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9 PM Current Affairs Weekly Compilation

For UPSC CSE mains examination

4th Week

Nov. 2023

सत्यमेव जयते

UPSC

Features :

Arranged as per syllabus Topics
Most complete coverage of major
News Papers editorials

Index

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GS Paper 1

Subject: History

Topic: Indian culture will cover the salient aspects of Art Forms, literature and Architecture from ancient to modern times

Materialist School of Indian Philosophy

News: The article discusses the materialist school of Indian Philosophy and its principal teachings.

The Indian philosophical tradition encompasses a wide range of beliefs, theories, and perspectives on existence, knowledge, ethics, and spirituality. Rooted in ancient texts such as the Vedas, Upanishads, and various philosophical treatises, it includes several major schools of thought like Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Samkhya, Yoga, Mimamsa, Vedanta, and more.
Each of these offers distinct insights into the nature of reality and the human condition through rigorous inquiry, debate, and exploration of fundamental questions about life and the universe.
In this tradition, all schools of philosophy had to provide **proofs, or *pramānas***, for their conceptual framework.

What are the different *pramanas* accepted in Indian Philosophy?

Pramana	Definition
Pratyaksha	Direct perception or knowledge gained through sensory perception, i.e., seeing, hearing, etc.
Anumana	Inference, or knowledge obtained through logical reasoning based on observations or evidence.
Upamana	Analogy, where knowledge is gained by comparing or likening something to a familiar object.
Shabda	Testimony, or knowledge derived from trustworthy sources such as scriptures or experts.
Arthapatti	Postulation or presumption, used to explain a fact when no other pramana can explain it.
Anupalabdhi	Non-apprehension, or knowledge obtained from the absence or non-existence of something.

What is the Materialist School of Indian Philosophy?

The Materialist School upheld the ***pratyaksa pramāna*** (perception, or more literally that which is within sight) as the foundation of knowledge.
Its tenets included:

1. **Perception as Foundation of All Knowledge:** The implication of this principle is the denial of innate ideas (ideas or consciousness exisiting independent of the material world).

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2. **Pleasure-seeking:** The dictum of 'eat, drink and be merry' describes the pleasure-seeking ways of materialists, best encapsulated by the Sanskrit dictum "*yāvat jīvēt sukham jīvēt*" or "whilst living, live well".

3. **Focus on Individual and not Collective Ethics:** Unsound ethics will have consequences on the material world. So the question of ethics is left for each person to answer for themselves.

4. **Lack of a Divine Agency:** No divine agency exists to safeguard human society from terrors, either natural or human. They do not believe in God, punishment and rewards.

5. **Material Notion of Hell:** The experience of hell is defined as death by the enemy's weapon, diseases, starvation and other such pains.

6. **Material Notion of Heaven:** The Lokāyatas' conception of heaven reflects the male preoccupation with the female of the human species.

7. **Notion of Heaven and Hell:** The notions of heaven and hell were not a supernatural category but real aspects of the material world. For them, hell was nothing less than all the suffering and pain surrounding us, for example war, disease, hunger, etc. The luxuries, on the other hand, were considered as heaven. Given the patriarchal age, these luxuries often reflected the male preoccupation with the female of the human species.

8. **Discarded Ritualism:** The Lokāyatas found the ritualism in the concluding periods of the Vedic era exploitative and useless.

9. **Against Orthodoxy and Social Ills:** Caste, rank in society or orthodoxy of views were out of the question in their society. They entertained freedom in thought, in religious and social matters.

GS Paper 2

Subject: Indian Polity

Topic: Issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure

Special Category Status (SCS)- Why is Bihar demanding the Special Category Status?

News: The article discusses Bihar's request for Special Category Status to help with its development challenges, such as poverty and lack of resources. This status would bring more financial aid and benefits. Other states also want this status, but it's hard to get due to government policies.

What is Special Category Status (SCS)?

SCS is a classification for states in India that face specific challenges, like difficult terrain or socio-economic issues. It was introduced in 1969, based on the fifth Finance Commission's recommendations.
Five Factors for SCS: (i) hilly and difficult terrain (ii) low population density and/or sizeable share of tribal population (iii) strategic location along international borders (iv) economic and infrastructural backwardness and (v) non-viable nature of state finances

What are the benefits of SCS?

1. **Financial Benefits**: Previously, SCS states received about 30% of central assistance based on the Gadgil-Mukherjee formula. However, post the 14th and 15th Finance Commission (FC) recommendations and the

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Planning Commission's abolition, assistance changed to a shared pool of funds, increasing from 32% to 41% for all states.

2. **Favorable Funding Ratios:** In SCS states, the Centre-State funding ratio for centrally sponsored schemes is 90:10, more beneficial than the typical 60:40 or 80:20 for the general category.

3. **Additional Incentives:** SCS states enjoy concessions in customs, excise duties, income tax, and corporate tax rates to encourage investments and industry setup.

For more information on **SCS,** read here

Why does Bihar want SCS?

1. **Economic Backwardness:** About one-third of Bihar's population lives in poverty. The state has a low per-capita GDP of around ₹54,000, marking it as one of India's poorest states.

2. **Impact of Bifurcation:** Bihar's bifurcation led to industrial decline, with many industries moving to Jharkhand, resulting in fewer employment opportunities.

3. **Natural Challenges:** The state faces regular floods in the north and droughts in the south, impacting agriculture and livelihoods.

4. **Need for Welfare Funding**: Bihar's Chief Minister highlighted the need for SCS to secure approximately ₹2.5 lakh crore for various welfare measures over five years.

5. **Lack of Resources:** Bihar argues its lack of natural resources and continuous water supply for irrigation contributes to its underdevelopment.
   Note: States like Andhra Pradesh and Odisha also want SCS. Andhra Pradesh cites revenue loss after bifurcation, and Odisha points to natural disasters and a large tribal population (nearly 22%). However, the Central government, referring to the 14th FC report, has consistently rejected their requests, stating that no state should receive this status.

What should be done?

1. **Reassessing Criteria for SCS**: Given Bihar's situation, there's a need to revisit the criteria for SCS, especially considering Bihar meets most except for the hilly terrain and geographically difficult areas.

2. **Alternative Funding Models**: Following the Raghuram Rajan Committee's suggestion, exploring new funding models based on a multi-dimensional index.

3. **Addressing Bihar's Specific Needs:** Bihar urgently needs significant support for poverty alleviation, focused aid for disaster management and agriculture, and policies that attract new industries and create job opportunities.

Topic: Representation of People Act

Challenges of enforcing the Model Code of Conduct – A better model

News: The article discusses the challenges of enforcing India's election rules, the Model Code of Conduct. It mentions recent actions by the Election Commission against various politicians for rule violations. There are concerns about the Commission's impartiality and a proposed change affecting its independence.

What is the Model Code of Conduct?

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The model code refers to a set of norms laid down by the Election Commission of India, with the consensus of political parties. It bears no statutory backing and remains unenforceable.

It spells out the dos and don'ts for elections. Political parties, candidates and polling agents are expected to observe the norms.

It is operational from the date that the election schedule is announced till the date that results are announced.

For more information read here.

What are the challenges of enforcing the Model Code of Conduct?

1. **Reliance on Political Cooperation:** The MCC's effectiveness depends on the cooperation from political parties and governments, which can be inconsistent.
2. **Interpretation of Clauses:** Some MCC clauses, such as maintaining the "purity of the election process," are subjective and difficult to enforce uniformly.
3. **ECI's Vigilance and Action:** The Election Commission of India's role is crucial. They acted against leaders from different parties like BJP, Congress, and AAP, but the effectiveness and consistency of these actions are under scrutiny.

What are the concerns about the impartiality of the ECI?

1. **Selective Action:** The ECI took action against various leaders across parties like BJP, Congress, and AAP. However, complaints against Prime Minister Modi and Home Minister were reportedly ignored. This raises questions about selective enforcement.
2. **Influence of Central Agencies:** Allegations of the Enforcement Directorate being used for political purposes during elections, without ECI intervention, add to the concerns of bias.
3. **Proposed Legislative Changes:** The potential for the ruling party to control ECI appointments through new legislation (the Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Bill, 2023) could further compromise the Commission's impartiality and independence, impacting its ability to conduct free and fair elections.

For information on the Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Bill, 2023 read here.

Topic: Structure, organization and functioning of the Judiciary

On AIJS – *A* non-starter

News: This article discusses the various issues with the formation of the All-India Judicial Service (AIJS).

Recently, President Droupadi Murmu suggested the creation of an All-India Judicial Service (AIJS) which will help diversify the judiciary by allowing bright youngsters from varied backgrounds to become judges through a merit-based process.

What is the AIJS?

Article 312 of the Constitution, as amended by the 42nd Amendment Act in 1976, provides for the creation of an AIJS. It requires a resolution adopted by the Council of States with two-thirds majority of present and

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voting, and a parliamentary law.

Under AIJS, District judges will get recruited centrally through an all-India examination and allocated to each State along the lines of the All India Services.

It is well argued that it will ensure a transparent and efficient method of recruitment to attract the best talent in India's legal profession.

What is the need for the AIJS?

1. **Huge vacancy of judges and delay in recruitment:** Currently there is a 21% vacancy across all levels of courts in the country and a pendency of more than 5 crore cases, primarily due to inordinate delay in holding regular exams by states.
2. **Declining quality of judicial officers:** The ever-continuing decline in their quality will delay delivery of justice, increase pendency of cases, impair quality of judgments, and in turn affect the competence of higher judiciary as well.
3. **Subjectivity in the process:** Current judicial appointments at the lower level and upper levels have been criticised for subjectivity, corruption and nepotism, making a neutral and impartial system of recruitment imperative.

What are the issues with AIJS?

A national system of recruitment at the district judge level may have the following issues according to the author:

1. **Lack of consensus:** As the Union Law Minister disclosed last year in the Rajya Sabha, there is no consensus on the proposal. Only 2 High Courts agreed to the idea, while 13 were against it.
2. **Current system ensures diversity:** The current system of recruitment of **district judges through the respective State High Courts** is more conducive to ensuring diversity, as there is scope for both reservation and a clear understanding of local practices and conditions of the State.
3. **Issues related to expertise:** Unlike civil servants (who are recruited through a national common examination), judges are not assisted by an experienced lower bureaucracy in decision-making. Hence, they need to be well-versed in the issues involved for judicial functioning and the local practices and conditions of the State.
4. **Against the federal nature of the Constitution:** It is unlikely that all States will agree to this subject becoming centralised.
5. **May not attract the best talent:** This is due to the following:
a. **Other preferences available:** Lawyers typically consider judicial service based on practical experience rather than academic brilliance. Options such as litigation, joining law firms and going into the corporate sector appear more beneficial to some students of good institutions.
b. **Lack of certainty in career progression:** Given that the number of district judges elevated to the High Courts is much lower than those from the Bar, the lack of certainty on career progression may also render a national judicial service unattractive.

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On Restructuring the Supreme Court – It's time to revamp the structure of the Supreme Court

News: The article discusses the issues with the functioning of the Supreme Court which necessitate reforms such as the constitution of a separate Constitutional Bench and regional benches.

What are the powers of the Supreme Court?

1. **Original Jurisdiction:** It decides disputes between different units of the Indian Federation. This includes any dispute between:
   1. the Centre and one or more states; or
   2. the Centre and any state or states on one side and one or more states on the other; or
   3. between two or more states.
2. **Appellate Jurisdiction:** It is the highest court of appeal in the country. It hears appeals from lower courts and tribunals, both civil and criminal, ensuring uniformity in the interpretation and application of laws.
3. **Advisory Jurisdiction:** The President of India can seek advice from the Court on questions of law or fact that may appear before him/her.
4. Apart from this, it has the power of **judicial review** (reviewing the constitutionality of laws passed by the legislature and executive actions), the power to **punish for its own contempt,** as well as the **power to issue writs** (such as habeas corpus, mandamus, etc.) for the enforcement of the fundamental rights.

What are Constitution Benches?

