

The Hindu Important News Articles & Editorial For UPSC CSE

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- Kashmir's papier mache artisans are reviving the memory of dodos, a bird extinct since 1681, by crafting colorful models adorned with symbolic floral and forest prints.
- These handcrafted dodos are in high demand, particularly in Europe and Mauritius.
- The bird's introduction to Kashmir's craft scene is relatively recent and growing.

Kashmiri artisans give wings to the dodo

Made by locals in the Valley's *karkhanas*, over 50,000 papier mache models of the bird, which became extinct in 1681 and was introduced to artisans by tourists two decades ago, have been shipped to markets in Europe and Mauritius this year

Peerzada Ashiq
SRINAGAR

This Christmas, papier mache artisans in Srinagar have given wings to thousands of dodos, a bird that became extinct in 1681 within 80 years of its interaction with humans and exposure to depleting forests.

Reyaz Jan, in his 70s, who was giving final touches to a papier mache model of the bird at a *karkhana* in Zadibal area of Srinagar, says, "I was introduced to the shape and size of the bird from pictures. Of late, we download images. The shape and size of the bird is endearing. I fell in love with it at first sight. It's sad that the bird is no more seen anywhere."

Fast disappearing from people's memory, the fearless and flightless bird, approximately three-feet tall, has a new

home in the papier mache world of Kashmir, which otherwise was mainly influenced by Persia, its motifs and figures.

The dodos, which originally had grey or brown plumage, come in many colours in the papier mache form with floral and forest prints adorning its body.

"The floral prints symbolise how it was the depleting forest cover that resulted in the extinction of the bird," Mr. Jan says.

With a magical touch of yellow to the hooked tips and stout legs and dark green to the rear curly feathers, Mr. Jan gives life to the dodo, albeit in papier mache.

Christmas orders

Besides dangling balls, jingles, crescents, Santas, stars and boxes, this year, Kashmir has exported these dodos in large quantities.

Over 50,000 papier

The bird is a very recent addition to the craft, which has been practised in Kashmir for over 600 years now

mache dodos have set their feet in markets of Europe and Mauritius in East Africa this year, just ahead of Christmas.

"Dodos were last seen in Mauritius. The bird is important to the place and is the national emblem there. We mostly export papier mache dodos to the country. There is a huge demand for dodo products, which come in different sizes," Faizan Mir, who runs Mir Arts, an exclusive papier mache arts showroom at Srinagar's Hawsal, says.

It takes five to 10 days to create large-sized dodos in *karkhanas* located in the Valley. "Our *karkhana* produced over 3,000

dodos this season for exports," says Mr. Mir.

Most papier mache artisans do not know much about how dodos were introduced in Kashmir's art scene.

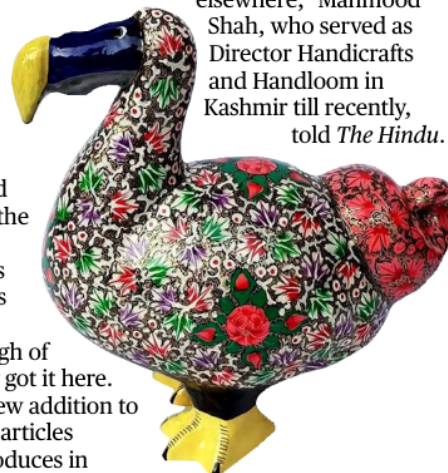
The bird is a very recent addition to the craft, which has been practised in Kashmir for over 600 years now.

However, there are many stories about the arrival of dodos in Kashmir.

"There were tourists from Mauritius who visited Kashmir and introduced the bird around two decades ago. There is no written record though of who exactly got it here. It's a very new addition to the array of articles Kashmir produces in

papier mache," Mr. Jan said.

Thanks to those unknown tourists, the dodos have got wings and the demand for them is only growing with each passing day. "Papier mache artisans of Kashmir are keeping the memory of dodos alive. A local craft space is making them in hundreds and exporting them to the place where it went extinct and elsewhere," Mahmood Shah, who served as Director Handicrafts and Handloom in Kashmir till recently, told *The Hindu*.



About Dodo:

- **Scientific Name:** *Raphus cucullatus*, an extinct flightless bird.

