



Mains Marathon
Compilation

1st to 6th May, 2023

Mains Marathon Compilation for the Month of May, (First Week) 2023

1. What are the key challenges India faces in achieving its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030, and how can lessons from its COVID-19 response be applied to address these challenges?
2. Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement between India and EFTA states will foster a strong partnership and increase trade between trusted democratic partners that share values. Discuss.
3. What are the challenges faced by gig workers in India, and how does the Code on Social Security, 2020, attempt to address their concerns?
4. How does the process of de-dollarisation affect the global economy, and what factors have contributed to the U.S. dollar's dominance as the global reserve currency?
5. In light of the present developments, how India's special operations' capability for rescue missions has progressed. How do these missions highlight the importance of strategic corporals and the need for specialized training and equipment in modern warfare?
6. Critically analyze the potential applications and implications of generative artificial intelligence in various sectors.
7. Critically analyze the role of the Master Plan of Delhi (MPD) in addressing the complex urbanization challenges faced by the city. Also, suggest possible solutions for a more inclusive and sustainable urban development strategy.
8. Analyze the impact of the current appointment process and the reliance on the Academic Performance Index (API) in some higher educational institutions.

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1. **What are the key challenges India faces in achieving its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030, and how can lessons from its COVID-19 response be applied to address these challenges?**

Introduction: Provide a brief introduction on “The challenges India faces in achieving its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030”

Body: Write 4-5 points on the key challenges India faces in achieving its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. Write 3-4 points on lessons from its COVID-19 response to be applied to address these challenges.

Conclusion: Provide a conclusion on how India can make significant progress towards meeting its SDGs and improving the well-being of its population.

India's Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, expressed concerns about the slowing progress on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) during a meeting of Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors under India's G20 Presidency. India's success in achieving SDGs is crucial due to its large population size and projected economic growth.

What are the key challenges India faces in achieving its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030?

- **Uneven Progress:** India has made progress in some areas, but there are disparities across districts. While certain indicators, such as neonatal and under-five mortality, improved sanitation, and electricity access, are on track at the national level, many districts still lag.
- **Inadequate Pace of Improvement:** For several SDG indicators, the current pace of improvement is insufficient to meet the targets. Issues such as clean cooking fuel, improved water, and handwashing facilities, and women's well-being require accelerated progress.
- **Gender Inequality:** India struggles with gender inequality, particularly concerning indicators like girl-child marriage, teenage pregnancy, and partner violence. The prevalence of child marriage remains high, and achieving the SDG target by 2030 seems unlikely in most districts.
- **Environmental Sustainability:** India faces significant challenges in achieving environmental sustainability goals. Factors such as air and water pollution, deforestation, and inadequate waste management contribute to the degradation of natural resources and pose obstacles to achieving SDGs related to climate action and environmental preservation.

How can lessons from its COVID-19 response be applied to address these challenges?

- **Strong Political Leadership:** India's successful COVID-19 response was driven by strong political leadership and a responsive administrative structure. Similar leadership is needed to achieve SDGs, with a focus on district-level implementation and course corrections when necessary.
- **Digital Infrastructure:** India leveraged its existing digital infrastructure and developed new platforms like Co-WIN and Aarogya Setu for COVID-19 management. Consolidating these platforms into a comprehensive, integrated digital resource could support population health management for SDGs.

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- **Timely and Targeted Strategies:** India's COVID-19 relief package was timely and targeted, providing direct support to vulnerable populations and revitalizing the economy. Applying a similar approach to SDGs, with a proactive government-supported program, could improve people's well-being.

Conclusion:

To achieve its SDG targets by 2030, India must address the key challenges it faces, including uneven progress, inadequate pace of improvement, and gender inequality. Drawing lessons from its COVID-19 response, India should prioritize strong political leadership, enhance its digital infrastructure, and implement timely and targeted strategies. By adopting a comprehensive, pioneering approach similar to the COVID-19 response, India can make significant progress toward meeting its SDGs and improving the well-being of its population.