Article 145(3) provides for the setting up of a Constitution Bench. It says a **minimum of 5 judges** need to sit for deciding a case involving a **"substantial question of law as to the interpretation of the Constitution".** This provision is also applicable to the Court hearing any reference under **Article 143**, which deals with the power of the President to consult the Court.

What are the issues with the working of the Court?

1. **Backlog of Cases and Overburdening:** There are 79,813 cases pending before the Supreme Court. It has been reduced to an appeals court, with only 4 of the 1,263 decisions issued in 2022 were issued by a Constitution Bench.
2. **Lack of Access to The Supreme Court:** It is reported that appeals in the Supreme court mostly comprised matters from High Courts that are geographically closer to the Supreme Court. Courts far away from the apex court had fewer appeals filed, due to both difficulties in accessibility and costs.

Due to this, there has been a demand for a structural change regarding accessibility, reducing workload, giving importance to Constitutional cases, etc. in the top court.

What are some suggestions to address these structural gaps in the Supreme Court?

1. 10th Law Commission (1984): It proposed that the Supreme Court be split into two divisions: **Constitutional and Legal Division,** with the Constitutional Division handling only issues pertaining to constitutional law. **11th Law Commission (1988)** reiterated the same.
2. Supreme Court, in **Bihar Legal Support Society v. CJI Case (1986)**, stated that it was "desirable" to establish a **National Court of Appeal** that would be able to entertain **special leave petitions**. This would allow the Supreme Court to only entertain constitutional and public law-related questions.
3. 229th Law Commission Report (2009) recommended **4 regional benches** in Delhi, Chennai or Hyderabad, Kolkata, and Mumbai which would take up **appellate responsibility**, with a Constitution Bench

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in New Delhi working on a regular basis. This would divide the heavy backlog of non-constitutional cases among regional benches while also making them accessible.

What should be the way forward?

Constitution of regional benches, and a separate Constitution Bench should be the way forward, in line with the CJI's recent announcement regarding his intent to create Constitution Benches as a permanent feature of the Court.

Terminology Used:

Special Leave Petition: Under this, the aggrieved party is provided a special permission to be heard in Apex Court, in appeal against the order or judgment of any court or tribunal in the territory of India, when any substantial question of law is involved, or gross injustice has been done.
Master of Roster: It refers to the privilege of the Chief Justice to constitute Benches to hear cases.

On Transfer of Judges – Collegium's opacity is injurious to the institution's health

News: The article discusses issues with the procedure of transfer of judges by the Collegium. It also suggests reforms that can be undertaken to resolve these issues.
Recently, various judges of High Courts have raised questions on their abrupt transfers by the Supreme Court (SC) Collegium.
Evolution of the Collegium system:

Constitutional Provisions regarding Judicial Appointments and the Evolution of the Collegium System

- **Article 124(2):** The Judges of the Supreme Court are appointed by the President. She **should consult such a number of the Judges** of the **Supreme Court** and of the High Courts in the States as she may deem necessary for the purpose.

- **Article 217:** The Judge of a High Court shall be appointed by the President **in consultation with** the Chief Justice of India and the Governor of the State. The Chief Justice of the High Court should also be consulted except in case of his/her own appointment.

- *First Judges Case (1981)*: The SC said that **consultation under Article 124 doesn't mean concurrence.** The President is not bound by CJI's advice.

- *Second Judges Case (1993)*: The SC **overruled its previous decision** and said **CJI's advice is binding.** The CJI is required to formulate its advice based on a collegium of judges consisting of CJI and two senior-most SC judges.

- *Third Judges Case (1998)*: The SC expanded the collegium to a **five-member body** to include the CJI and the four senior-most judges of the court after the CJI.

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What are the issues with the procedure of transfer of judges by the Collegium?

1. **Lack of Transparency:** There is no official procedure or any written manual for the functioning of the Collegium. The parameters considered for transfers are not public, Moreover, the reasons for transfer are not communicated to the judges.
2. **Impact on Judicial Efficiency:** Frequent or abrupt transfers of judges can disrupt the functioning of courts, impacting the efficiency of the judicial system.

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3. **Lack of Constitutional Backing:** The Collegium system is not prescribed by the Constitution. Article 124 only mentions consultation, which the SC interpreted as 'concurrence' in Second Judges Case (1993). Many consider this as judicial overreach.

4. **Lack of Checks & Balance:** There are no checks on the whole process (by the Executive or the Legislature).

5. **Accusations of Impartiality:** Critics of the system argue that near relatives, kith and kin of sitting Judges receive favorable treatment leading to nepotism (also called **'Uncle Judges Syndrome'**).

In which scenarios are transfers usually recommended by the Collegium?

One, a transfer is used for appointing Chief Justices or ensuring elevation to the SC.

For instance, a potential candidate for SC judgeship is usually sent to a large high court to be tested on judicial performance.

Two, Transfer of a judge is sometimes done as punitive action to deal with judges who do not conform to the expected or proper course of action as part of the judiciary.

This is because impeachment is the only remedy when questions of propriety are raised against a judge. Since it requires a very high degree of evidence and political will, judiciary sometimes resorts to transfers.

What should be done going ahead?

1. **Establish a Defined Procedure:** The Government and Judiciary should cooperate to finalize a defined procedure regarding judicial transfers. The Memorandum of Procedure should have clear guidelines for transparency like criteria, disclosure of reasons for transfer, mechanism for raising concerns, etc.

2. **Reviving the National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC):** NJAC was proposed as an alternative to the collegium system to ensure checks and balances. It would have representation from the judiciary, executive and eminent jurists and will be responsible for appointment and transfer of judges.

Topic: Indian Constitution – Significant provisions

Domicile-based Private Sector Reservation

News: The article discusses the reasoning provided by the Punjab and Haryana High Court in quashing domicile-based private sector reservation in Haryana.

Recently, the Punjab and Haryana High Court quashed the Haryana State government legislation providing 75% reservation to State domiciles in the private sector in jobs with a monthly salary of less than ₹30,000.

What are the arguments against domicile-based private sector reservation provided by the Court?

1. **Legislative Overreach:** The court stated that it was beyond the purview of the State to legislate on the issue and restrict private employers from recruiting from the open market.

2. **Violates Right to Equality:** It also held that the Act was violative of equality guaranteed under Article 14. By allotting 75% reservation for "locals", the Act goes against the rights of citizens of the rest of the country.

3. **Violates Right to Freedom:** It said the Act violates freedom guaranteed under Article 19 by imposing unreasonable restrictions on workers' right to move freely throughout the territory of India.

4. **Slippery Slope:** The Court held that such acts could lead to other States coming up with similar enactments. This would lead to putting up of protectionist walls throughout India. Other States like Andhra Pradesh and Jharkhand have also enacted similar legislation.

5. **Lead to Inspector Raj:** The court termed the requirements on private employers stipulated in the Act as similar to those under "Inspector Raj" (over regulation/ supervision by the Government).

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What are the issues with domicile-based private sector reservation?

1. **Negatively affect the Economy:** Workers move to other States seeking job opportunities that are relevant to their skills and abilities. The shortage of qualified workers in a state may impact businesses and thus the economy of the entire country.
2. **Discourage Investment:** Compulsions to employ decreases the competitiveness of companies. Apart from that, such measures directly discourage investment potential in a state by creating compliance burden.
3. **Threat to Unity:** This step would create friction among locals and non-locals in the implementing states. This will shake the fundamentals of India's Unity in Diversity in the long run.
4. **Hamper Inclusive Growth:** If States impose restrictions that prevent job seekers from other States from accessing opportunities, citizens of poorer States will have to make a living within their own regions. This will lead to rising inequalities.

What is the reasoning behind Haryana government's decision of providing domicile-based private sector reservation?

1. **Demand by the Locals:** There is resentment among locals in better-off States over their jobs being taken up by "migrant" workers. This has led to their governments coming up with ill-thought-out protectionist measures.
2. **Private Sector's Preference for Migrant Labour:** Private employers often exploit the migrant labour market as such workers tend to work long hours for low wages with little or no social protection and benefits. The private sector prefers them over local workers with better bargaining power.
3. **Addressing Unemployment and Economic Disparities:** Introducing reservation might be an attempt to address high unemployment rates among certain communities or regions. Especially in Haryana which has one of the highest rates of unemployment (9%) as per PLFS 2021-22.

What should be done?

Uphold Uniform Labour Rights: States should ensure that migrant workers enjoy basic labour rights, thereby creating a level playing field for all workers (local as well as migrants) and eliminating preference for migrant labour. This will also protect the migrant labours from exploitation.
Apart from this, the State govt's focus should be on: **Ease of Doing Business Reforms** to attract industries, **Skill Development Programs**, **Infrastructure Development**, **Education Reforms** and **Rural Development**.

Subject: Governance

Topic: E-governance- applications, models, successes, limitations, and potential

DPI could help unlock a massive opportunity in the purple sector

News: The article highlights the massive opportunity that Digital Public Infrastructure presents when applied in the purple sector. Disability-inclusive infrastructure using DPI can generate a special market boom and help India's economy.

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What is the Purple Sector of an Economy?

The term "purple sector," symbolizing disability with the color purple, encompasses a diverse workforce. This includes individuals with disabilities, as well as special educators, rehabilitation professionals, healthcare workers, and entrepreneurs and innovators who focus on developing products and services for individuals with special needs. It constitutes a substantial and intricately segmented sector.

For more information on DPI- Read here.

What is the significance of DPI in the purple sector?

1. **Enhanced employment opportunities to disabled-** Transportation Apps, educational apps for disabled, etc, based on DPI platform enhances employment opportunities for the disabled. **For ex-** Namma Yatri app for providing accessible transportation to the disabled.
2. **Increase in government revenues-** Increased employment opportunities to the disabled community, which constitute around 150 million population in India (WHO), increases the tax base of the government.
3. **Increased expenditure in the economy-** Persons with disabilities, along with their friends and families, command large quantum of spending power. Disability friendly shopping apps based on Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC), enhance the economic stature of disabled people as both customers and value-creators.
4. **Social benefits like Health care and Education-** Disabled focussed apps for health and education based on the Open Network for Education and Skilling Transactions (ONEST) and Unified Health Interface (UHI) platforms, can help people with disabilities take up skill development courses, find specialist healthcare experts, etc.

What Measures has the government taken for increasing accessibility for the disabled?

1. **The Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016:** The Act has several provisions for benefit of persons with disabilities like it has increased the magnitude of reservation for Persons with Disabilities in government jobs and education institutes.
2. **Accessible India Campaign:** The aim of the Campaign is to make a barrier free and conducive environment for Persons with Disabilities, with a focus on built up environment, transportation, and ICT ecosystem.

For more information on govt initiatives Read Here

What should be the way forward in building disability friendly apps?

1. Discoverability- Products and services meant to cater to their special needs as well as those offered by persons with disabilities must be made available to a wider market.
2. Trust- We must ensure that right persons are identified for various services and initiatives to instil trust in these apps. Data privacy must be of paramount importance.
3. Access- Products and services should be accessible in both physical and digital formats.
4. Cost of Innovation- We should focus on lowering the cost of innovation or developing novel products and services for persons with special needs.

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Subject: Social Justice

Topic: Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Education.

Importance of Sex education- Social justice, sexual education, the need of our times

News: The article highlights the importance of sexual education, the role of teachers, and government initiatives like ARSH and RKSK. It also mentions challenges like cultural resistance and the need for better resources and training.

What are the social issues that affect Indian adolescents the most?

Gender Inequality: Gender issues, including discrimination and stereotypes, are prevalent. This impacts the way adolescents interact and form relationships.

Sexual Education Gaps: Lack of comprehensive sexual education contributes to misunderstandings and poor handling of gender and sexual health issues among adolescents.

What are the benefits of sexual education in India?

Promotes Gender Respect: Sexual education fosters respect for different gender identities, crucial for healthy interpersonal relationships. It aids in developing a deeper understanding and respect for LGBTQA+ communities.