Daily News Analysis

- **Native Habitat:** Exclusive to Mauritius, a tropical island in the Indian Ocean, with no natural predators before human arrival.
- **Physical Description:** Stood about 3 feet (1 meter) tall, weighing 10–20 kg, with grayish feathers, a large hooked beak, stubby wings, and stout legs.
- **Diet:** Primarily frugivorous, feeding on fruits, seeds, roots, nuts, and possibly crabs or small animals.
- **Reproduction:** Nested on the ground, laying one egg at a time, making it vulnerable to predators.
- **Extinction:** Declared extinct by 1681 due to overhunting by sailors, habitat destruction, and the introduction of invasive species like rats and pigs.
- **Historical Significance:** Its extinction marked one of the earliest documented human-caused extinctions, highlighting the impact of human activity on biodiversity.

The President of India appointed Justice V. Ramasubramanian (retd.) as Chairperson of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), filling a vacancy since June.

- Child rights advocate Priyank Kanoongo and Justice Bidyut Ranjan Sarangi were appointed as members.

National Human Rights Commission (NHRC):

- Acts as a watchdog for human rights in India, covering rights related to life, liberty, equality, and dignity, as guaranteed by the Constitution and international covenants enforceable by Indian courts.
- **Establishment:**
 - Established on 12th October 1993 under the Protection of Human Rights Act (PHRA), 1993.
 - Amended through the Protection of Human Rights (Amendment) Act, 2006 and the Human Rights (Amendment) Act, 2019.
 - Conforms to the Paris Principles (1991) for human rights promotion and protection, endorsed by the UN General Assembly in 1993.
- **Composition:**
 - Comprises a Chairman (former Chief Justice of India or Supreme Court judge) and five members.
- **Appointment:**
 - Members are appointed by the President based on the recommendation of a six-member committee headed by the Prime Minister, including the Speaker of Lok Sabha, Deputy Chairman of Rajya Sabha, Leaders of the Opposition, and the Union Home Minister.
- **Tenure:**
 - Members serve a term of three years or until 70 years of age, whichever is earlier.
- **Role and Functions:**
 - Investigates human rights violations with the powers of a civil court.
 - Cannot inquire into cases older than one year.
 - Functions mainly as a recommendatory body without punitive powers.
 - Limited jurisdiction over armed forces and no power to act on violations by private parties.



Justice V. Ramasubramanian

Former SC judge named human rights panel chief

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The President of India on Monday appointed former Supreme Court judge, Justice V. Ramasubramanian (retd.), as Chairperson of the National Human Rights Commission. The post of NHRC chief was lying vacant since June this year.

President Droupadi Murmu also appointed child rights advocate Priyank Kanoongo and retired Justice Bidyut Ranjan Sarangi as NHRC members. A committee led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi had met on December 18 to select the NHRC chief. Opposition leaders in Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha, Mallikarjun Kharge and Rahul Gandhi respectively, also attended the meeting.

Renowned filmmaker Shyam Benegal, a pioneer of Indian New Wave cinema, passed away at 90.

- Tributes poured in from leaders and celebrities, recognizing his profound contributions to Indian cinema and society.

Filmmaker who gave a voice to the voiceless, held dear the idea of India

Shyam Benegal experimented with form and technique, broke every boundary to document the changing contours of Indian society and kept evolving with times; be it farmers or sex workers, his protagonists questioned the social order with searing intensity without resorting to hyperbole

Anuj Kumar
NEW DELHI

A peerless filmmaker who gave voice to the voiceless and documented the idea of India through his rich oeuvre, Shyam Benegal passed away on Monday in a Mumbai hospital at 90.

One of the foremost oarsmen of the Indian New Wave, reality never escaped from Benegal's focus.

In 1970s, when Bollywood was looking for poetic justice through the Angry Young Man, Benegal captured the silent resistance of the marginalised in feudal India with *Ankur* (1974), *Nishant* (1975), and *Manthan* (1976).

Be it farmers or sex workers, his protagonists questioned the prevailing social order with searing intensity without resorting to hyperbole for the Dada Saheb Phalke Award winner saw cinema as a medium that can reflect the very act of living. Starting as an ad filmmaker, Benegal consistently experimented

with form and technique and kept evolving with times. His range of subjects remain unrivalled as Benegal broke every boundary to document the changing contours of Indian society.

