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1. Trust and Punishment

Context: The recently announced Jan Vishwas Bill 2.0 at the Union government level, soon to be followed by Jan Vishwas 3.0 bills by various state governments, is critical to enabling this maxim. The Jan Vishwas Bill Initiative aims to streamline laws to improve ease of living by decriminalizing minor offenses and reducing bureaucratic overreach. The current system also blurs the line between minor infractions and serious crimes, and it can award lesser punishment for serious crimes and vice versa.

Key points

- **Overview:** Currently, 882 central laws are enacted over 174 years. 370 laws contain 7,305 criminal provisions, including - 5,333 jail terms, 982 mandatory minimum sentences, 433 life imprisonment clauses, 301 death penalty provisions.
- **Examples of Excessive Criminalization:** Minor offenses with disproportionate penalties - Milking a cow on the street. Failing to report an animal's death within 3 hours. Storing e-cigarettes. Disproportionate Punishments - Mental Healthcare Act implies same jail time (6 months) for administrative lapses (e.g. record-keeping) and severe medical malpractice (unauthorized brain surgery). Traffic violations (e.g. running red lights) penalized as harshly as forced labour.
- **Challenges:** *Systemic Issues* - Overlapping laws enable corruption and misuse by officials. Only 25–27% conviction rate. The process itself becomes the punishment and burdens citizens. 75% of prisoners are undertrials. 3.5 crore pending cases clog the justice system. *Socioeconomic Impact* - Vulnerable to exploitation due to lack of legal awareness and resources. Fear of arrest exploited in scams (e.g., digital arrest frauds). *Philosophical Tension* - Modern state laws clash with societal norms in an ancient civilization, leading to enforcement challenges.
- **Jan Vishwas 2.0 Framework:** Requires proactive removal of criminal provisions, not voluntary surrender by bureaucrats. Four Guiding Principles (Vidhi Report) –
 - *Protection of Value* - Criminalize only to protect vital societal interests.
 - *Prevention of Harm* - Direct link between crime and substantial harm.
 - *Necessity* - Criminalization as a last resort.
 - *Proportionality* - Punishment aligned with offense severity.
- **Way Forward:** *Vision for Viksit Bharat* - Legal reforms critical to achieving India@100 goals by prioritizing ease of living over punitive governance. Shift from retributive to restorative justice (e.g. rehabilitation over imprisonment). *Call to Action* - Adopt Madhyam marg (middle path) balancing trust in citizens with accountability. Address undertrial crisis and reduce case backlog through systemic decriminalization.
- **Conclusion:** The Jan Vishwas Bills represent an opportunity to transform India's legal framework into one that fosters trust and aligns with the aspirations of a modern, humane society. Its success hinges on adopting Vidhi's principles, fostering public consensus, and prioritizing restorative justice.

2. The Ocean Front

Context: Unlike most parts of the world, the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) has historically lacked forums and institutions that could facilitate dialogue or help create a cooperative response to developments affecting the whole region. There has been a security architecture in the IOR, because diversity, combined with chauvinistic self-interest, has prevented the formation of functional, effective regional institutions. Now to maintain this India must act as a unifier in the Indian Ocean Region.

Key points

- **Challenges in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR):** *Institutional Deficits* - Historically lacked cohesive forums for dialogue or security architecture due to diversity and chauvinistic self-interest. Failed regional organizations (e.g. SAARC, BIMSTEC) and diluted focus due to competing priorities like the Indo-Pacific paradigm.
US Indo-Pacific Shift - Redirected global attention away from IOR-centric initiatives, complicating India's efforts to prioritize regional unity.
- **India's Diplomatic Initiatives in the Region:** *Indian Ocean Conference (IOC)* - Launched in 2016 by MEA and India Foundation to implement SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region). Gains traction as a consultative forum, addressing regional security, economic, and environmental challenges.
EAM Jaishankar's Address in Muscat (2023) - Highlighted challenges such as Middle East conflicts (Houthi threats to shipping) and South China Sea tensions. Stressed adherence to agreements and stability as key to regional predictability.
- **Role of the Indian Navy in Maritime Diplomacy:** *2007 Maritime Strategy* - Envisions naval power as a tool to support foreign policy, blending soft power with strategic influence.
Humanitarian Assistance (HADR) - Rapid response during the 2004 Asian Tsunami, evacuations in conflict zones (e.g., Yemen, Ukraine).
Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) - Real-time traffic monitoring and collaboration with Seychelles, Mauritius, Maldives, and Sri Lanka.
Security Patrols - Safeguarding EEZs of island nations against poaching and smuggling.
- **Challenges and foreign policies:** *Strategic Arguments* - Critics advocate greater military integration in foreign policy to advance India's great-power ambitions. Current reliance on soft power (e.g. yoga, Bollywood) seen as insufficient for global influence.
Systemic Limitations - Delays due to poor MoD-MEA synergy. Need for amphibious lift capabilities, hospital ships, and dedicated HADR funding.
- **Way Forward:** *Capacity Building* - Invest in HADR infrastructure (e.g. amphibious vessels, medical ships). Expand MDA networks to cover more IOR nations.
Policy Reforms - Adopt a whole of government approach to integrate military, diplomatic, and bureaucratic efforts. Formalize a National Security Strategy to guide maritime diplomacy.
- **Conclusion:** Maritime diplomacy offers tools for conflict prevention, soft power projection, and regional leadership. Indian Navy's proactive role positions India as a first responder and preferred security partner. India's success hinges on aligning naval capabilities with foreign policy goals under a unified strategic vision.