2. **Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement between India and EFTA states will foster a strong partnership and increase trade between trusted democratic partners that share values. Discuss.**

Introduction: Provide a brief introduction on the “Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement between India and EFTA states”

Body: Write 5-6 points on how the Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement between India and EFTA states fosters a strong partnership and increases trade between trusted democratic partners that share values. Write a point on the way forward.

Conclusion: Provide a conclusion on how India and EFTA states can deepen their economic ties and advance their shared values of sustainable development and gender equality.

Introduction:

High-level delegates from EFTA states (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland) and India met to discuss the prospects of resuming negotiations towards a Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA). The joint statement reflects the shared desire to conclude a mutually beneficial TEPA at the earliest.

How will Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement between India and EFTA states to foster a strong partnership and increase trade between trusted democratic partners that share values?

- **Economic Benefits:** EFTA states' economies have imports and exports close to \$1.3 trillion, making them significant merchandise and services traders globally. This offers substantial trade potential for India.
- **Complementary Strengths:** India's economic growth and leadership in green technologies can be complemented by EFTA states' trade and investment ties, promoting technology transfer, R&D, innovation, and business collaboration.
- **Market Access and Export Potential:** A trade agreement would enhance market access for goods, boosting India's export potential to EFTA markets, where EFTA's export products frequently serve as inputs in Indian export industries.
- **Investment Opportunities:** EFTA states have already invested over \$35 billion in India, spanning various sectors. A trade pact is expected to significantly increase investments, fostering economic growth and bilateral relations.

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- **Skilled Labor and Services Sector:** EFTA states benefit from the highly skilled Indian workforce, particularly in the services sector. India, in turn, benefits from EFTA companies generating jobs and contributing to economic growth. A trade agreement would create more business opportunities for skilled Indian service providers.
- **Collaboration on Green Growth:** EFTA states possess cutting-edge technologies that can contribute to India's green growth aspirations, aligning with India's aim to meet 50% of its energy needs with renewables by 2030.

Way Forward:

Both India and EFTA states should prioritize these trade talks, aiming for a swift process toward a balanced agreement with strong political involvement and guidance. Strengthen collaboration in areas of sustainable development and gender equality, promoting shared values between trusted democratic partners.

Conclusion:

A Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement between India and EFTA states holds great potential for fostering a strong partnership and increasing trade between these trusted democratic partners. The agreement would leverage the complementary strengths of both parties, enhance market access, stimulate investments, promote skilled labour exchanges, and facilitate collaboration in green growth. By prioritizing these negotiations and ensuring a balanced agreement, India and EFTA states can deepen their economic ties and advance their shared values of sustainable development and gender equality.

3. What are the challenges faced by gig workers in India, and how does the Code on Social Security, 2020, attempt to address their concerns?

Introduction: Provide a brief introduction on “Gig workers in India”

Body: Write 4-5 points on the challenges faced by gig workers in India. Write 3-4 points on How does the Code on Social Security, 2020, attempt to address their concerns?

Conclusion: Provide a conclusion on attempts to address the concerns of Gig workers in India.

Introduction

The rapidly expanding gig economy in India, involving non-traditional employment setups, has brought with it a set of unique challenges. Gig workers, including platform workers who connect with customers through digital platforms, lack the job security and benefits that conventional employees enjoy. The recent strikes by Zomato-owned Blinkit delivery agents highlight the prevalent issues.

What are the challenges faced by gig workers in India?

- **Decreased earnings:** The strikes started when Blinkit reduced the minimum payout per delivery from ₹25 to ₹15, resulting in the daily earnings of delivery agents falling from around ₹1,200 to ₹600-700. This incident underscores the precarious income stability of gig workers.
- **Unclear employment status:** The status of gig workers, whether they should be regarded as employees or independent contractors, is a contentious issue. Due to this

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ambiguity, gig workers fall outside the ambit of certain laws and are consequently denied statutory benefits.

- **Exclusion from labour codes:** Of the four new labour codes proposed, only the Code on Social Security includes gig work, excluding gig workers from essential protections such as minimum wage and occupational safety. They also can't form legally recognized unions and lack an effective mechanism to redress grievances.
- **Deplorable working conditions:** A 2022 report by Fairwork India highlighted the poor working conditions of gig workers, emphasizing the need for statutory affirmation of their rights.