Budgets were never a constraint for his vision. Born to a photographer father in Hyderabad, Benegal discovered very early that there is nothing in the human experience that can't be depicted through the medium.

He grew up watching the works of Guru Dutt, his second cousin, but the real inspiration came from Satyajit Ray's *Pather Panchali*. Like Ray, his films always found a theatrical release. He believed that the audience always stood for meaningful cinema.

From idealism to satire
Music was integral to his cinema but not as a decorative device. The strains in *Bhumika*, *Mandi*, and *Sardari Begum* scythe through the atavistic mores of society and leave a mark on the conscience.

If his early works were

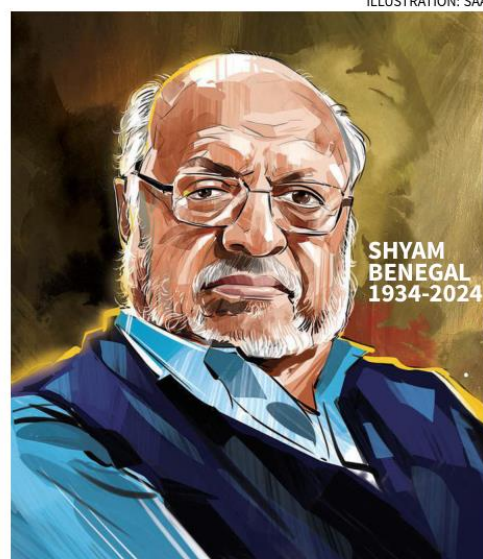


ILLUSTRATION: SAAI

rooted in idealism, satire gradually found its way in films like *Welcome to Sajjanpur* and *Well Done Abba*.

He adapted Mahabharat as *Kalyug* in a corporate family. The film speaks to us even today. Later, he recreated Dharamvir Bharti's novel into the lyrical *Suraj*

Ka Satwan Ghoda.

He brought crowd funding to Indian cinema much before it became a fad and made classics like *Manthan*, *Antarnaad*, and *Susman*.

His touching trilogy woven around Muslim women, *Sardari Begum*, *Mammo*, and *Zubeidaa* brought

him back to the top billing in the 1990s.

Strong team of creatives

He forged a strong team of creatives with Govind Nihalani, Shama Zaidi, and Vanraj Bhatia to realise vision and introduced us to powerhouse talent like Shabana Azmi, Naseeruddin Shah, Rajit Kapoor, Salim Ghouse, and Rajeshwari Sachdev. All through, he challenged actors to go beyond their comfort zone. Be it Smita Patil and Amol Palekar in *Bhumika* or Karisma Kapoor in *Zubeidaa*, the actors found a new life in Benegal's hands.

Someone who didn't wear his ideology on his sleeve, in *The Making of Mahatma*, he introduced us to Gandhi's psyche before he became the Mahatma and with equal passion documented the life of Subhas Chandra Bose in *The Forgotten Hero*. His objective gaze came through in *Bharat Ek Khoj*, an adaptation of Jawaharlal Nehru's *The Discovery of India* where he captured the spi-

rit of India. It was his most comprehensive work that has withstood the test of time. Not to forget *Samvidhan* where he introduced the Constitution to young Indians.

Behind that hard exterior, Benegal carried a gentle soul who would go the extra mile to make his actors feel comfortable. Humble to the core, he would always be ready to take criticism in his stride.

Age didn't diminish his passion. In 2023, he came up with an engaging biopic of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Alive to the times, as the head of the committee formed to suggest changes in the working of Central Board of Film Certification, he suggested far-reaching changes.

A strong advocate of the pluralist identity of India, when Aamir Khan spoke about growing intolerance in Indian society, Benegal had said, "You can and you should and you must raise your voice against intolerance. We are constitutionally bound to protect our minorities."

More About Shyam Benegal:

- **Legacy:** Peerless filmmaker and Dada Saheb Phalke Award winner who passed away at 90, documented India's social fabric through cinema.

