249th Report, titled 'Obsolete Laws: Warranting Immediate Repeal', recommended repealing the 1879 Act.
- Additionally, the All-India Bar Committee made its recommendations on the subject in 1953. Taking these into account, the 1961 Act was passed.

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## **CALLING FOR CAUTION, PM FLAGS NEED FOR ETHICS, DEMOCRATIC VALUES IN AI**

### **Why in the News?**

- While addressing the Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI) Summit, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi advised the need to exercise extreme caution in the deployment of AI.

## About Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI) Summit:

- The Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence is an international initiative, started in 2020.
- **Objective:** To bridge the gap between theory and practice on AI by supporting cutting-edge research and applied activities on AI-related priorities.
- GPAI brings together engaged minds and expertise from science, industry, civil society, governments, international organisations and academia to foster international cooperation.
- The founding members of the GPAI are: Australia, Canada, France, Germany, **India**, Italy, Japan, Mexico, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea, Singapore, Slovenia, the UK, the US, and the EU.
- At present, GPAI has **28 members**, along with the EU.

## About Artificial Intelligence:

- Artificial intelligence (AI) is the **ability of a computer or a robot controlled by a computer to do tasks that are usually done by humans because they require human intelligence and discernment.**
- The term is frequently applied to the project of developing systems endowed with the intellectual processes characteristic of humans, such as the ability to reason, discover meaning, generalize, or learn from past experience.
- AI algorithms are trained using large datasets so that they can identify patterns, make predictions and recommend actions, much like a human would, just faster and better.

## Should AI be Regulated before it's too late?

- Artificial Intelligence is already suffering from three key issues – **privacy, bias and discrimination.**
- Currently, governments do not have any policy tools to halt work in AI development.

- If left unchecked, it can start infringing on – and ultimately take control of – people’s lives.
  - Businesses across industries are increasingly deploying AI to analyse preferences and personalize user experiences, boost productivity, and fight fraud.
    - For example, ChatGPT Plus, has already been integrated by **Snapchat**, **UnrealEngine** and **Shopify** in their applications.
  - This growing use of AI has already transformed the way the global economy works and how businesses interact with their consumers.
    - However, in some cases it is also beginning to infringe on people’s privacy.
  - Hence, **AI should be regulated so that the entities using the technology act responsible and are held accountable.**
  - Laws and policies should be developed that broadly govern the algorithms which will help promote responsible use of AI and make businesses accountable.
  - Mandatory regulations on AI can go a long way in preventing technology from infringing human rights.
  - They can also help ensure that technology is used for the benefit of end users instead of negatively affecting their lives.
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## WHAT IS STONEHENGE?

Activists in the United Kingdom are coming together to stop the construction of a two-mile road tunnel close to the great circle of Stonehenge by the government.



### About Stonehenge:

- It is a massive **stone circle monument** located on Salisbury Plain in southern England.
- It was declared a **UNESCO World Heritage Site** of outstanding universal value in 1986.
- **When was Stonehenge built?**
  - **Work started** on this super stone circle **around 5,000 years** ago in the late Neolithic Age, but it took over **1,000 years to build** in four long stages.

- Archaeologists believe the **final changes** were made around **1,500 BC**, in the **early Bronze Age**.
- **Stones Used:**
  - The **bigger stones** at Stonehenge, known as **sarsens**, weigh **25 tons on average** and are widely believed to have been brought from Marlborough Downs, 32 kilometres to the north.
  - Most of the monument's **smaller stones**, referred to as "**bluestones**" (as they have a bluish tinge when wet or freshly broken), weigh **between 2 and 5 tons and** came from quarries in the Preseli Hills in west Wales, about 225 km away from Stonehenge.
  - Scientists are **still unsure exactly how** prehistoric **people moved the stones** over such long distances.
- **Purpose:**
  - Though there is **no definite evidence** as to the intended purpose of Stonehenge, it was **presumably a religious site and an expression of the power and wealth** of the chieftains, aristocrats, and priests who had it built.
  - It is just one **part of a larger sacred landscape that contained many other stone and wooden structures**, as well as **burials**.
  - It was **aligned with the Sun** and possibly used for **observing the Sun and Moon** and **working out the farming calendar**.

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## WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH CENTRE'S ETHANOL BLENDING SCHEME

### Why in News?

- The Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution directed all mills and distilleries not to use sugarcane juice/syrup for making any ethanol with immediate effect.
- After banning sugar exports, the Centre has taken the next step towards augmenting domestic availability - restricting diversion of the sweetener for ethanol production.



## Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) Programme:

- **About:**
  - It was launched by the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas in **2003** to promote the use of alternative and environment friendly fuels.
  - **This programme has been extended** to the whole of India (except UTs of Andaman Nicobar and Lakshadweep islands) with effect from **1st April, 2019** wherein Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) sell petrol blended with ethanol up to **10%**.
  - The all-India average blending of ethanol with petrol has risen from 1.6% in 2013-14 to **11.8% in 2022-23**.
  - **India's goal is to grow this ratio to 20%** by 2030, but when the NITI Aayog released the ethanol roadmap in 2021, that deadline was advanced to **2025**.
- **Benefits of EBP programme:**
  - It will reduce India's import bill.
  - It will reduce environmental pollution.
  - It will increase farm income.
  - Biofuels demand least incremental investment for manufacturers.

## Why is the Sweetener Diversion for Ethanol Production Restricted?

- **Sugar supply concerns:**
  - The 2022-23 sugar year ended with stocks of just over 57 lakh tonnes (lt), the lowest since the 39.4 lt of 2016-17 and way below the record 143.3 lt of 2018-19.
  - Also, there is uncertainty over production for the current 2023-24 year.
  - **Maharashtra and Karnataka** are expected to record particularly sharp declines, on the back of subpar rains and low reservoir water levels in their major cane-growing areas.