How does the Code on Social Security, 2020, attempt to address their concerns?

- **Legal recognition:** The Code on Social Security, 2020, for the first time, brings gig workers within the purview of labour laws. It provides a legal definition of gig workers and differentiates them from traditional employees.
- **Provision for benefits:** While the Code does not provide gig workers with benefits like gratuity, insurance, and provident fund that are available to traditional employees, it mandates that the central and state governments create suitable social security schemes for gig workers, including health and maternity benefits, provident funds, and accident benefits.
- **Mandatory registration:** The Code also necessitates compulsory registration of all gig workers and platform workers, enabling them to avail themselves of the benefits offered by these schemes.

Conclusion

Despite some efforts, like the Code on Social Security, 2020, to address gig workers' rights, their challenges persist. Legal petitions are seeking recognition for gig workers as unorganised workers, and for them to fall under the Unorganised Workers' Social Security Act, 2008. However, the response from the Centre remains pending. While the Labour Codes have received Presidential assent, their implementation is delayed due to pending rules by the States. Hence, a concrete solution for the challenges faced by India's gig workers is still awaited.

4. How does the process of de-dollarisation affect the global economy, and what factors have contributed to the U.S. dollar's dominance as the global reserve currency?

Introduction: Provide a brief introduction to the concept of de-dollarisation and the U.S. dollar's role as the global reserve currency.

Body: Write 3-4 points on How does the process of de-dollarisation affect the global economy? Write 3-4 points on What factors have contributed to the U.S. dollar's dominance as the global reserve currency?

Conclusion: Provide a conclusion on the evolving dynamics of global finance, and how de-dollarisation could reshape the future economic order

Introduction

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De-dollarisation refers to the process where the U.S. dollar is replaced by other currencies as the global reserve currency. Reserve currencies are widely used in cross-border transactions and are held as reserves by central banks. Over time, several countries have attempted to displace the dollar's dominant position for varied reasons.

How does the process of de-dollarisation affect the global economy?

- **Instigating De-dollarisation:** Notably, Russia's invasion of Ukraine has intensified de-dollarisation attempts. The imposed U.S. sanctions that limited the use of the dollar to purchase oil and goods from Russia have been seen as weaponising the dollar, leading to a global rethink.
- **Dollar Influence:** The global economy is interconnected, and the dollar's status as the international reserve currency grants the U.S. significant power over global transactions since these transactions are cleared by American banks.
- **The emergence of Alternatives:** As de-dollarisation gathers pace, currencies such as the Chinese yuan emerge as alternatives due to China's rising economic prowess. This shift could redefine the dynamics of the global economy, impacting trade, investments, and geopolitical relations.

What factors have contributed to the U.S. dollar's dominance as the global reserve currency?

- **Historical Precedence:** The reserve currency mantle has historically been shouldered by economic superpowers. As the U.S. rose to global economic prominence in the 20th century, the dollar took over from the British pound as the global reserve currency.
- **Perceived Advantage:** The U.S. dollar's reserve currency status is seen as conferring undue privileges, allowing the U.S. to purchase goods and assets by simply creating a new currency. While this can lead to currency debasement, as long as the U.S. doesn't debase its currency faster than others, the dollar's value and status may remain stable.
- **Global Trust:** Despite several countries employing expansionary monetary policy, the dollar's popularity stems from global trust in U.S. financial markets and the U.S. rule of law. This trust encourages investment in U.S. assets, bolstering the dollar's position.
- **Trade Deficits and Surpluses:** U.S. trade deficits have led to the global accumulation of dollars, often reinvested in U.S. assets. Interestingly, countries with trade surpluses, like China, also vie for their currency to gain reserve status. Yet, restrictions and doubts about the rule of law can hinder such ambitions.

Conclusion

De-dollarisation signals a shift in the global economic order. While the U.S. dollar has enjoyed dominance for decades, emerging economies and geopolitical shifts challenge this status. Understanding the factors contributing to the dollar's dominance helps identify what might shape future reserve currency contenders.