Reduces Risky Behaviors: Educating adolescents about consent and boundaries not only helps prevent sexual abuse but also reduces sexual activity and risky behaviors. Additionally, it can delay the age at which adolescents first engage in sexual intercourse.

Strengthening Democracy: Sexual education encourages empathy and understanding of diverse identities and experiences, crucial for a democratic society that values all its members.

What are the challenges in providing sexual education in India?

1. **Cultural Resistance:** The cultural hesitation to discuss topics like sex and relationships openly in Indian society poses a significant challenge.
2. **Teacher Training:** A lack of trained teachers who are comfortable and skilled in teaching sexual education is a major obstacle.
3. **Resource Constraints:** There's a scarcity of adequate teaching materials and curricula specifically designed for comprehensive sexual education in schools.

For more information on challenges of sex education in India read here.

What government initiatives are in place regarding sexual education in India?

1. **Union government initiatives:** Recent initiatives include the **Adolescent Reproductive and Sexual Health Strategy (ARSH) of 2005** and the **National Adolescent Health Programme (Rashtriya Kishore Swaasthya Karyakram or RKSK)**.
2. **Legal Recognition of Sexual Education:** The Calcutta High Court's judgment emphasized that children have the right to access sexual education and sexual and reproductive health services.
3. **Committee for Removing Discriminations in Schools:** The Government of Tamil Nadu established a committee headed by Justice K. Chandru. This committee's aim is to suggest ways to eliminate caste and

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community discrimination in educational institutions, thereby fostering a more inclusive setting for sexual education.

What should be done?

1. **Enhance Teacher Training:** As per the UNESCO 2021 report, train teachers in participatory pedagogies for effective sexuality education.
2. **Incorporate Legal Awareness:** Implement the Kerala model of including POCSO awareness in curricula from 2024-25 to educate students on legal aspects of sexual offences.
3. **Reconsider Age of Consent:** Reflect on the observations of the Madras, Delhi, and Meghalaya High Courts, and the Chief Justice of India regarding the criminalization of consensual adolescent relationships, suggesting a reevaluation of the age of consent.
4. **Develop Regional Vocabulary:** Create specific terms in regional languages for discussing sexual consent, addressing the gap for non-English speakers, and ensuring wider understanding and inclusivity in sexual education

Subject: International Relations

Topic: India and its neighbourhood-relations

Shift in Maldives' foreign policy- With Mohamed Muizzu's India-out policy, Turkey's inroads into Maldives

News: The article talks about how the Maldives, under its new President Mohamed Muizzu, is changing its foreign policy by choosing Turkey as a key partner.

There is a big shift in Maldives policy from its previous focus on India and China. Turkey, under President Erdogan, is becoming more influential in the region. The Maldives is using its strategic position to balance between different powerful countries. This change challenges India, which needs to adjust its strategy.

What is the new shift in Maldives' foreign policy?

1. **Historical Context:** Previous President Abdulla Yameen favored China, while his successor Ibrahim Solih adopted an "India First" policy. Now, Muizzu's decision reflects a new direction.
2. **Strategic Position of Maldives:** The Maldives, with its critical location in the Indian Ocean, is leveraging its position to form new alliances, as seen in its pivot towards Turkey.
3. **Geopolitical Implications:** This shift highlights the changing dynamics in South Asian geopolitics, with smaller states like the Maldives playing major powers against each other for strategic advantages.

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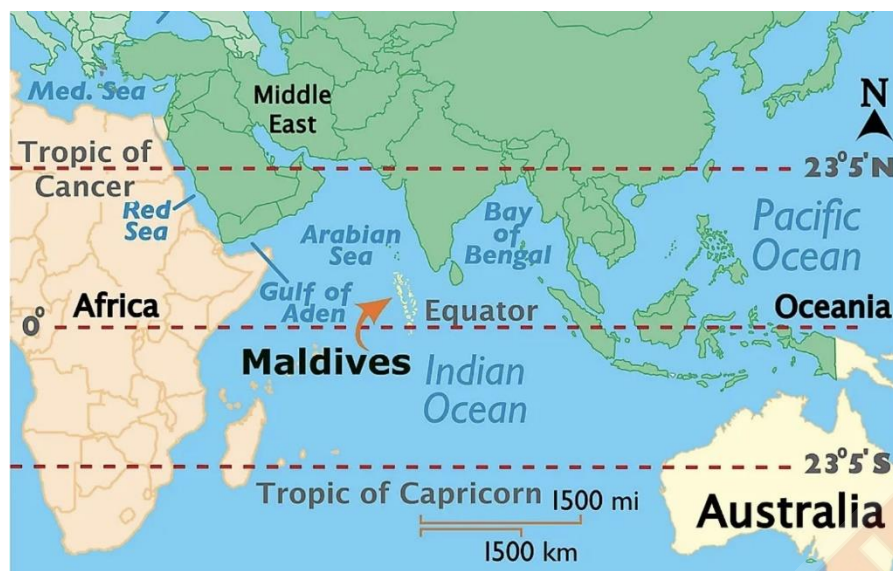
Figure 1.Source: World Atlas

For more information on **India- Maldives relations,** read here.

Why is Turkey's role important?

Turkey's Multi-dimensional Role: Turkey is broadening is incluence due to its strategic location at the crossroads of Europe, Asia, and the Middle East and NATO membership. It is involved in strengthening its influence in Middle east, Asia and Africa. This is evident in Turkey's deepening relations with Pakistan and his stance on issues like Kashmir, as well as in the Maldives' recent choice to make Turkey the destination for President Muizzu's first official visit.

What are the implications for India?

1. **Strategic challenge:** The Maldives' position in the Indian Ocean is crucial for major powers, including India, for controlling sea lines of communication. Maldives foreign policy shift could impact India's strategic interests.
2. **Potential for Regional Instability:** India needs to be wary of the potential destabilization in the region due to Turkey's rising influence. It is because Turkey is closer to other regional players like Pakistan.

What should be done?

1. **Acknowledging Small States' Agency:** India should recognize the growing influence and strategic leverage of smaller nations like the Maldives. It's important for India to remain patiently engaged, leveraging its geographical proximity and historical ties.
2. **Engagement in Domestic Politics:** Understanding and involving itself in the internal political dynamics of the Maldives is crucial for India.
3. **Collaborating with Gulf Nations:** To counter Turkey's influence in the Maldives, India could collaborate with Gulf countries like Saudi Arabia and the UAE.
4. **Expanding Strategic Outreach:** India should look to broaden its foreign policy reach beyond South Asia. Actively engaging in regions like the Middle East and Central Asia could serve as a counterweight to Turkey's growing influence.

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Topic: Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests

On the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework- IPEF agreement: India has played its cards quite well

News: The article discusses India signing the Supply Chain Resilience Agreement of the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF) to diversify trade and reduce dependence on China. It also highlights the IPEF's challenges, such as limited market access and internal conflicts among member countries.

What is the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF)?

The IPEF was started in May 2022 by the United States along with 13 countries including Australia, India, and Japan. This group represents about 40% of the global GDP and 28% of world trade. The IPEF focuses on **four areas:** trade, supply chains, clean energy, and creating a clean economy. It's unique because member **countries can choose which of these areas they want to be involved** in, without needing to commit to all four. This flexibility sets the IPEF apart from other international agreements. India had joined Pillars II to IV of IPEF while it has an observer status in Pillar-I.

What are the key outcomes of the 3rd IPEF Ministerial Meeting?

The 3rd Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) Ministerial Meeting in San Francisco produced significant outcomes:

1. **Supply Chain Agreement:** Signed in San Francisco, this first-of-its-kind agreement aims to enhance the resilience and responsiveness of supply chains.
2. **Clean Energy, Decarbonisation and Infrastructure:** Commitment to accelerate clean energy technologies and decarbonize economies, supporting sustainable livelihoods and aligning with Paris Agreement goals.
3. **Trade Pillar:** Progress has been made towards a mutually beneficial outcome that emphasizes strong labor standards and fair trade.
4. **IPEF Critical Minerals Dialogue:** Launched to foster closer collaboration on strengthening IPEF critical mineral supply chains and boosting regional economic competitiveness.
5. **Financing Initiatives:** Emphasis on mobilizing financing for supply chain resilience and sustainable development.
6. **Future Meetings:** Plans for an annual ministerial-level IPEF Council from 2024 and biennial leaders' meetings.

What challenges does the IPEF face?

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1. **US Domestic Politics and Trade Barriers:** The United States, despite advocating for free trade, has been implementing trade subsidies and erecting trade barriers in the name of quality, labor, and environmental standards. This creates a challenge for IPEF, as the US's own policies might contradict the framework's objectives.
2. **Concerns about the Stability:** The scrapping of the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) by former US President Donald Trump adds to the skepticism around the IPEF. This past action raises concerns about the stability and commitment of the US towards such international trade agreements.
3. **Differing Member Interests**: The diverse interests of IPEF member countries can lead to conflicts, making it difficult to reach a consensus, particularly on trade issues. This challenge became evident during the recent San Francisco dialogue, when members failed to reach an agreement on the trade pillar, resulting in its deferment.

What is the significance of IPEF for India?

1. **Counterbalancing China's Influence:** Through the IPEF, India is diversifying its trade and supply chains, reducing its dependency on China. This strategic move not only improves India's supply stability but also serves as a countermeasure to China's growing regional influence.
2. **Economic Growth:** The IPEF, representing about 40% of global GDP, opens up significant new trade and economic opportunities for India.
3. **Strategic Positioning**: Participation in IPEF strengthens India's position as a reliable partner in regional supply chains, boosting its role in global value chains.
4. **Navigating Geopolitical Challenges:** India's involvement in IPEF helps it manage complex geopolitical dynamics, such as the Ukraine-Russia conflict, while maintaining beneficial relationships and economic interests

GS Paper 3

Subject: Indian Economy

Topic: Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development and employment

On Currency in Circulation – Cash questions

News: The article discusses the issue of currency in circulation increasing in India despite a significant growth in digital payments at the same time.

What is the status of digital payments in India?

One of the most significant developments of recent years is the widespread adoption of digital payments. Facilitated by the Unified Payments Interface, **between 2016-17 and 2022-23**, digital payments expanded at a **CAGR of 51% in volume** terms, and **CAGR of 27% in value**.

What are the benefits of using digital payments?

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1. **Instant and convenient mode of payment:** Unlike cash, money can be instantaneously transferred to the beneficiary's account using digital modes like using mobile number or easy-to-remember virtual payment address (email-like address).
2. **Enhanced financial inclusion:** People who may have been deterred by the time, and travelling cost involved in physically accessing a bank outlet can now conveniently access the bank account digitally and get various benefits of being part of the formal banking system.
3. **Increased transparency in government system:** Earlier government cash transfers were subject to "leakage" and "ghost" (fake) recipients. Now, benefits are directly transferred to target beneficiary's account through digital modes of payments.
4. **Safe and secure:** Recipients of cash payments are vulnerable to theft. Digital payments are secure as multiple levels of authentication are required for making transactions.
5. **Formalisation of Economy:** Unlike cash payments, digital payments automatically establish a user's financial footprint. This leads to formalisation of the economy because of increased access to Financial Services, Reduction in informal Cash Transactions, ensuring Tax Compliance, etc.

However, despite the adoption of digital payments, demand for cash, as reflected by Currency in Circulation, has also been growing.

What is meant by Currency in Circulation (CiC)?

Currency in circulation is the value of all the banknotes and coins that a country's monetary authority has issued, minus the amount that has been removed from circulation. It is a key part of a country's money supply.

What is the status of currency circulation in India?

