

# 9 PM Current Affairs Weekly Compilation

For UPSC CSE mains examination



**3<sup>rd</sup> Week**

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**Features :**

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

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## GS Paper 1

### Subject: Geography

#### Topic: Important Geophysical phenomena

#### On the Variability of Indian Monsoon – Gearing up for change

**News:** The article discusses the findings of IMD's data at the sub-divisional (tehsil) level on monsoon trends.

A detailed article on the **Indian Meteorological Department (IMD)** can be [read here](#). In the 150 years of its existence, the IMD has collected immense amounts of meteorological data that underlie its forecasts of the monsoon.

#### What are the findings of IMD's data on monsoon trends?

In an analysis of monsoon trends at the sub-divisional (tehsil) level, from 1982-2022, the following was noticed:

- Increase in Rainfall:** Monsoon rainfall is increasing in more than half, or 55%, of India's roughly 4,400 tehsils.
- Decline in Rainfall:** About 11% of them saw decreasing rainfall. In those tehsils, 87% showed a decline during June and July, which are crucial for the sowing of kharif crops.
- Abnormally High or Low Rainfall:** 30% of India's districts witnessed several years of deficient rainfall years and 38% districts witnessed several years of excessive rainfall.
- Reversal of Rainfall Patterns:** Some tehsils in Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Tamil Nadu, that were historically dry, were getting wetter.
- Changes in [North-East Monsoon](#):** The northeast monsoon rain has increased by more than 10% in the past decade (2012-2022) in several tehsils in Tamil Nadu, Telangana, and Andhra Pradesh.

#### How should these findings be utilised?

There is still research happening on whether Indian monsoon's long dry spells followed by torrential wet spells can be attributed to **natural variability or global warming**. In this regard, prioritising regional and sub-district forecast data over national level data would be helpful.

This will help in making **region-specific plans** to improve **climate resilience** and channel necessary **funds and resources**.

## Subject: Indian Society

### Topic: Effects of Globalization

#### Third Globalisation and India

**News:** The article discusses the undergoing changes in Globalization. It also highlights its impact on India.

Earlier, the **'Second Globalization'** featured unconditional access for the periphery (underdeveloped world) to the core (developed or advanced economies) of the world economy. However, it is currently undergoing changes.

#### What is 'Second Globalization'?

It broadly refers to the international regulations and organizations to **support economic integration** at the global level created after World War II, as part of the **Bretton Woods Agreement of 1944**.

The technologies of **telecommunication, container ships, wide-body aircraft, and modern finance** yielded unprecedented levels of cross-border activity.

The core gave complete access to their economic and technological progress **even to countries that were unfriendly or hostile**.

#### How is globalization undergoing change with Third globalisation?

Since 2018, the third globalization has emerged.

According to the author, the **'third globalization'** (currently) makes the access given in the 2<sup>nd</sup> globalization, (for the periphery to the core) more conditional based on **foreign policy and military alignment**.

It has seen access to the core being given in more limited ways for countries that have a **hostile foreign policy and military stance**. The core does full integration with each other, but they impose limitations upon hostile nations, having impact on **both trade and FDI**. For instance, since 2018, **China's share in USA's imports** has dropped sharply.

#### What should be the way forward for India?

##### 1) For India's Foreign Policy:

**a. In the case of China:** There is a substantial trade engagement with China, hence there should not be any sudden disruptions.

**b. For rest of the world:** India should be a **status quo power**, which will work with the core and try to obtain economic growth in the coming years.

**2) For Firms:** Strategy thinking at firms needs to bring a better understanding of the political system in various countries, the risks associated with doing business in undemocratic countries, and the evolving rules of the game that are being established by the core.

## Topic: Urbanisation, their problems and their remedies

### Issues in Indian Urban Planning: Trapped in central planning

**News:** The article discusses the problems with town planning in India. It highlights how detailed government control leads to inefficient land use and fails to create nice cities.

#### What are the current issues in Indian town planning?

1. **Uncoordinated Private Development:** The private sector, built in an uncoordinated manner and focused on individual profits, results in the overuse of land for private projects and insufficient space for public amenities. Consequently, essential services like water, sanitation, electricity, and telecom suffer due to poorly planned and executed infrastructure.
2. **Excessive Government Control:** Development authorities in cities meticulously plan urban areas, often over-regulating and mismanaging land use. This includes dividing cities into detailed zones (residential, commercial, industrial, and green) with strict compliance requirements.
3. **Constitutional Violations and Legal Issues:** These overly detailed plans can violate constitutional principles. For instance, landowners in green zones face restrictions on building or modifying properties, leading to legal disputes and land misuse.
4. **Widespread Corruption and Arbitrary Power:** The system's complexity and over-regulation breed corruption and give undue power to authorities, enabling them to selectively enforce rules.