Daily News Analysis

- ➡ **Indian New Wave:** Known for films like Ankur (1974), Nishant (1975), and Manthan (1976) that highlighted the struggles of marginalized communities.
- ➡ **Style:** Used cinema to reflect the act of living, combining realism with searing social commentary.
- ➡ **Range of Work:** Explored themes from idealism (Bhumika, Sardari Begum) to satire (Welcome to Sajjanpur, Well Done Abba).
- ➡ **Pioneering Efforts:** Introduced crowdfunding (Manthan), and created iconic works like Bharat Ek Khoj and Samvidhan.
- ➡ **Team & Actors:** Collaborated with creatives like Govind Nihalani and introduced talents like Shabana Azmi and Naseeruddin Shah.
- ➡ **Ideology:** Advocated pluralism and spoke against intolerance.
- ➡ **Notable Biopics:** Directed The Making of Mahatma, The Forgotten Hero, and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's biopic (2023).

India's dependency on China for critical minerals poses significant challenges to its economic and national security.

India's reliance on China for critical minerals

Does China have unparalleled dominance in the critical minerals sector? How was it able to do so? What are the minerals for which India is heavily dependent on China? Why has India not been able to excavate the lithium reserves found in Jammu and Kashmir?

EXPLAINER

Rakshit Shetty

The story so far:

The Ministry of Mines in 2023 identified 30 critical minerals deemed essential for the nation's economic development and national security. While the report highlighted India's complete import dependency for 10 critical minerals, it did not fully address a more pressing concern – the extent and nature of dependency on China.

Is China a dominant player?

China's unparalleled dominance in critical minerals stems from its vast resource base and strategic investments across the value chain. As the world's largest mining nation, China has discovered 173 types of minerals, including 13 energy minerals, 59 metallic minerals, and 95 non-metallic minerals. Reserves of nearly 40% of these minerals, particularly copper, lead, zinc, nickel, cobalt, lithium, gallium, germanium, and crystalline graphite, increased significantly last year, supported by an exploration investment of \$19.4 billion. This led to the discovery of 132 new mineral deposits, including 34 large ones. China's dominance extends beyond reserves to include processing and refining, with control over 87% of rare earth processing, 58% of lithium refining, and 68% of silicon processing. Furthermore, China has strategically invested in overseas mining projects and built unparalleled midstream refining capabilities, raising supply chain vulnerabilities for countries including India, the U.S., and EU nations.

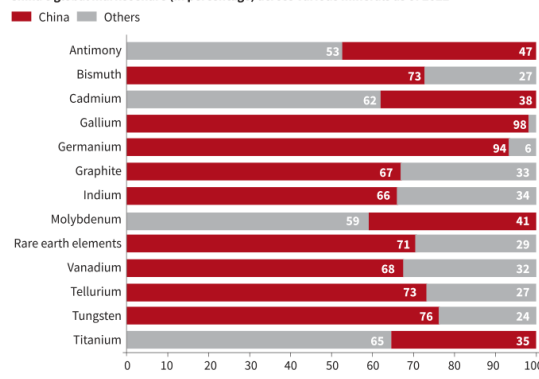
What about China's export controls?

When it comes to China's approach to weaponising critical mineral exports, it is strategic and calculated. Beijing primarily targets minerals deemed critical by Western nations and their allies, especially those essential for

China, a leading player in critical minerals

China's dominance in critical minerals stems from its vast resource base and strategic investments across the value chain. As the world's largest mining nation, China has discovered 173 types of minerals

China's global market share (in percentage) across various minerals as of 2022



semiconductors, batteries, and high-tech manufacturing. However, China carefully balances these decisions against two constraining factors: it avoids controlling minerals which heavily depend on Western raw material imports, and it refrains from actions that could disrupt its domestic industrial enterprises or export-dependent sectors. This strategic calculus was evident in China's 2010 rare earth embargo against Japan, its recent restrictions on antimony, gallium, and germanium exports, and its December 2023 ban on rare earth extraction and processing technologies.

Is India dependent on China?

An in-depth examination of import data of 30 critical minerals spanning 2019 to 2024 reveals India's acute vulnerability to Chinese supplies, particularly for six critical minerals where dependency

exceeds 40%: bismuth (85.6%), lithium (82%), silicon (76%), titanium (50.6%), tellurium (48.8%), and graphite (42.4%). Bismuth, primarily used in pharmaceuticals and chemicals, has few alternative sources, with China maintaining an estimated 80% of global refinery production. Lithium, crucial for EV batteries and energy storage, faces processing bottlenecks, despite alternative raw material sources, as China controls 58% of global refining. Silicon, vital for semiconductors and solar panels, requires sophisticated processing technology that few countries possess. Titanium, essential for aerospace and defence applications, has diversified sources but involves high switching costs. Tellurium, important for solar power and thermoelectric devices, is dominated by China's 60% global production share and finally graphite, indispensable for EV

batteries and steel production, faces supply constraints as China controls 67.2% of global output, including battery-grade material.