The demand for cash increased significantly during the time of COVID-19 pandemic. In 2020-21, CiC increased by 16.6% of GDP, against an annual average of 12.7% during the past decade.
In 202122, this has come down to 13.2% of GDP.
Notably, CiC is higher than the 11.5-12% of GDP in the pre-demonetisation period.
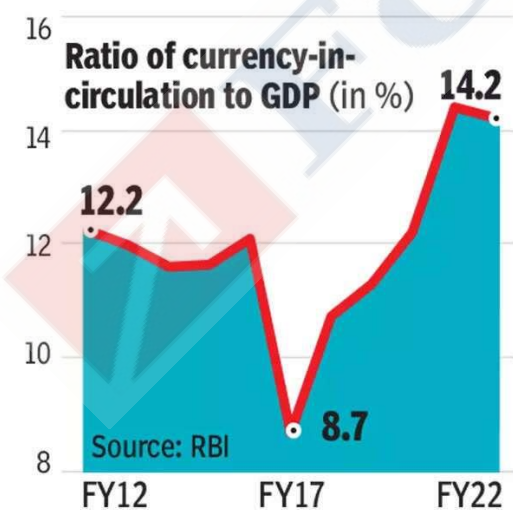
Figure 2.Source: Times of India.

What are the factors influencing the increasing demand for cash in the economy?

1. **Disruption caused by the Pandemic:** This may have led to a behavioural changes with people now keeping more cash to deal with uncertain situations.
2. **Growing Informalisation of the Workforce:** The informal sector depends on cash for settlements, which may be driving the demand. Higher CiC may be an indication of the growing informalisation of the workforce.
3. **Higher Inflation:** The rise can also be attributed to higher inflation in recent years. CiC tends to grow during episodes of high inflation (since it necessitates more spending).
4. **Direct benefits received digitally but used as cash:** The benefits are transferred through digital modes, but their actual usage is in cash because of a variety of factors (such as village shopkeepers not having the option of digital payment).
5. **Tax Evasion and Black Money:** It is possible that cash is still being used in large transactions to avoid taxes in sectors such as real estate. Recent reports of cash seizure, especially

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at the time of elections, suggest that illicit cash is still being generated in the system.

On India's inclusion in Global Bond Index – Caution: The watch word for bond index inclusion

News: The article discusses the pros and cons of India's recent inclusion in Global Bond Index.

JPMorgan announced in September that India would be included in its Global Bond Index **GBI-EM Global Index suite** starting 28 June 2024. However, neither RBI nor the Centre has been overly enthusiastic about it.

What are Global Bond Indices?

Global bond indices include emerging debt markets that closely monitor local currency bonds that are issued by governments of various developing nations.
When a country's government bonds are added to one or all of these indices, they can get a safe entry into the buy zone of foreign portfolio investors. This enhances the liquidity and ownership base of the bonds.
One such global bond index is the **JPMorgan Govt Bond Index-Emerging Markets (GBI-EM).**

What are the pros of India's inclusion in a major global bond index?

1. **Expansion of investor base for Government Security:** An expansion of the investor base for Govt-Securities will improve the govt's fiscal situation.
2. **Strengthening of Rupee:** Appreciation of Indian Rupee due to an influx of dollars in the economy (the dollar will require conversion to the rupee, thereby increasing its demand).
3. **Increased Capital Inflows:** With India's inclusion in the index, additional inflows to the tune of $20-25 billion are expected.
4. **Lower Borrowing Costs:** Inclusion in global indices will reduce bond yields and can lead to lower borrowing costs for the Indian government and corporates.
5. **Less Risk:** Investments expected are in rupee-denominated securities and hence not that risky (compared to dollar debt).

India has sufficient forex reserves and RBI has a track record of handling large-scale inflows and large-scale outflows to manage any associated risks. However, the move requires close consideration due to the following reasons.

What are the cons of India's inclusion in a major global bond index?

1. **Risk of Capital Flight:** According to the RBI Governor, there are lots of passive investors who are mainly influenced by the weightage in the index. Any reduction in India's weightage, for reason such as, say, the government's refusal to toe a line laid down by major Western powers, could see an exodus of funds from the country.
2. **Risky dependency on foreign funds:** The risk of being held hostage to the whims of foreign funds (often subject to political pressures, as we saw in the context of Russia's ouster from Western capital markets).
3. **Pressure on Forex Market:** As holdings will be converted into foreign currency for withdrawal from India, enormous pressure will be built on our relatively thin forex markets.
4. **Depreciation of the Rupee:** A sudden bulk demand for dollars would put downward pressure on the rupee, resulting in its depreciation. This will have further implications such as:
   a. **Inflation** (as oil imports become costlier).
   b. Increase in **current account deficit** (as import bills swell).

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c. Increase in **fiscal deficit** (as the government is compelled to subsidize petroleum products that become costlier).

Apart from this, reasons given against a move to more capital account convertibility apply to GBI inclusion as well. This includes factors such as:

1. **Vulnerability to External Shocks:** It makes a country more susceptible to volatile international financial flows. Sudden inflows or outflows of capital can destabilize the economy, leading to currency volatility, financial crises, and macroeconomic instability.
2. **Impact on Domestic Industries:** A sudden influx of foreign capital can impact domestic industries. For example, it may lead to the appreciation of the domestic currency, making exports more expensive and imports cheaper, potentially harming local industries.

Thus, India should approach this inclusion with caution, taking the risks into consideration.

On Currency Substitution – Can dollarisation save an economy?

News: The article discusses the possible advantages as well as the challenges of currency substitution (dollarisation by Argentina, in this case).

Background:

Javier Milei, the recent winner of Argentina's presidential election, has plans to replace the country's currency of peso with the dollar **(dollarisation)**. Argentina has been suffering under inflation levels greater than 100%, high rates of poverty and declining purchasing power.

What is dollarisation?

Dollarisation is the term for when US Dollar is used in addition to or instead of the domestic currency of another country. It is an example of **currency substitution**. Dollarization usually happens when a country's own currency loses its usefulness as a medium of exchange, due to hyperinflation or instability.

What are the benefits of dollarisation?

1. **Tackles Hyperinflation:** If the domestic currency is replaced by dollars, the money supply in the economy can no longer be controlled by vested political interests who can increase spending (and hence the money supply) for political ends (such as unsustainable freebies).
The rise of prices would be forced to moderate since consumers would no longer be able to access currency easily, thus slowing down consumption demand.
2. **Accelerate Growth:** This can be achieved through:
a. **Increase Investments & Exports:** To access dollars through foreign trade and/or capital inflows, the economy will have to focus on increasing exports and easing conditions for the movement of foreign capital.
b. **Ensure Financial Stability:** The stable value of the dollar ensures that economic agents, both foreign and domestic, would be able to make long-term plans regarding economic activity.
c. **Loss of the Ability to Manipulate Currency:** It would ensure the government resorts to productive methods to increase exports, instead of merely artificially depreciating the currency.

What are the challenges with dollarisation?

1. **Loss of the ability to control money supply:** The adoption of dollars implies that the economy loses its hold on monetary policy (controlling the money supply in the economy).

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For instance, **Greece**, in the wake of the **Eurozone crisis** (the struggle faced by Eurozone countries in paying off debts they had accumulated over decades), was left without the ability to control both fiscal and monetary policy.

2. **Loss of the ability to depreciate one's currency:** On the foreign trade front, countries would no longer be able to take recourse to depreciation of currency to boost exports.

3. **Not enough on its own:** For instance, after dollarisation, the Ecuadorian economy showed considerable progress on economic indicators. However, dollarisation was not the sole reason for success. Policy decisions such as new contracts with oil exploration companies, social spending, restructuring of debt, etc. played an important role in its economic success.

What should be done?

The achievement of economic prosperity is a complex affair that requires sustained engagement with policy-making. Thus, dollarisation, if used well in conjunction with smart domestic policy, can offer a route to economic success.

Migrant Workers in India - The hypocrisy of our concern for workers trapped in Uttarkashi tunnel

News: The article highlights the difficulties faced by migrant workers in India, who are vital for development yet frequently overlooked. It uses the tragic incident of a collapsed tunnel in Uttarakhand as an example of their dangerous working conditions and societal neglect.

Who are the migrant workers in India?

Migrant workers in India are people who move within the country for work. This movement includes rural-to-urban migration, rural-to-rural, within and between states, and circular or seasonal relocations.

They typically come from poor states like Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and Jharkhand, seeking jobs in richer regions such as Kerala, Maharashtra, Punjab, and Karnataka.

About 35-40% of Indians are part of this internal migration. Their migration is influenced by the low level of formal sector employment in India, which is around 22% as per the Periodic Labour Force Survey of 2021-2022.

What challenges do migrant workers face?

1. **Unsafe Working Conditions:** Instances like the Uttarakhand tunnel incident underscore the risks they face, including building collapses and industrial accidents due to inadequate safety measures.
2. **Inadequate Legal Protection:** The only law addressing their needs, the Interstate Migrant Workmen Act of 1979, is poorly implemented. This leaves them vulnerable to exploitation and neglect.
3. **Discrimination and Social Exclusion:** They are often treated as outsiders and face discrimination in their host cities. There are no policies specifically designed to protect their rights and well-being.
4. **Poor Living Conditions:** Migrant workers frequently live in substandard housing and lack access to basic healthcare and education for their children.

What are the government initiatives for migrant workers in India?

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1. **National Database of Unorganised Workers (NDUW):** Aims to create a comprehensive database with Aadhaar-seeded information like name, occupation, and skills, enhancing employability and social security access.
2. **Schemes for Welfare**: Includes Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyan, Pradhan Mantri SVANIDHI Scheme, Aatm Nirbhar Bharat, Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana, One Nation One Ration Card, and financial assistance for construction workers.
3. **All India Survey on Migrant Workers**: Conducted by the Labour Bureau for detailed insights into migrant workers' conditions.
4. **Education and Scholarships:** Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan provides free education to children of migrant workers. Scholarships are offered through the National Scholarship Portal.
5. **Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code (OSH Code) 2020:** This code replaces the Inter-state Migrant Workmen Act (1979), ensuring better working conditions, wages, and social security for migrant workers.

What should be done?

1. **Develop Comprehensive Policies:** Create specific policies addressing the unique needs of migrant workers, including healthcare, housing, and education for their children.
2. **Enhance Safety Measures:** Implement stricter safety protocols in workplaces, especially in high-risk environments like construction sites, to prevent incidents like the Uttarakhand tunnel collapse.
3. **Build Thoughtful Cities:** Develop urban areas that prioritize the dignity and needs of migrant workers. Move beyond just "smart cities" to create spaces that are accommodating and respectful of those who migrate for work.

Political parties promising "freebies" - What elite critics of freebies don't understand

News: The article discusses the trend of Indian political parties promising expensive welfare schemes, or "freebies," during elections. This practice is criticized for being financially irresponsible and potentially harmful to state finances. The article also explores why parties rely on such tactics.

What are freebies?

According to the Reserve Bank of India report in 2022, freebies are defined as items or services provided free of charge as a public welfare measure. They can be differentiated from broader welfare goods, like health and education, but such a distinction poses significant challenge.

What are the reasons for the use of freebies by political parties?

1. **Freebies as welfare measures**: Political parties consider freebies as part of welfare measures. As such, they view it as a part of their political mandate and include it in their election manifesto.
2. **Voter appeal:** Freebies like cash transfers and smartphones are attractive to voters. They offer immediate and tangible benefits, making them effective for winning support.
3. **Simplification of messaging:** In the complex arena of electoral politics, freebies provide a simple, easily communicable message. Compared to nuanced policy discussions, direct benefits are straightforward to explain and understand.
4. **Show quick results:** Implementing long-term developmental projects is complex and time-consuming. Freebies, on the other hand, are easier to deliver and show quick results, which is advantageous for parties in power seeking to demonstrate their effectiveness.

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5. **Freebies are not a form of corrupt practice under the Representation of People's Act:** In S. Subramaniam Balaji vs. State of Tamil Nadu case, the Supreme Court ruled that political parties are within their rights to make electoral promises, including the distribution of consumer goods. The court determined that making such promises does not constitute corrupt practice. This has further supported the arguments made by political parties in favour of freebies.

Why are freebies harmful to the nation?