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5. **In light of the present developments, how India's special operations' capability for rescue missions has progressed. How do these missions highlight the importance of strategic corporals and the need for specialized training and equipment in modern warfare?**

Introduction: Provide a brief introduction on the advancement of India's special operations capability for rescue missions.

Body: Write 2 points on how India's special operations' capability for rescue missions has progressed. Write 3 points on some Successful rescue missions, Write 3 points on how these missions highlight the importance of strategic corporals and the need for specialized training and equipment in modern warfare.

Conclusion: Provide a conclusion on the significance of India's special operations capability for rescue missions.

Introduction:

Recent evacuation missions highlight the advancement of India's special operations capability. Special operations play a crucial role in modern warfare, emphasizing the importance of strategic corporals and specialized training.

In light of the present developments, how India's special operations capability for rescue missions has progressed?

- **Overcoming past challenges:** Recall the 'Kandahar' incident in 1999, where limitations hindered a rescue operation. Lack of aircraft capable of avoiding restricted airspace and refueling constraints limited response options.
- **Acquisition of vital aircraft:** Introduction of the C-130J Super Hercules and C-17 Globemaster enhanced India's capabilities. The C-130J's range, versatility, and advanced instrumentation provided critical advantages. These aircraft enable operations to be conducted avoiding restricted airspace and tackling difficult landing conditions.

What are some Successful rescue missions?

- **Wadi Seidna, Sudan (April 2023):** The evacuation of 121 Indians showcased the IAF's capabilities and professionalism. The C-130J's advanced instrumentation and confident crew ensured a successful mission.
- **Herat, Afghanistan (April 2020):** Safe evacuation of Indian Embassy personnel amid challenging conditions. Garud commandos provided security, emphasizing the importance of specialized training.
- **Kabul, Afghanistan (August 2021):** Risky evacuation mission amid uncontrolled airspace and chaotic ground situation. Pilots demonstrated exceptional skills, avoiding multiple aircraft and utilizing night vision goggles.

How do these missions highlight the importance of strategic corporals and the need for specialized training and equipment in modern warfare?

- **Strategic Corporals:** Actions of enlisted personnel on the frontlines can have significant strategic effects. Failure or success in special operations can impact a nation's reputation and policies.

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- **Specialized Training:** Special operations require extensive training to handle complex situations. Special forces crews must bear the weight of a nation's prestige, ensuring successful outcomes. Ethos and training should not be diluted by diverting resources to routine tasks or VIP carriage.
- **Importance of Specialized Equipment:** Advanced aircraft like the C-130J enable operations in challenging environments. Synthetic runway generation, electro-optical night vision, and other equipment enhance situational awareness. Special operations crews must have access to state-of-the-art equipment to accomplish their missions effectively.

Conclusion:

India's special operations capability for rescue missions has progressed significantly, evident by successful evacuation missions. These operations underscore the importance of strategic corporals and the need for specialized training and cutting-edge equipment. It is crucial to preserve the ethos and training of special operations units to ensure their continued effectiveness in modern warfare.

6. Critically analyze the potential applications and implications of generative artificial intelligence in various sectors.

Introduction: Provide a brief introduction on the potential applications and implications of generative artificial intelligence in various sectors

Body: Write 4-5 points critically analyzing the potential applications and implications of generative artificial intelligence in various sectors. Write 3 points on Implications and Concerns, Write 3 points on Way Forward.

Conclusion: Provide a conclusion on the potential applications and implications of generative artificial intelligence in various sectors.

Introduction:

A breakthrough in machine learning and artificial intelligence, generative AI creates new forms of media like text, audio, video, and animation. Advanced machine learning capabilities enable the generation of creative content based on simple text prompts.