Why does India rely on imports?

Despite being endowed with significant mineral resources, India's heavy reliance on imports stem from several structural challenges in its mining and processing ecosystem. Many critical minerals are deep-seated, requiring high-risk investments in exploration and mining technologies – a factor that has deterred private sector participation in the absence of adequate incentives and policy support. The country's processing capabilities are also limited. This is particularly evident in the case of the recently discovered lithium deposits in Jammu and Kashmir, where despite the presence of 5.9 million tonnes of resources in clay deposits, India lacks the technological capability to extract lithium from such geological formations.

What is the way forward?

India has initiated a multi-pronged approach to reduce its dependency on China. The government has established KABIL, a joint venture of three State-owned companies, to secure overseas mineral assets. India has also joined strategic initiatives like the Minerals Security Partnership and the Critical Raw Materials Club to diversify its supply sources and strengthen partnerships. The country is also investing in research through institutions like the Geological Survey of India and the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research while promoting recycling and circular economy practices to reduce virgin mineral dependency. Production-linked incentives for extracting critical minerals through recycling also seem promising. However, transitioning away from China will require sustained investment and long-term commitment to these various initiatives.

The writer is a research analyst at The Takshashila Institution.

THE GIST

China's dominance extends beyond reserves to include processing and refining, with control over 87% of rare earth processing, 58% of lithium refining, and 68% of silicon processing.

An in-depth examination of import data of 30 critical minerals spanning 2019 to 2024 reveals India's acute vulnerability to Chinese supplies, particularly for six critical minerals where dependency exceeds 40%.

Despite being endowed with significant mineral resources, India's heavy reliance on imports stem from several structural challenges in its mining and processing ecosystem.

- ➔ With China dominating mineral reserves, processing, and refining, India's vulnerability in sectors like electronics, energy, and defense has increased.
- ➔ India is taking steps to diversify supply sources and reduce this reliance.

Identification of Critical Minerals

- ➔ In 2023, the Ministry of Mines identified 30 critical minerals crucial for India's economic development and national security.
- ➔ While India's import dependency on 10 minerals was highlighted, the article points out the significant issue of dependency on China.

China's Dominance in the Global Mineral Market

China's Vast Resource Base and Mining Capabilities

- China is the world's largest mining nation, having discovered 173 types of minerals, including key minerals like copper, nickel, lithium, cobalt, and rare earth elements.
- China controls nearly 40% of global reserves for critical minerals and has invested significantly in exploration, discovering 132 new mineral deposits, including 34 large ones.
- Processing and Refining Dominance
- China dominates mineral processing and refining, controlling 87% of rare earth processing, 58% of lithium refining, and 68% of silicon processing, giving it a significant influence over global supply chains.

China's Export Controls Strategy

Strategic Export Restrictions

- China strategically controls exports of critical minerals like antimony, gallium, and germanium, especially those vital for semiconductor, battery, and high-tech manufacturing.
- However, China carefully balances these restrictions to avoid harming its own domestic industries that rely on these minerals and ensures it doesn't disrupt its key economic sectors.

India's Dependency on Chinese Imports

High Dependency on Chinese Supplies

- India's vulnerability to Chinese supplies is particularly high for six critical minerals: bismuth (85.6%), lithium (82%), silicon (76%), titanium (50.6%), tellurium (48.8%), and graphite (42.4%).
- Bismuth, lithium, and graphite are critical for various industries, including pharmaceuticals, EV batteries, and solar panels, all of which rely heavily on Chinese processing and production.

Challenges Behind India's Import Reliance

Structural Issues in Mining and Processing

- Despite possessing significant mineral resources, India faces challenges in mining technologies and processing capabilities, limiting domestic production.
- Lack of private sector participation and inadequate policy incentives hinder the development of India's mining sector.