1. **Financial Strain on State Finances:** Offering freebies can lead to fiscal irresponsibility. It strains state budgets, as highlighted by RBI. This may even hinder the government's ability to provide basic amenities.
2. **Undermining Party Platforms:** Excessive reliance on freebies can erode the ideological framework of political parties. It shifts focus from comprehensive policy-making to short-term benefits, weakening the party's foundational principles.
3. **Creating Unsustainable Expectations:** The trend of offering larger benefits with each election creates unsustainable expectations among voters. This cycle can lead to a fiscal race to the bottom, where parties continuously promise more without regard for long-term fiscal health.
4. **Reducing Credibility:** Overemphasis on freebies can diminish a party's credibility. It suggests a lack of substantial policies and hence, reliance on short-term tactics for voter appeal.

State debt to GDP ratio in 2021-2022

State	Ratio
Punjab	53.3
Rajasthan	39.5
Bihar	38.6
Kerala	37
UP	34.9
Bengal	34.4
Jharkhand	33
Andhra	32.5
MP	31.3
Haryana	29.4
TN	27.4
Karnataka	26.6
Chhattisgarh	26.2
Telengana	24.7
Gujarat	19
Odisha	18.8
Maharashtra	17.9

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Freebies announced by states in 2022-23

State	As % of GSDP	As % of revenue receipts	As % of own tax revenue
Andhra Pradesh	2.1%	14.1%	30.30%
Bihar	0.1%	0.6%	2.70%
Haryana	0.1%	0.6%	0.90%
Jharkhand	1.7%	8.0%	26.70%
Kerala	0.0%	0.0%	0.10%
Madhya Pradesh	1.6%	10.8%	28.80%
Punjab	2.7%	17.8%	45.40%
Rajasthan	0.6%	3.9%	8.60%
West Bengal	1.1%	9.5%	23.80%

What should be done?

1. **Fiscal Responsibility:** The Election Commission of India has proposed that political parties disclose the financial impact of their manifesto promises. This will enable evaluation of such freebies against their trade-offs to ensure fiscal health and avoid straining budgets.
2. **Clear Distinction:** Make a clear distinction between what constitutes a public good and a freebie. This distinction is crucial to avoid misuse of public funds for short-term electoral gains.
3. **Attitudinal change: Eradication of unnecessary freebie culture requires an attitudinal change** in the masses. This warrants delivery of robust political and moral education at all levels.

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4. **Governance Focus:** Focus on governance and execution of policies that offer long-term benefits, such as infrastructure development and job creation, rather than short-term giveaways.

For more information on **Freebies,** read here.

Topic: Inclusive growth and issues arising from it

India's economic growth and inequality- A $5 trillion economy, but for whom?

News: The article discusses India's economic growth and inequality. It compares India's situation to Japan's economic history, highlighting issues like wealth distribution and social challenges. It questions if India's growth will benefit all citizens or just a few.

What is India's current economic plan?

1. **Aim for a $5 Trillion Economy:** India's goal is to become the world's third-largest economy by 2028 with a GDP target of $5 trillion.
2. **Emphasis on Advanced Sectors:** The Indian government has identified key sectors for growth, including the digital economy, fintech, energy transition, and addressing climate change.
3. **Reforms and Incentives:** The government has implemented reforms like GST, the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, and reduced corporate taxes. It also promotes initiatives like Make in India, Start-Up India, and Production Linked Incentives.
4. **Focus on Inclusive Growth:** The government's plan is anchored around the concept of "inclusive growth," ensuring the economic development benefits a wide range of citizens.

What are India's economic challenges?

1. **Significant Wealth Inequality:** In India, the richest 1% own about 41% of the country's wealth, while the poorest 50% have only a 3% share.
2. **High Tax Burden on Poor Population:** Around 64% of the total Goods and Services Tax (GST) is paid by the bottom half of the population, while the top 10% contribute only 3%.
3. **Limited Benefits from Economic Growth:** Despite India's push for a $5 trillion economy, most benefits seem skewed towards the affluent. This is reflected in India's low inequality index score of 21.9, indicating a large disparity in wealth distribution and economic gains.
4. **Challenges in Capital, Productivity, and Labor:** India's economic growth faces hurdles due to uneven capital distribution, questionable educational and skill levels, and nascent digital literacy.
5. **Gap in Per Capita Income:** India's per capita income, a key indicator of well-being, is low. In 2022, India ranked 149th among 194 countries, with a per capita income of $2,400, far below that of countries like Japan ($34,000) and China ($13,000).
6. **Continued Need for Food Security:** The extension of the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Ann Yojna until 2028 underscores the persistent challenge of food security in India.

What can India learn from Japan's experience?

1. **Importance of Economic Diplomacy:** When Japan dropped to the world's third largest economy, it adopted ego-free economic diplomacy. By embracing China as a key trading partner, Japan demonstrated the benefits of positive international relations for economic progression.

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2. **Balancing Industrial Growth with Social Stability:** Japan's transition to a high-value industrial economy played a role in the emergence of **hikikomori phenomenon**, where individuals isolate themselves from society. This phenomenon is characterized by people staying indoors for long periods, often in their homes. This situation underscores the importance of adopting a balanced approach to industrialization, one that takes into account its effects on personal and social relationships.

3. **Inclusive Economic Strategies:** Japan's experience emphasizes the importance of growth strategies that include all societal segments. Despite facing social issues and rank demotion, Japan's high per capita income, at $34,000, compared to China suggests a relatively broad distribution of economic benefits. This highlights the need for policies that ensure economic gains reach beyond just the wealthy or technologically advanced sectors.

Topic: Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc.

From fossil fuels to cleaner energy - Clean energy share in India and its States' electricity mix

News: The upcoming U.N. climate summit in Dubai highlights the varying progress and challenges faced by different countries in transitioning to clean energy.

What is the status of Indian states in their transition towards clean energy?

The share of clean and fossil fuel sources in power generation of select Indian States between 2019 and 2022 are:

Gujarat: Reducing fossil fuel usage from 80% in 2019 to 60% in 2022.
Rajasthan: Like Gujarat, it has seen a decline in fossil fuel use.
Karnataka and Himachal Pradesh: Leaders among the top 15 power-producing states, with a higher share of clean energy.
Tamil Nadu: Approaching a 50:50 clean-to-fossil fuel ratio, but progress has stagnated recently.
Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, Bihar: High dependence on fossil fuels (over 90%), with no significant change in the last four years.
Odisha and Punjab: Contrarily, these states have seen an increase in fossil fuel usage in recent years.

What government initiatives are in place to promote clean energy?

To promote clean energy, the government has implemented several key initiatives are **a**)**100% FDI**- under the automatic route encourages global investment, **b) Waiver of ISTS Charges**- Exempting solar and wind power projects from Inter State Transmission System charges if commissioned by June 30, 2025, c**) Establishing Renewable Purchase Obligation (RPO)** trajectory up to 2022 ensures a consistent demand for renewable energy, **d) Payment Security Mechanisms**- Mandating dispatch against Letter of Credit or advance payment ensures timely payments to renewable energy generators.

For more information read here

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On Indian Railways' Finances – For a railway business plan

News: This article discusses the reasons for the poor revenue of Indian Railways and its various outcomes. Indian Railways loses money on the bulk of its passenger services. According to the Railways' method of accounting, it loses a rupee for every rupee it gets from passengers.

What is the distribution of Indian Railways' revenue?

1. **Earnings from goods traffic:** Out of Indian Railways' ₹2.4 lakh crore revenue that it earned in the financial year 2022-23, the freight revenue was ₹1.62 lakh crore (~67.5%).
2. **Earnings from passenger traffic:** Its passenger revenue reached ₹63,300 crore in 2022-23 (~26%).
3. **Other earnings:** These include earnings from charges from retiring rooms and rest houses, rent from land leasing, bridge tolls, receipts from catering department, etc.

How does Railways try to increase its revenue from the passenger segment?

According to the author, Indian Railways increases fares through tricks such as:

1. Reclassifying a train from express to superfast (for which the fare is higher)
2. Reducing the number of coaches for cheaper classes of travel and providing more coaches for higher categories.

What are the outcomes of the Railways' poor revenue from the passenger segment?

1. **Increase in Freight Charges:** To offset the losses on its passenger service, Railways pushes up freight rates for goods transport (**Cross-Subsidization Policy**). This is why Railways has lost out on goods traffic to roadways. Railways accounts for only a quarter of the total goods traffic and is restricted to mostly bulk items like coal and iron ore.
2. **Investment fuelled by Debt:** With expenditure almost equal to the annual revenue, most of the massive investments being done has necessarily been funded by borrowings and increasingly through support from the Budget. This adversely impacts the government's fiscal position and pushes the burden on the public.
3. **Lack of Expansion in the Passenger Segment:** Railways has no financial incentive to increase passenger transport (since it loses money in this segment). Freight traffic has grown 40 per cent in a decade, while passenger traffic has been static.
4. The situation is further aggravated due to a **growing pension bill.** With revenues not growing as much as required, the pension bill (increasing due to periodic Pay Commissions) is eating up 23% of its revenue.

This has necessitated the requirement of a new business plan for Indian Railways, with a new pricing plan.

Train accidents in India – Track Changes

News: The article discusses recent train accidents in India, highlighting the increasing number of such incidents due to pressure on the railway system. It also mentions efforts to improve safety, like the Kavach system, and suggests a need for better maintenance and regulatory measures.

Background:

In recent years, India's railways have seen a decline in overall consequential accidents, but the severity of incidents remains a concern. For instance, the first half of this financial year witnessed 20 serious accidents,

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including the Buxar derailment and the Vizianagaram collision. This trend, compared to the 48 consequential accidents in the entire previous year, suggests a need for ongoing and enhanced safety measures in the railway network.

Train accidents across India are broadly in decline

■ Derailments ■ Collisions ■ Unmanned level crossing ■ Manned level crossing ■ Fire ■ Other

Guardian graphic. Source: Dhaval Desai at Observer Research Foundation. Note: accidents involving loss of life, injury, loss to railway property or interruption to rail traffic above specified Indian Railways thresholds
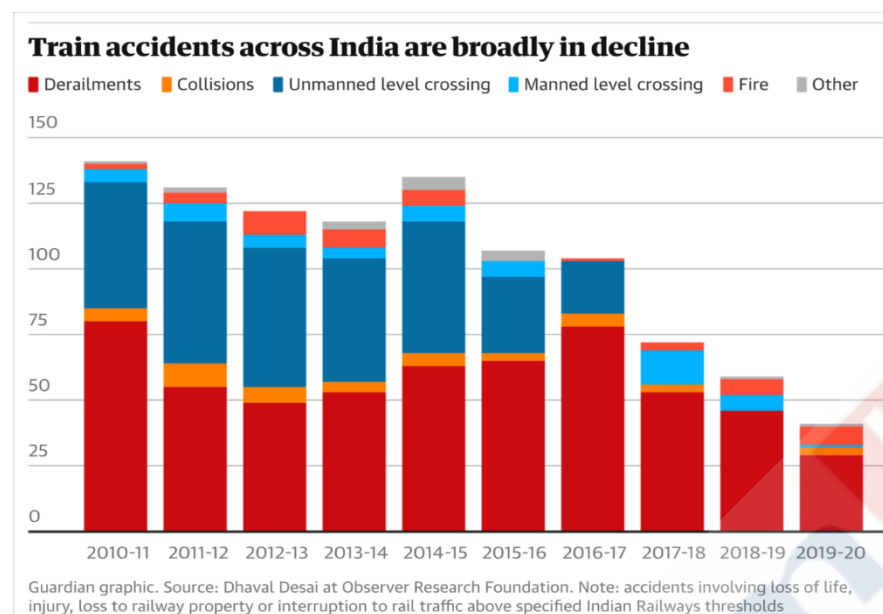
What are the reasons for the increase in train accidents in India?

1. **Increased Traffic:** Post-COVID-19, there's a 30% rise in consequential train accidents due to higher passenger and freight traffic.

2. **Maintenance Challenges**: Pressure on punctuality leads to reduced maintenance blocks. For instance, the Buxar accident in October was linked to a broken rail, potentially preventable with better maintenance.