Critically analyze the potential applications and implications of generative artificial intelligence in various sectors:

- **Marketing and Branding:** Crafting personalized sales, marketing, and brand messaging using generative AI. Generating social media posts, blogs, and marketing copies by providing text prompts to engage with the audience effectively.
- **Software Development and Productivity:** Generative AI services like GitHub, Copilot, and ChatGPT facilitate code generation, snippets, and entire functions, improving developer productivity.
- **Data Augmentation and AI Training:** Generating synthetic data for data augmentation to enhance the training and testing of AI models. Enabling large-scale experimentation by creating additional training data. Reducing human research hours by summarizing legal research materials effectively.

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- **Design and Architecture:** Creating and simulating complex engineering, design, and architectural concepts. Allowing engineers and consumers to design and iterate over floor plans and architectures using text prompts or vocal commands.
- **Medical Diagnosis and Treatment:** Generating potential personalized treatments based on patient symptoms and medical history. Enhancing medical diagnosis through AI systems like DeepMind AlphaFold, which predicts protein structures.

What are the Implications and Concerns?

- **Bias and Exclusion:** Generative AI systems can perpetuate existing biases if trained on biased or non-inclusive data. Efforts must be made to address biases and ensure fairness in the generated outputs.
- **Misuse and Inappropriate Content:** Generative AI can be exploited to create deep fakes, disinformation, and offensive content. There is a need to regulate and mitigate the potential misuse of AI-generated media.
- **Accuracy and Accountability:** Ensuring the accuracy and quality of generated information, particularly in complex engineering and medical contexts. Challenges arise in determining responsibility and accountability for the content produced by generative AI systems.

Way Forward:

- **Rigor and Responsibility:** The development of AI technology should adhere to ethical guidelines and undergo regular fairness audits. Privacy and security concerns should be protected.
- **Policy and Regulation:** Implementing policies and regulations to promote the ethical and responsible use of generative AI. Raising awareness and education to address the potential harms and threats associated with its use.
- **Inclusive AI Development:** Encouraging diverse representation in AI design teams to avoid biases and exclusion.

Conclusion:

Generative AI holds immense potential across sectors like marketing, software development, research, and architecture. However, its applications come with concerns related to biases, misuse, and accountability. By embracing responsible development, regulation, and inclusive practices, society can leverage the benefits of generative AI while mitigating potential risks.

7. **Critically analyze the role of the Master Plan of Delhi (MPD) in addressing the complex urbanization challenges faced by the city. Also, suggest possible solutions for a more inclusive and sustainable urban development strategy.**

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Introduction: Provide a brief introduction on the challenges of urbanization faced by Delhi and the role of the Master Plan of Delhi (MPD) in addressing these challenges.

Body: Write 2-3 points Critically analyzing the role of the Master Plan of Delhi (MPD) in addressing the complex urbanization challenges faced by the city. Write 2-3 points suggesting possible solutions for a more inclusive and sustainable urban development strategy

Conclusion: Provide a conclusion on the need for a more inclusive and sustainable urban development strategy in Delhi, highlighting the importance of changing mindsets, empowering the have-nots, and engaging with ground realities for effective urban planning.

Introduction:

Delhi's development is marred by the recurring demolitions of illegal constructions, highlighting the failure of urban planning rather than a mere law and order issue. The Master Plan of Delhi (MPD) serves as a legal instrument defining the illegality of land use, shifting the blame to the inadequate MPD instead of addressing urban planning deficiencies.

Critically analyze the role of the Master Plan of Delhi (MPD) in addressing the complex urbanization challenges faced by the city:

- **Inversion of Objectives:** MPD falls short of meeting the needs of all residents it should serve, leading to illegal developments and subsequent demolitions. The MPD authors need to objectively analyze the problem, focusing on formulating redressal mechanisms and effective strategies for future urban development.
- **Misguided Urban Planning Model:** The present MPD and planning ideology in India are modeled after post-war European and American strategies, unsuitable for India's socio-economic and cultural complexities. The inadequacy of this model contributes to the recurrent demolitions, failing to address the expectations and urbanism of new migrants.
- **Lack of Self-Reflexive Reform:** The insights gained from the failures of MPD have not triggered self-reflection or reform in the urban planning profession or civic governance. The rigidity of MPD continues to be defended as immutable certainty in courts, disregarding the need for adaptive and creative urban planning approaches.