India's Strategy to Reduce Dependency

Multi-Pronged Approach

- India has launched initiatives like KABIL, a joint venture of three State-owned companies, to secure overseas mineral assets and diversify supply sources.
- India is engaging in global partnerships, such as the Minerals Security Partnership and the Critical Raw Materials Club, to reduce its dependence on China.

Focus on Research and Recycling

- India is investing in research through institutions like the Geological Survey of India and the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research.
- The country is also promoting recycling and circular economy practices, including production-linked incentives for extracting critical minerals through recycling.

Long-Term Commitment Needed

- ➡ While these efforts are promising, a sustained investment and long-term commitment are necessary for India to successfully reduce its dependency on China.

UPSC Mains Practice Question

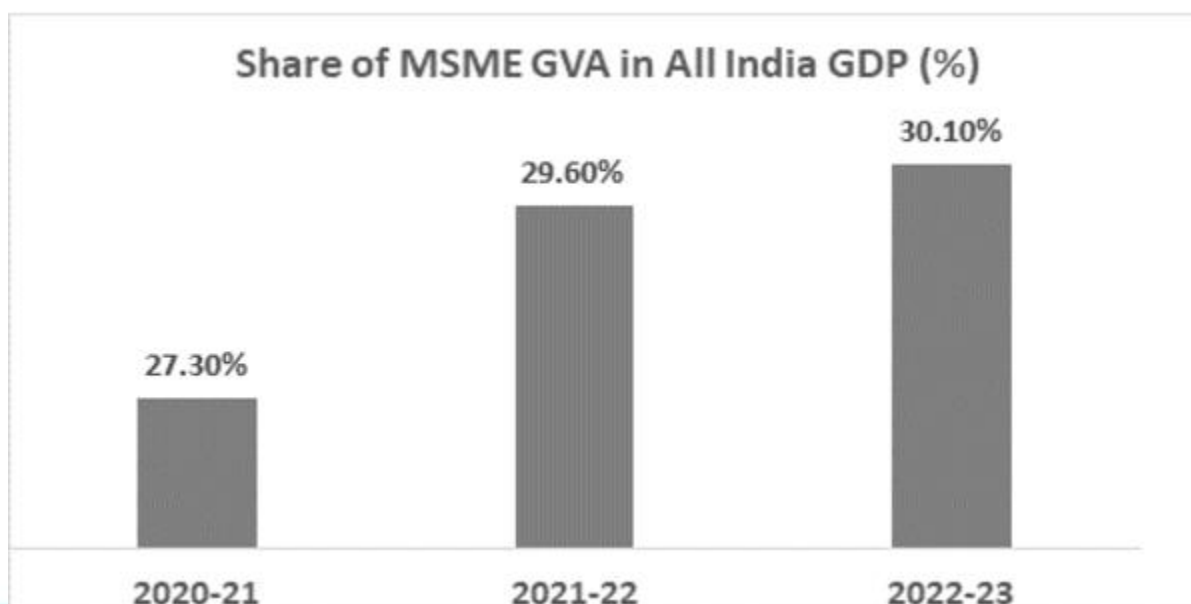
Ques : Critically examine India's dependency on China for critical minerals and discuss the steps India is taking to reduce this reliance. What challenges and opportunities does this dependency present for India's economic and national security?



In News : The MSME Revolution: Transforming India's Economic Landscape

The MSME sector in India has witnessed remarkable growth, significantly boosting exports, contributing to GDP, and driving economic development.

- Despite challenges like the COVID-19 pandemic, MSMEs demonstrated resilience and adaptability, scaling up enterprises and enhancing export competitiveness.



MSMEs' Contribution to India's Export Growth

- MSME exports rose significantly from ₹3.95 lakh crore in 2020-21 to ₹12.39 lakh crore in 2024-25.
- The number of exporting MSMEs increased from 52,849 in 2020-21 to 1,73,350 in 2024-25.
- MSMEs contributed 45.73% to India's exports in 2023-24, which further increased to 45.79% by May 2024.

MSMEs' Role in India's GDP

- The Gross Value Added (GVA) by MSMEs in GDP grew from 29.7% in 2017-18 to 30.1% in 2022-23.
- Even during the COVID-19 pandemic, MSMEs maintained a significant GDP contribution of 27.3% in 2020-21 and rebounded to 29.6% in 2021-22.
- This demonstrates MSMEs' resilience and pivotal role in India's economic stability.