3. **Equipment Failures:** There's an increase in equipment failures, such as wagon detachments and signal issues. In the first half of this financial year, these failures were higher compared to the previous year.

4. **Human Errors:** Long working hours and lack of accountability contribute to accidents caused by human error.

5. **Slow Capacity Expansion**: Delayed infrastructure upgrades strain the system. For example, the Bahanaga Bazar accident in Odisha was due to faulty wiring and signaling.

6. **Incomplete Safety Systems:** The Kavach (Train Collision Avoidance System), though promising, covers only 1% of the rail network, insufficient to significantly reduce accidents due to human errors.

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EQUIPMENT FAILURE ON THE RISE
Causes of accidents

■ 2021-22 ■ 2022-23 ■ 2023-24 (up to Sept)

COACH DETACHMENT
51 | 41 | 41

RAIL
2,286 | 1,620 | 371

OVERHEAD EQUIPMENT
1,976 | 1,808 | 1,049

WAGON
2,059 | 2,020 | 1,364

LOCOMOTIVE
16,969 | 18,231 | 9,388

SIGNAL
65,149 | 51,888 | 34,417

Source: Indian Railways

What initiatives have been taken to address railway safety in India?

1. **Railway Safety Fund:** The Rashtriya Rail Sanraksha Kosh (RRSK) was set up with a corpus of ₹1 trillion for five years starting 2017-18. It focuses on replacing, renewing, and upgrading critical safety assets. By 2021-22, a gross expenditure of ₹1.08 trillion was made on RRSK works.

2. **Kavach System**: Indian Railways introduced Kavach, an indigenous automatic train protection system. It's designed to prevent accidents due to signal passing and over-speeding.

3. **Maintenance and Renewals:** The railway ministry plans railway maintenance in advance. By November 2023, around 3000 kilometers of track renewals were completed, meeting 66% of the annual target.

4. **Audit reports and recommendations:** The Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) periodically conducts audits of Indian Railways, identifying shortcomings and making recommendations to address safety concerns.

For more information read here

What should be done?

1. **Increase Accountability and Training:** Address human error by enforcing stricter accountability and providing better training. For instance, the Andra Pradesh collision due to signal overshooting highlights the need for better crew training.

2. **Establish a Safety Regulatory Body:** This would oversee safety standards, especially with the increasing inclusion of private operators and new high-speed corridors.

3. **Leverage Technology and AI:** Adopt more advanced technologies and artificial intelligence to reduce human error and enhance overall safety operations.

For more information, read here.

Subject: Agriculture

Significance of factors of Technology for agriculture- Producing more from less

News: This article discusses how technology has transformed agriculture in India. It mentions four key factors of technology: genetics, crop nutrition, crop protection, and agronomic interventions. These advancements have led to higher agricultural productivity, reducing the reliance on factors like land and labor. The article highlights the significant role of technology in India's agricultural growth.

What are the Traditional Factors of Agricultural Production?

Agriculture originally depended on four key factors: land, water, labor, and energy.

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1. **Land**: Initially, farming's growth relied heavily on the extent of land available. For instance, in India, agricultural growth of 2.8% per year from 1950-51 to 1961-62 was largely due to an increase in cultivated land, from 118.75 lakh to 135.40 lakh hectares. (as per NITI Aayog paper)
2. **Water**: Water's availability, crucial for land quality, varied across regions. The fertility of agricultural land was directly influenced by soil fertility and water availability.
3. **Labor**: Traditional farming depended significantly on human labor. More farmhands meant more production.
4. **Energy**: Before modern machinery, energy in farms primarily came from bullocks, used for plowing fields and other tasks, demonstrating the reliance on animal power in traditional agriculture.

How do the factors of technology transform Agriculture?
Modern agriculture integrates four technological factors: genetics, crop nutrition, crop protection, and agronomic interventions.

1. **Genetics**: The development of new, high-yielding seed varieties was crucial. These seeds, bred by scientists such as Henry Beachell, Gurdev Singh Khush, and others. They incorporated dwarfing genes that enabled the plants to support heavy, fertilizer-fed grains without falling over. This genetic innovation was fundamental in transforming agricultural productivity.
2. **Crop Nutrition:** The transition to chemical fertilizers marked a significant change. For example, synthetic fertilizers like Urea (46% nitrogen) and di-ammonium phosphate (18% nitrogen, 46% phosphorus) provided nutrients more efficiently than traditional farmyard manure.
3. **Crop Protection:** Advances in crop protection chemicals ensured that gains from improved genetics and nutrition were fully realized. These products protected crops from pests, diseases, and weeds, contributing to higher yields.
4. **Agronomic Interventions:** Mechanization (like tractors) and water-saving technologies (such as drip irrigation) replaced traditional labor and energy sources, enhancing farming efficiency and productivity. Practices like intercropping also contributed to more effective land use.

What is the Impact of Technology on Farming?

1. **Higher Yields with Less Land:** Despite a modest increase in farmland (just 3.3% between 1961-62 to 2019-20), technological advances have significantly boosted production.
2. **Growth in Agricultural Sector:** The agricultural growth rate in India from 2005-06 to 2021-22 reached 3.7% annually, the highest recorded in different phases. This increase is attributed to the faster adoption of productivity-enhancing technologies, alongside improvements in rural infrastructure like roads, electricity, and irrigation.
3. **Improved Efficiency:** The integration of technology in farming has led to more output from the same or even fewer resources. This is a shift from traditional input-based growth to efficiency-driven production.

What are the Government initiatives to modernize agriculture?

1. **National e-Governance Plan in Agriculture (NeGP-A):** This program funds state and UT projects that employ advanced technologies like AI, Machine Learning, Robotics, Drones, Data Analytics, and Blockchain for developing agricultural solutions.
2. **Digital Public Infrastructure for Agriculture:** This open-source initiative aims to provide farmers with information services for crop planning, health, input access, credit, insurance, crop estimation, and market intelligence. It includes establishing core registries for farmers, geo-referencing of village maps, and crop sown registries. A pilot digital crop survey has been launched in 12 states.
3. **Sub Mission on Agricultural Mechanization (SMAM):** Promotes farm mechanization, benefiting small and marginal farmers through high-tech equipment and awareness programs.

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4. **Technological Initiatives under Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana:** Includes Yield Estimation System based on Technology (YES-Tech), Weather Information Network Data Systems (WINDS) portal, and the AIDE/Sahayak door-to-door enrollment app for crop insurance.
5. **ICAR Mobile Apps and Kisan Sarathi:** Offers over 100 mobile apps and a digital platform for agricultural information and advisories.

Subject: Environment

Topic: Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation

Transition to electric trucks - Fleet electrification to tackle urban pollution

News: This article discusses the severe air pollution problem in Indian cities, mainly caused by PM2.5 and PM10 pollution from trucks and construction. It emphasizes the need to transition to electric trucks, create green freight corridors, and attract private investment to tackle the pollution crisis.

Why is there a need to transition to electric trucks?

1. **Growing Truck Fleet:** About 9 lakh new trucks are added annually in India, increasing PM2.5 pollution. The existing fleet is already large, with 70 lakh trucks.
2. **High Fuel Consumption and Emissions:** Trucks consume over a quarter of India's oil imports and are responsible for over 90% of road transport CO_2 emissions.
3. **Electric Vehicles Penetration:** While electric vehicle use has crossed 6%, electric trucks are still limited, mainly due to cost and infrastructure challenges.
4. **Need for Decarbonization:** To meet the 2070 net zero target, decarbonizing the transport sector, especially through truck electrification, is crucial.

What are the steps taken by the government to facilitate the shift towards electric vehicles?

1. **FAME Schemes:** The Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Hybrid and Electric Vehicles initiative offers incentives for purchasing EVs and establishing charging stations.
2. **National Electric Mobility Mission Plan:** Launched in 2020, it targets having 30% electric vehicles on roads by 2030.
3. **Tax Incentives:** An additional tax deduction of INR 1.5 Lakh is provided for the interest on loans for electric vehicle purchases.
4. **Public Transport Enhancement:** Financial support is given for electric buses in cities like Delhi.
5. **Transformative Mobility Mission:** This focuses on the manufacturing of EVs, components, and batteries.
6. **NITI Aayog's Battery Manufacturing Subsidy:** Proposes a $4.6 billion subsidy to boost domestic lithium battery production.

What should be done to facilitate this transition?

1. **Address High Upfront Costs:** Tackle the issue of e-trucks being expensive (₹1.5 crore for electric vs. ₹40 lakh for diesel trucks) through subsidies or financial incentives.
2. **Accelerate E-Truck Adoption:** Increase the pace of transitioning to electric trucks, aiming beyond the 7,750 e-truck targets for 2030.

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3. **Public-Private Investment**: Mobilize funding by combining public and private investments, aiming for a high ratio of private to public funds.
4. **Expand Electric Rail Freight:** Utilize India's electrified rail freight more, as it currently covers only 20% of freight.
5. **Set Electrification Targets:** Establish clear targets for electrifying trucks, similar to what's being done for buses.
6. **Create Green Freight Corridors:** Designate specific highways as green corridors to demonstrate the effectiveness of e-trucks.
7. **Innovative Financing and Incentives:** Innovative financial tools, incentives for charging infrastructure, support for entrepreneurial initiatives, and a favorable regulatory environment can help achieve the essential breakthrough in India's truck electrification.

Terminology used

Particulate Matter (PM): It is a type of air pollution made up of tiny particles and droplets in the air. It's categorized mainly into two types: **a)** PM10- These particles are inhalable, with diameters of 10 micrometers or smaller. They come from sources like construction sites, unpaved roads, and fields. **b)** PM2.5- Even smaller, these fine particles have diameters of 2.5 micrometers or less. They can come from smokestacks, fires, and other similar sources.
PM, especially PM2.5, poses significant health risks. Due to their tiny size, these particles can penetrate deep into the lungs and even enter the bloodstream.

Climate-smart agriculture (CSA)- Need for climate-smart agriculture in India

News: The article discusses climate-smart agriculture (CSA) as a way to address climate change and improve farming. CSA helps increase farm productivity, adapt to climate changes, and reduce greenhouse gases. It's important for sustainable development, food security, and meeting global climate goals.

What is Climate-Smart Agriculture (CSA)?

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), CSA is an approach designed to transform and reorient agricultural systems to support sustainable development and secure food security in the face of climate change.
It focuses on 1) increasing agricultural productivity and incomes, 2) adapting and building resilience to climate change, and 3) reducing or removing greenhouse gases.
CSA includes various practices like water-smart (efficient water use), weather-smart (responding to weather

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changes), energy-smart (using energy efficiently), and carbon-smart (reducing carbon footprint) methods.
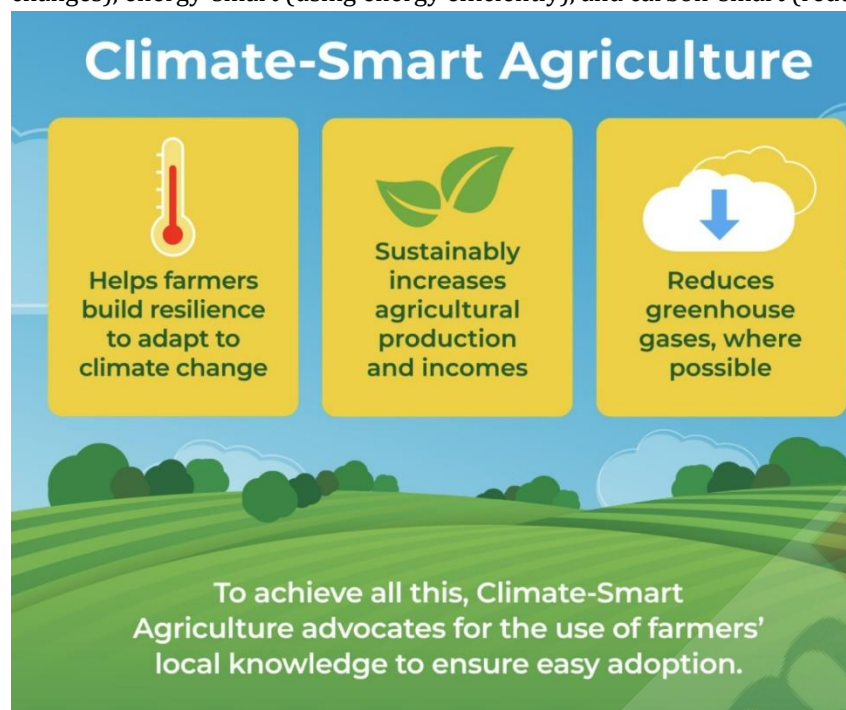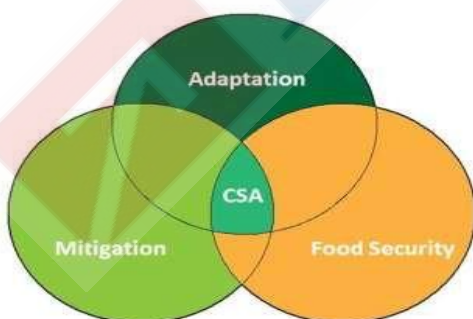

Figure 3.Source: FAO

What are the benefits of CSA?