Suggest possible solutions for a more inclusive and sustainable urban development strategy:

- **Pragmatic Creativity:** Urban planners in Delhi should adopt pragmatic and creative approaches, learning from successful examples worldwide, rather than relying on state police powers. Mediating processes for slum development and managing commercial and industrial activities should be integrated into subsequent MPD revisions.
- **Acknowledging Political Economy:** Recognize the role of a robust developing political economy in Delhi, reflecting the aspirations and needs of both the haves and have-nots. Modify the MPD to accommodate and regulate the growth of these sectors, avoiding the need for demolition as the primary urban planning strategy.

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- **Empowering the Have-Nots:** The needs and aspirations of both the haves and have-nots are equally legitimate and should be addressed in an inclusive urban planning framework. The self-help achievements of the have-nots, despite facing societal and governmental hostility, should be recognized and integrated into urban planning strategies.

Conclusion:

The Master Plan of Delhi (MPD) has been unable to effectively address the complex urbanization challenges faced by the city. To achieve inclusive and sustainable urban development, a change in mindset is required, emphasizing ethical considerations over legal issues. Civic authorities must engage with the people and ground realities of Delhi to develop an inclusive and sustainable urban development strategy, rather than relying on the judiciary or superficial aesthetics to create a "world-class" city.

8. Analyze the impact of the current appointment process and the reliance on the Academic Performance Index (API) in some higher educational institutions.

Introduction: Provide a brief introduction on the impact of the current appointment process and the reliance on the Academic Performance Index (API) in some higher educational institutions

Body: Write 2-3 points on the Impact of the current appointment process and the reliance on the Academic Performance Index (API) in some higher educational institutions. Write 2-3 points on the Way forward.

Conclusion: Provide a conclusion on the need to reevaluate the current appointment process, considering a more holistic evaluation of candidates' capabilities and prioritizing the expansion of higher education opportunities.

Introduction:

The tragic death of a young ad-hoc lecturer at the University of Delhi highlights the deep-rooted issues in higher education institutions. The appointment process in some colleges, based on the Academic Performance Index (API), has led to controversial selections and the exclusion of experienced ad-hoc teachers.

What is the Impact of the current appointment process and the reliance on the Academic Performance Index (API) in some higher educational institutions?

- **Flawed Selection Process:** The current selection process focuses excessively on API scores, overlooking the holistic evaluation of candidates' capabilities as researchers and teachers. Perfunctory interviews with limited interaction lead to the exclusion of competent ad-hoc teachers who have been serving for years.
- **Questionable Merit Criteria:** The selection of candidates who have not cleared their Ph.D. confirmation and lack substantial research credentials raises doubts about the emphasis on academic merit. Anecdotal evidence suggests that recommendations from certain social and cultural organizations played a significant role in the selection process.

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- **Displacement of Experienced Teachers:** The appointment of less-qualified candidates over experienced ad-hoc teachers disregards their competence and years of service. The bleak prospects of securing future teaching jobs due to limited opportunities in higher education further exacerbate the situation.

Way forward:

- **Sympathetic and Humane Approach:** Institutions should consider alternative ways to support and uplift existing ad-hoc teachers instead of outright exclusion. A more compassionate administration could devise creative solutions to ensure the inclusion and fair treatment of experienced teachers.
- **Holistic Evaluation:** The selection process should go beyond the narrow focus on API scores and incorporate comprehensive assessment methods. A balanced evaluation should consider research achievements, teaching experience, and the overall capabilities of candidates.
- **Focus on Expansion of Higher Education:** Governments should prioritize the expansion of higher education institutions to provide more opportunities for teachers and students. Relying solely on online courses may overlook the value of classroom interactions and peer group engagement in holistic education.

Conclusion:

The current appointment process, heavily reliant on the Academic Performance Index (API), has resulted in questionable selections and the displacement of experienced ad-hoc teachers. It is crucial to reassess the merit criteria, adopt a more compassionate approach, and prioritize the expansion of higher education to ensure a fair and inclusive environment in higher educational institutions.