Growth and Upgradation of Enterprises

- ➡ MSMEs are classified into Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises based on investment and turnover criteria revised on July 1, 2020.
- ➡ **Micro Enterprise:** Investment \leq ₹1 crore; Turnover \leq ₹5 crore. **Small Enterprise:** Investment \leq ₹10 crore; Turnover \leq ₹50 crore.
- ➡ **Medium Enterprise:** Investment \leq ₹50 crore; Turnover \leq ₹250 crore. From 2020-21 to 2021-22, 714 Micro enterprises and 3,701 Small enterprises scaled up to Medium.
- ➡ The trend grew stronger in 2023-24 to 2024-25, with 2,372 Micro enterprises and 17,745 Small enterprises upgrading to Medium enterprises.

Significance of MSMEs for Economic Development

- ➡ MSMEs are instrumental in employment generation, entrepreneurship promotion, and inclusive growth.
- ➡ The sector fosters innovation, supports export competitiveness, and strengthens India's position as a global economic leader.
- ➡ By creating employment opportunities and driving economic development, MSMEs serve as the backbone of India's economy.

Envisioning India as a global skill supplier

In an address in August, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had said that he was hopeful that India's skilled workforce will play a prominent role in the global job market.

Global mega trends, such as demographic transitions, globalisation, technological advancements, and climate change, are significantly altering the demand for, and the supply of, international migrant workers. Among the various facets of such changes, the skills of these workers are assuming centrality in public policy discourse.

Reviews of immigration policies of the traditional and major migrant destinations (the U.S., the U.K., Canada, and Gulf Cooperation Council countries) and of the new destinations (Germany, South Korea, Japan, etc.) reveal the increased prioritising of skill-selective and skill-intense immigration. Most of the destination countries recognise that their ability to respond to certain developments, such as an ageing society, digitalisation, declining fertility rates, and the need for economic diversification strategies to tackle the challenging global economic environment, can be met only by welcoming international migrant workers with the relevant skills.

Can India rise to the occasion and bridge the global skills gaps? Responding effectively to the skill needs of different destination countries is a complex task. Robust and evidence-based policy interventions are essential to facilitate skill-centred international labour migration outflows from India.

Fragmented policy structure

However, India still lacks a comprehensive policy architecture for international labour mobility. The policy interventions are fragmented and are often not based on evidence. The only data source for annual migrant labour outflows from India is the data on emigration clearances, which covers only those with an



S.K. Sasikumar

Labour and migration analyst and former senior faculty, V.V. Giri National Labour Institute

India must design a comprehensive national policy on international labour migration, with skill-centred migration anchored as one of the fundamental pillars

educational attainment below matriculation and low skilled workers migrating to 18 select countries. Such data inadequacy stands as a major obstacle in formulating constructive policies.

India's efforts have mostly revolved around bilateral agreements on international labour mobility with different countries covering aspects such as social security, skills, protection, and welfare. These are primarily one-off exercises, not situated within a composite policy framework. Further, there are hardly any evaluations available on the outcomes of these pacts and the learnings from them.

India must design and operationalise a comprehensive national policy on international labour migration, with skill-centred migration anchored as one of the fundamental pillars. Such a policy should clearly set the road map for the different processes involved in transitioning India as the global skill capital.

The way forward

The critical step in this direction is to identify and anticipate the ever-changing skills in demand in select destination countries and the emergent skill gaps across their key sectors and occupations. Organisations such as the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training are actively involved in skill forecasting for European countries using rigorous methodologies. Data and insights obtained from regional and national skill-forecasting exercises, especially for the U.S., the U.K. and Canada, that mostly cover the medium term (2-5 years), can help India respond to skill needs. This should be supplemented by big data analytics of real-time online job vacancies in destination countries for which India seeks to become the lead supplier of skills.

Once this is done, India's capacity to provide the requisite skills must be assessed. This will entail systematic mapping of the country's skill development efforts

related to skill mobility and follow-up actions: introducing identified skills and competencies as a part of the curriculum in specific institutions; reorienting skill programmes of India's International Skill Centres to meet the global skill gaps; creating customised short-term skill training geared towards destination countries; and so on. The priority must be to raise the quality of skill development to international standards. This calls for the convergence of the skill qualification systems of India and the destination countries. India also needs a review of the National Skills Qualification Framework to assess its effectiveness in aligning our qualifications with those of the major destination countries.