1. **Increased Agricultural Productivity:** CSA sustainably boosts farm productivity; crucial as global food demand is projected to increase by 60% by 2050.

2. **Enhanced Adaptation to Climate Change:** CSA promotes crop diversification and integrates drought-resistant crops, increasing water efficiency.

3. **Greenhouse Gas Reduction:** CSA plays a crucial role in reducing greenhouse gases, which is vital considering agriculture contributed 17% to global emissions in 2018.

4. **Sustainable Food Security:** CSA contributes to long-term food security, which is essential in a world with a growing population and changing diets.

5. **Environmental Protection:** CSA ecosystem-based approach helps in coexisting croplands with wild areas, protecting native species and pollinators.

6. **Flexibility and Broad Application:** CSA is not a rigid set of rules but a flexible approach with a wide range of applications. This adaptability allows it to be effectively implemented in various agricultural contexts and regions.

7. **Socio-Economic Transformation:** CSA provides access to climate-resilient methods and information, greatly benefiting farmers, especially those in disadvantaged positions.

Figure 4.Source: FAO

What are the challenges of CSA?

1. **Novelty and Limited Scope:** CSA is relatively new, particularly in countries like India. For example, the scope of initiatives like precision farming is still limited.

2. **Localizing Responses:** Each region has unique climatic and agricultural conditions that require tailored approaches.

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3. **Balancing Economic and Environmental Goals:** Balancing the economic needs of farmers with environmental sustainability is complex and requires careful planning and support.

For more information on challenges of CSA read here

What initiatives have been taken to implement CSA?

Global Initiatives for CSA:
Sustainable Development Goals: CSA aligns with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, particularly in ending hunger and enhancing environmental management through sustainable agriculture.
Paris Agreement: CSA practices like agroforestry and carbon sequestration support the Paris Agreement's objective to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Initiatives in India:

National Action Plan on Climate Change: Emphasizes the role of climate-resilient agriculture in India's adaptation strategies.
Government Programs: Includes National Adaptation Fund for Climate Change, National Innovation on Climate Resilient Agriculture, and Soil Health Mission, focusing on sustainable farming practices.
Private Sector Involvement: Private companies and farmer-producer organizations are actively working towards CSA adoption in India.

For more information on Indian government initiatives, read here.

What should be done?

1. Increase efforts to educate farmers about CSA practices, especially in areas like India where these methods are still emerging.
2. Strengthen capacity-building programs to support the widespread adoption of CSA, including training and resource allocation.
3. Strengthen the collaboration between government initiatives and private sector efforts to ensure a cohesive approach towards CSA adoption and practice.

On solving the Air Pollution problem – Who is in charge of my 'air'?

News: The article discusses the various steps that can be taken to deal with the challenges of air pollution in India.
A detailed article on **Air Pollution** can be read here.
What should be done to deal with the challenges of air pollution issue in India?

1. **Real-Time Pollution Statistics:** A complete grid of air quality measurement stations is required across India; these stations need to work accurately, and their data needs to go out in real time.
2. **Research along with Data:** A vibrant research community is required, which puts out papers on the problem. This environment of facts and research will ensure evidence-based measures to deal with air pollution.
3. **Identifying the Sources of Pollution:** Specialized instruments are required to continuously monitor the air and break down the sources of pollution.
4. **Removing Harmful Policies:** The issue of stubble burning is a consequence of various bad policies in the agriculture/food domain. This includes an over-emphasis on cereals (through MSP and public

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procurement) and the shortening of the sowing window which compels farmers to burn stubble (Punjab Preservation of Subsoil Water Act, 2009).

5. **Tackling Jurisdictional Issues through Collaboration:** The problem of air quality is not limited to legal jurisdictions and thus requires collaboration between multiple governments beyond the state and national borders. For instance, around 30% of Indian Punjab's pollution originates in Pakistan. World Bank has identified 6 relevant regional airsheds for India, covering multiple urban, provincial, and national jurisdictions. 4 of the 6 span national borders. All authorities in a given airshed need to cooperate on data, research, and policy formulation.
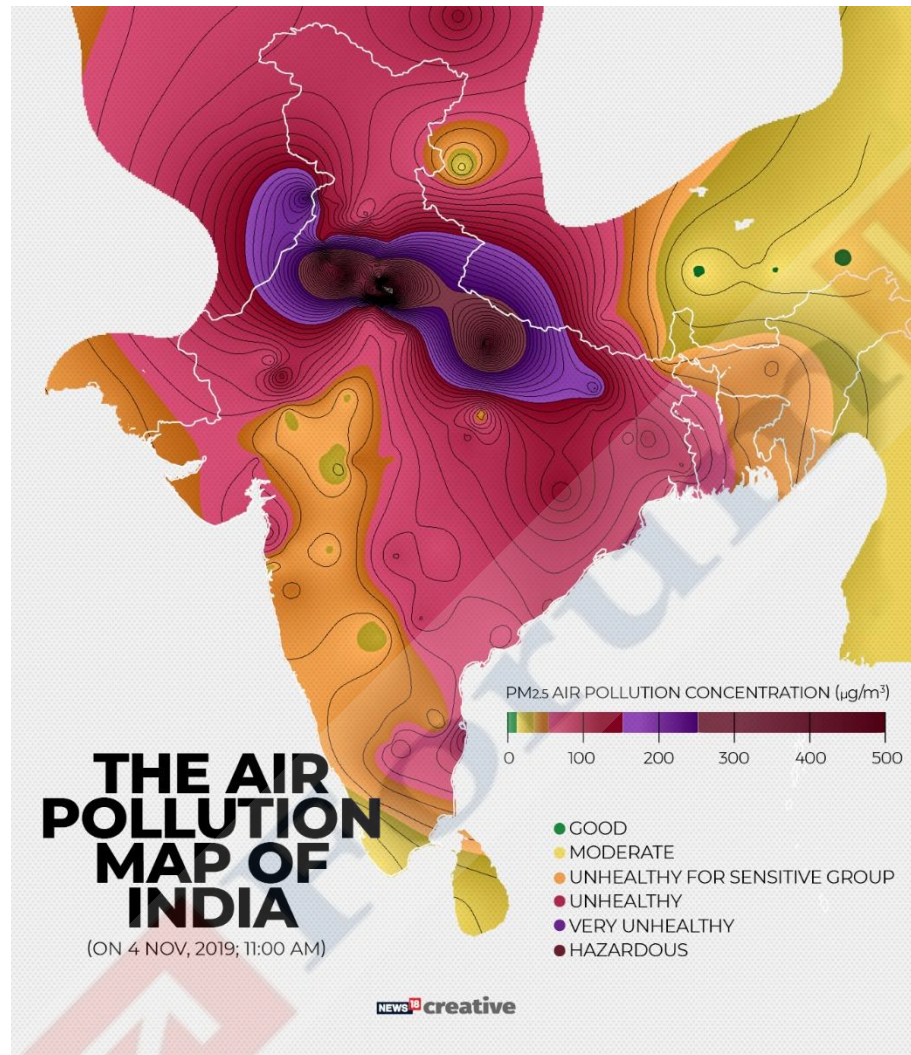

Figure 5.Source: News18.

Air Pollution across Jurisdictions.

Terminology Used:

Airshed: An airshed is a geographical area where local topography and meteorology limit the dispersion of pollutants away from the area. They are formed by air masses moving across a landscape, thus influencing the atmospheric composition of that area. These airsheds usually do not overlap with legal-political boundaries.

On the Impact of Climate Change on Health – Recognising the impact of climate change on health

News: The article discusses how climate change negatively impacts health in India, emphasizing the need for action at various levels to address the challenges posed by rising temperatures, extreme weather events, and the related increase in diseases and mental health issues.

About Impact of climate change on health:

WHO's Assessment of Climate Change Impact on Health: a) Climate change is humanity's biggest health threat, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). **b**) It estimates that climate change will cause an additional 250,000 deaths annually from undernutrition, malaria, diarrhea, and heat stress between 2030-2050. **c**) The direct health-related costs of climate change are projected to be USD 2-4 billion per year by 2030.

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The **Lancet Countdown report** links increased disease and food insecurity to fossil fuel reliance, impacting health due to heat.

How does climate change affect health in India?

The impact of climate change on health is a multifaceted issue, with both direct and indirect consequences:

1. **Vector-Borne Diseases:** Warmer climates favor the spread of diseases like malaria and dengue fever, as they create more hospitable environments for vectors like mosquitoes.
2. **Water and Food-Borne Diseases:** Flooding and higher temperatures can lead to outbreaks of diseases like cholera and diarrhoea.
3. **Increased Sickness and Deaths:** Extreme weather events, like the record heat waves in India in 2023, directly contribute to higher rates of illness and mortality.
4. **Nutrition and Food Security:** Climate change affects agriculture, leading to reduced food availability and quality. This can cause malnutrition, especially in vulnerable populations.
5. **Exacerbation of Chronic Conditions:** Increased pollution and heat can worsen respiratory illnesses, cardiovascular diseases, and other chronic conditions.
6. **Urban Heat Islands:** Dense urban areas with minimal greenery can become significantly hotter than surrounding areas, intensifying the health impacts of heatwaves.
7. **Mental Health**: The stress of dealing with climate change impacts, including financial strain and displacement, can exacerbate mental health issues.
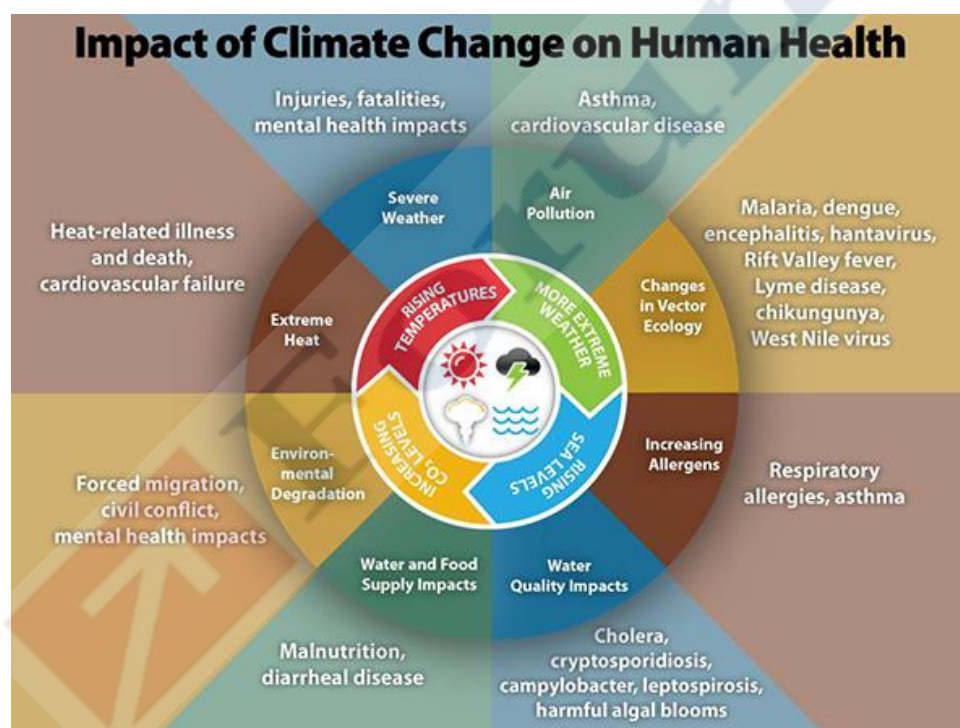

Figure 6.Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

What are some government initiatives to overcome this issue?