3. The dystopian side of Insta-commerce

Context: In many urban centres, workers gather in the morning, waiting for employers or contractors (thekedaars) to offer them jobs. These workers, desperate for employment, often accept low wages as they are part of a vast unemployed workforce. Labourers in these markets experience a daily auction where the lowest wage wins, forcing them into financial insecurity. The thekedaars are a creation of managerial facilitation where employers can get a 'middleman' to squeeze the greatest possible amount from labour and offer them the greatest possible profits.

Key points

- **Overview:** The gig economy creates insecure low-wage jobs where digital platforms control work while workers lack rights, social security and fair wages.
- **Gig Worker:** A gig worker is someone who takes up short-term or freelance jobs instead of a permanent job. Their income depends on demand, and they often face uncertain working conditions without legal or social protection.
- **Gig Economy:** Digital platforms have replicated the role of middlemen by offering jobs through apps, eliminating direct human interaction. Gig work operates on a piece-rate model, where workers take up tasks without job security or fair wages. These platforms disguise their exploitation as "freedom of choice," but workers have little bargaining power.
- **Exploitation Through Ratings and Low Wages:** Customers see gig workers only briefly but fail to recognize their struggles, long hours, and harsh working conditions. Ratings have replaced fair wages, as workers must seek high ratings to maintain employment rather than demanding rights.
- **New Forms of Gig Exploitation:** A recent service offers domestic workers for as low as ₹49 an hour, further devaluing their labour. This model continues to exploit desperate workers who need immediate employment but are not given dignity or fair pay.
- **Challenges in Passing Protective Laws:** In some states, workers successfully pushed for legislation to ensure - A social security framework, Access to their work data, A grievance redress system, A tripartite board for discussion. However, political decisions have delayed these laws, leaving workers unprotected.
- **Way ahead:** Without legal protections, gig workers continue to face a modern form of exploitation. Bringing an end to unfair platform-based gig work is essential for ensuring justice for millions of workers.
- **Conclusion:** The gig economy must evolve beyond digital convenience to ensure fair wages and dignity. Ethical algorithms, worker protections, and legal safeguards can transform platform-based jobs into sustainable livelihoods rather than modern exploitation.

4. Chandrayaan-3 data says water ice

Context: As countries like the US, China, Russia, and India develop plans for long-term stations on the moon, water available on the moon itself is emerging as a vital resource. Aside from meeting the drinking and sanitary needs of astronauts, scientists are also working on using moon water as fuel for rockets launched from the natural satellite. In a new study, researchers from the Physical Research Laboratory (PRL) in Ahmedabad have found that the area of the moon where water ice can be easily accessed is greater than expected.

Key points

- **Overview:** India's Chandrayaan-3 mission has made a ground-breaking discovery regarding the presence of water-ice on the Moon. This revelation has major implications for future lunar exploration, as it could make water more accessible for human missions and space-based activities.
- **Chandrayaan-3 and Its Scientific Contributions:** The ChaSTE instrument, onboard the Vikram lander, was designed to measure surface and sub-surface temperatures of the Moon. It provided the first-ever in-situ temperature readings from high-latitude lunar regions.
- **Unexpected Temperature Variations:**
 - High Surface Temperatures* - The ChaSTE data showed that sun-facing slopes recorded temperatures as high as 82°C (355 K) at the Shiv Shakti point, where the Vikram lander had touched down.
 - Cold Shaded Areas* - In contrast, just a meter away on a flat surface, the temperature dropped to 59°C (332 K). The temperature varied drastically based on the inclination and exposure to sunlight.
 - Extreme Night-time Cooling* - At night, temperatures plummeted to -181°C, confirming the Moon's vast thermal differences.
- **Presence of Water-Ice:** Scientists found that slopes tilted more than 14° away from the Sun maintained much lower temperatures, creating an environment where water-ice could migrate and stabilize beneath the surface.
- **Significance of this Discovery:**
 - Greater Accessibility for Space Missions* - Polar regions pose technical challenges for landings due to rugged terrain and constant shadow.
 - Supports Long-Term Lunar Habitation* - Water on the Moon is crucial for drinking, sanitation, and growing food for astronauts.
 - Commercial and Scientific Potential* - The ability to extract water locally reduces the need to transport it from Earth, making lunar missions more sustainable and cost-effective.
- **Implications for Future Lunar Exploration:** Chandrayaan-3's discovery aligns with global lunar exploration efforts, including NASA's Artemis program, China's plans for a lunar base, and Russia's lunar lander missions. With more accessible water-ice deposits, India's future lunar missions can now focus on resource utilization, setting the stage for permanent human presence on the Moon.
- **Conclusion:** Chandrayaan-3's findings have significantly expanded our understanding of the Moon's water distribution. The revelation that water-ice may exist beyond the poles reshapes lunar exploration strategies and enhances the feasibility of future human settlements on the Moon.