Considering that contemporary immigration policies encourage temporisation, return migration is gaining prominence in international skilled migration flows. This is another area where India falls short: the optimum utilisation of return migrants' skills is one of the most neglected aspects of the country's migration policies. The best way to effectively reintegrate return migrants is to ensure that the skills and competencies they acquire in the destination countries are accredited by specialised skill certification institutions in those countries so that migrants can transition back effectively to the Indian labour market when they return.

Another pressing need is a skill-centred international labour migration information system, encompassing quantitative and qualitative indicators. Such a platform should regularly collate, generate, analyse, and report information and data on key indicators of skills and migration to enable evidence-based interventions. This will be pivotal in fostering skill partnerships between India and the principal destination countries, boosting skill-centred mobility, and improving migration and developmental outcomes.

GS Paper 02 : International Relations,

GS Paper 03 : Indian Economy

UPSC Mains Practice Question: Examine the challenges and opportunities for India in addressing global skill gaps through international labor migration. Suggest policy measures to enhance skill development and optimize the reintegration of return migrants. (250 Words /15 marks)

Context :

- The article discusses India's potential to contribute to the global job market through skilled labor migration.
- It highlights the need for a comprehensive policy framework to address skill gaps, improve training standards, and facilitate the effective integration of returning migrants.
- Additionally, it emphasizes the importance of data-driven migration policies.

India's Skilled Workforce and Global Migration Trends

- Prime Minister Modi expressed hope that India's skilled workforce will play a significant role in the global job market.
- Global mega trends such as demographic transitions, technological advancements, and climate change are altering the demand and supply of international migrant workers.
- Skills are becoming central to public policy discourse as countries adjust their immigration policies to address challenges like an ageing society, digitalisation, and declining fertility rates.

Skill-Selective Immigration Policies of Key Countries

- Traditional migration destinations like the U.S., U.K., Canada, and Gulf Cooperation Council countries, along with new destinations like Germany, South Korea, and Japan, are increasingly prioritising skilled workers.
- These countries recognise that economic diversification and addressing societal challenges can be achieved by welcoming skilled international migrants.

India's Challenges in Meeting Global Skill Gaps

- India faces a complex task in responding to the skill needs of various destination countries.
- Effective policy interventions based on robust evidence are essential for facilitating skill-centred migration.

Daily News Analysis

- India lacks a comprehensive policy framework for international labour mobility, with interventions often being fragmented and not data-driven.
- The only data source available for migrant labour outflows is emigration clearance data, which primarily covers low-skilled workers, creating a major obstacle for formulating effective policies.

Lack of a Comprehensive National Policy on Migration

- India's efforts have largely focused on bilateral agreements with other countries concerning social security, skills, protection, and welfare, but these agreements are not part of a larger policy framework.
- There is a lack of evaluations to assess the effectiveness of these agreements, highlighting the need for a more cohesive and structured approach.

The Path Forward for India

- India needs to design a comprehensive national policy on international labour migration, with skill-centred migration as a central pillar.
- A critical step is identifying the skills in demand in destination countries, forecasting skill needs, and using data analytics from job vacancies to address skill gaps.
- India must assess its own capacity to provide the required skills, mapping existing skill development efforts and aligning them with the needs of destination countries.

Enhancing Skill Development Standards

- To meet global standards, India must improve its skill development efforts, including integrating specific skills into curricula, reorienting training programmes, and creating targeted short-term courses for destination countries.
- A review of the National Skills Qualification Framework is necessary to align India's qualifications with those of major migration destinations.

Focus on Return Migration and Reintegration

- As international migration policies encourage temporary migration, return migration is becoming increasingly important.
- India must better utilise the skills of returning migrants by ensuring their competencies are recognised and accredited, facilitating their effective reintegration into the Indian labour market.

Need for a Skill-Centred Migration Information System

- India requires a comprehensive skill-centred international labour migration information system to collect, analyse, and report data on migration trends.
 - Such a system will support evidence-based interventions, foster partnerships with destination countries, and enhance migration and development outcomes.
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