India is actively addressing climate change and its health impacts through several initiatives:

1. **Climate Change and Health Hub in Delhi:** India, in collaboration with the Asian Development Bank, launched this hub with an aim to enhance knowledge sharing, foster partnerships, and drive innovations in managing climate-related health challenges.
2. **National Health Mission:** Targeted at underserved areas, this mission combats communicable and non-communicable diseases, including those exacerbated by climate change, through prevention and control measures.

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3. **Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY):** In 2018, the government introduced the AB-PMJAY), a major health initiative aimed at providing universal healthcare coverage to the economically weaker sections. This scheme seeks to revolutionize healthcare in India, with goals of reducing poverty, boosting productivity, and enhancing social justice.

4. **National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC):** Aimed at fulfilling India's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), the action plan addresses various dimensions of climate change. This plan encompasses missions focused on solar energy, water management, sustainable agriculture, sustainable habitats, greening initiatives, etc.

What should be done?

1. **Reducing Emissions:** Implementing policies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, such as the National Biofuel Policy and Vehicle Scrappage Policy.

2. **Strengthening Disease Surveillance:** Enhancing technologies for real-time tracking of disease outbreaks and adopting a One Health approach.

3. **Socio-Economic Support Systems:** Develop systems for social support and health services, considering the socio-economic factors that accentuate climate change impacts.

4. **Policy Development:** Researchers should focus on creating policy options to combat the health impacts of climate change.

5. **Government Action:** National, state, and local governments need to act on the policy options provided by research.

6. **Urban Planning:** Implement better urban planning strategies to mitigate the urban heat island effect. This includes increasing urban greenery and water conservation measures.

7. **International Collaboration:** Coordinating with global partners for funding and effective management of health and climate initiatives.
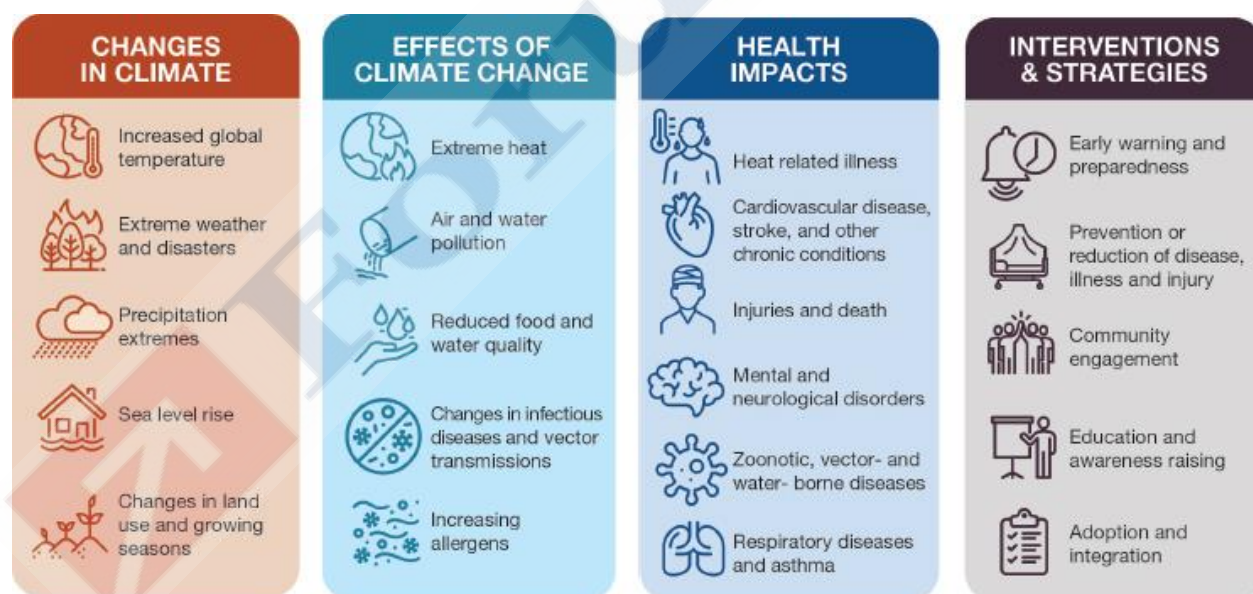

Figure 7.Source: National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences

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Subject: Internal Security

Topic: Security challenges and their management in border areas

On Maritime Security Challenges – The challenge of maritime security in the Global South

News: This article discusses the emerging challenges in the maritime domain and the issues associated with dealing with them.

What are the new threats emerging in the maritime domain?

1. **Asymmetrical war tactics:** This includes the following:
a. Use of Land-based missiles.
b. Use of Combat drones.
c. Use of grey-zone warfare (Grey-zone warfare is a set of activities that take place between peace and war).
2. **Unconventional security threats:** This includes:
a. Illegal fishing (and the use of unsustainable fishing methods such as bottom trawling).
b. Natural disasters and the impact of climate change.
c. Marine pollution.
d. Human and drug trafficking.

What are the challenges in dealing with these issues?

1. **Requires much more than just military action:** States must instead be prepared to commit capital, resources, and specialist personnel over prolonged periods to meet security needs.
2. **Lack of precedent:** There is no functioning template or a previous example to fight non-traditional threats at sea.
3. **Lack of representation of the vulnerable states:** Rising sea levels, marine pollution, climate change, and natural disasters have had a disproportionate impact on less developed states. Voices from these littoral states in Asia, Africa, and the Southern Pacific are ignored by the developed countries.
4. **Linkages of these issues across multiple jurisdictions:** The cross-jurisdictional linkages (spread across various sovereign countries) between these diverse areas make them challenging to manage.
5. **Disparity in maritime capabilities:** Littoral states in Asia and Africa have unequal law-enforcement capabilities required to jointly combat maritime threats.
6. **Lack of cooperation:** Many of these countries have varying security priorities and are not always willing to leverage partner capabilities to combat threats such as piracy, armed robbery, and maritime terrorism. Priority is given to political and strategic autonomy over cooperation.
7. **Lack of consensus:** Implementing a collaborative strategy is challenging since it requires maritime agencies to improve interoperability, share intelligence, and agree on a regional rules-based order. There is a lack of consensus in the Global South regarding this.
8. **Lack of sound policies:** Policies such as lenient regulations; lax implementation of the law; and subsidies that incentivise smaller fishermen to shift to motorised trawling contribute to the rise of unconventional threats.

What is India's approach in this regard?

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1. **India's Maritime Vision 2030:** It sets out a 10-year blueprint for the maritime sector, envisaging the development of ports, shipping, and inland waterways as a way of generating growth and livelihoods.
2. **India's Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative:** It rests on seven pillars including maritime ecology, marine resources, capacity building, disaster risk reduction, and maritime connectivity. It acknowledges that countries need collective solutions to their common problems, especially since they remain economically interdependent.

What should be done?

States must adapt a developmental approach to maritime security. To this extent, States must adopt an integrated form of maritime security operations and overhaul regulatory frameworks to align domestic regulation with international law.

Topic: Linkages between development and spread of extremism, Terrorism

Long-term effects of terror attack-

News: The article reflects on the 15-year anniversary of the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks. It examines long-term effects of terror attack (like 26/11 or the 9/11 attacks in the US, or 7/7 in London) such as economic burdens due to heightened security, inefficiencies in security practices, and the psychological impact on society. It advocates for a reassessment of these security measures.

What are the long-term impacts of terror attacks?

1. **Economic Drain on Governments:** Post-attack, governments spend heavily on security, diverting funds from other vital areas like healthcare. This results in a significant shift from productive investments.
2. **Inefficient security expenses:** Equipment like baggage scanners, metal detectors, and additional personnel lead to high operational costs. These are necessary but often inefficient responses to terror threats.
3. **Indirect Economic Impacts:** Terror attacks result in higher insurance premiums, lower tourism, and reduced investor confidence.
4. **Societal and Psychological Effects:** The pervasive security measures and constant vigilance create a psychological impact on society, contributing to a sense of fear and impacting daily life.

What should be done?

1. **Allocate Resources Wisely:** The diversion of substantial funds to security measures should be balanced. This means ensuring that essential sectors like healthcare are not neglected.
2. **Innovate and Adapt:** Embrace new technologies and strategies that enhance security efficiently. This involves moving away from traditional, less effective methods to more sophisticated, data-driven approaches.
3. **Critical Reevaluation of Security Measures:** It's essential to assess the effectiveness of security protocols in place, moving away from ritualistic practices like routine vehicle checks at hotels, which may not significantly enhance security.

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On the Issues with UAPA – J&K High Court underlines that criticism of a government can't be called a terrorist act

News: The article discusses the challenges associated with the UAPA and the observations of the courts in this regard.

Recently, the Jammu and Kashmir High Court granted bail to journalist Fahad Shah and quashed the charges framed against him under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967.

What is the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), 1967?

UAPA aims at effective prevention of unlawful activities and associations in India. **Unlawful activity** refers to any action taken by an individual or association intended to **disrupt the territorial integrity and sovereignty of India**. The Act assigns absolute power to the central government, by way of which if the Centre deems an activity as unlawful then it may, through an Official Gazette, declare it so. Till 2004, "unlawful" activities referred to actions related to secession and cession of territory. The 2004 amendment added "terrorist act" to the list of offences to ban organisations for terrorist activities.

What are the issues with UAPA?

1. **Broad and Vague Definitions:** The Act's definitions of "unlawful activities" and "terrorist acts" are broad and vague. This can potentially lead to misuse, allowing authorities to target individuals or organizations without clear criteria.

2. **Violation of Civil Liberties:** The Act allows for **pre-charge arrest (arrest occurring prior to a formal charge being made against a suspected criminal)** of suspects for a prolonged period, which violates the right to liberty and due process.

3. **Misuse for Political Purposes:** Critics argue that the Act has been used to target political dissenters, activists, and minorities, rather than focusing solely on combating terrorism or unlawful activities.

4. **Impact on Freedom of Speech:** There are concerns that the Act's provisions regarding speeches, writings, or actions that could be interpreted as supporting unlawful activities might impinge on freedom of speech and expression.

5. **Harsh Bail Conditions:** The UAPA has provisions that make it difficult for people charged under the act to obtain bail, as it requires that the accused show that they are not guilty, shifting the burden of proof from the prosecution to the accused.

6. **Low Conviction Rates:** Less than 3% of the arrests made under UAPA between 2015 and 2020 have resulted in convictions as per the People's Union of Civil Liberties.

What have been the judiciary's observations?

1. **Observations by the J&K High Court:**
a. It said that an investigative agency must justify the arrest of an accused under UAPA based on a "**clear and present danger** of the accused to the society at large, if enlarged on bail".
b. It rejected the argument that honour and dignity of India is a property under the anti-terror law, the destruction of which is a terrorist act. The court stated that any criticism of the central government could then be described as a terrorist act under this interpretation. This would **undermine the fundamental right to freedom of speech and expression**.

2. **Observations by the Delhi High Court:** It had ruled that "terror activity cannot be so broadly defined as to include ordinary penal offences".

3. **Observations by the Supreme Court:** In the One Media case where an undisclosed national security consideration was cited to deny renewal of license to a Kerala news channel, the Supreme Court had highlighted the trend of the state **misusing national security as a tool to deny citizens remedies** that are provided under the law.

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