#### How does government control impact land use?

1. **Rigid Zoning Laws:** Government authorities divide cities into detailed zones, like residential and commercial areas, leading to inflexible land use.
2. **Restrictions on Property Rights:** In green zones, property owners face severe limitations, such as being unable to build or modify houses, which infringes on their rights.
3. **Excessive Land for Open Spaces:** Indian cities, as per renowned urban planner Mr. Patel's observations, allocate 50-60% of land for private open spaces, compared to less than 10% in well-planned foreign cities.
4. **Lack of Economic Understanding:** The planning approach shows a misunderstanding of urban economics, leading to inefficient and underutilized urban spaces.

#### What should be done?

1. Use minimal yet effective state interventions, avoiding over-regulation and rigid zoning laws.
2. Create laws and institutions that can efficiently manage urban growth and planning, based on a deep understanding of urban economics.
3. Emulate successful urban planning models from abroad, where less than 10% of land is private open space compared to 50-60% in Indian cities.
4. Align planning policies to support economic growth while achieving sustainable development goals, as suggested in the Barker review of 2006 in the UK.

## On the Issues with Mumbai's Urban Development Model

**News:** The article discusses the issues with Mumbai's urban development model as exemplified by the construction of Atal Setu.

### Background:

Last week, the Mumbai Trans Harbour Link bridge, the Atal Setu was inaugurated. It has been advertised as a symbol of the city and the country's development.

However, according to the author, this development model (involving the construction of bigger concretised roads and paving over open spaces) belongs to the 1960s. It does not take into account the importance of urban ecology and is hence outdated.

### What are the issues with Mumbai's urban development model exemplified by the Atal Setu?

This mode of development based on the **Concretisation** and **Infrastructure Development** of the city with roads, highways and tunnels creates several problems:

1. This mode of development **produces more traffic** (by encouraging car transit).
2. It harms **open spaces, wetlands, gardens and playgrounds** that perform vital climate mitigation and adaptation services.
3. Increases **toxic air quality levels** in the city.
4. The increasing extent of **rainwater runoff in the streets**.
5. The city's **trees are cut down** on account of infrastructure projects.

### What should be done?

- 1) A different mode of development that takes into account **urban ecology** and **dissuades car transit** should be followed.
- 2) Urban planning should **address and mitigate the air quality crisis and the lack of open spaces, intertidal regions and mangroves** performing critical services.

## GS Paper 2

### Subject: Indian Polity

### Topic: Statutory, regulatory and various quasi-judicial bodies

## CCI in India's rapidly changing economy

**News:** The article discusses the role of the Competition Commission of India (CCI) in overseeing fair competition in India's rapidly changing economy. It highlights CCI's efforts to regulate markets, prevent anti-competitive practices, and protect consumer interests, especially in the digital age.

### What is the role of the Competition Commission of India (CCI) in India's rapidly changing economy?

## 9 PM Compilation for the Month of January [Third Week] 2024

1. **Overseeing Fair Competition with a Dual Approach:** CCI employs enforcement actions to combat anti-competitive practices such as price-fixing and bid-rigging. Simultaneously, it undertakes advocacy measures to foster a culture of competition, thus ensuring a level playing field in India's market.
2. **Oversight of Corporate Actions:** Mergers and acquisitions are scrutinized to prevent market dominance that could harm economic health and consumer welfare.
3. **Consumer Protection:** CCI safeguards consumer interests by ensuring fair prices, quality products, and market choices.
4. **Educating Stakeholders:** CCI educates about the benefits of competition and provides policy recommendations affecting competition.
5. It also **provides opinions and recommendations on policy** matters affecting competition, as and when sought

For more information function of CCI [read here](#).

### What are the challenges faced by CCI in India's rapidly changing economy?

1. **Digital Economy Dominance:** The rise of tech giants poses challenges due to their data control and resource abundance, potentially stifling competition and innovation.
2. **Rapid Technological Advancements:** Keeping up with swift technological changes and understanding their implications for competition.
3. **Global Market Dynamics:** Navigating the complexities of global interconnectedness and its impact on domestic markets.

### What initiatives have been taken by CCI to address new-age challenges?

1. **Streamlining Processes:** CCI has improved the efficiency of its investigation and decision-making processes. This has reduced investigation and decision-making times, enhancing market efficiency.
2. **Addressing Digital Economy Challenges:** Focused on scrutinizing practices like predatory pricing and data monopolisation by tech giants.
3. **Regulatory Framework Evolution:** Continuously updating regulations to stay robust and flexible for future challenges.
4. **International Cooperation:** Collaborating with global entities for knowledge sharing and harmonizing regulations.

### What should be done?

1. **Balance Regulation and Innovation:** The commission must ensure regulations are robust yet flexible enough to accommodate new business models and innovations.
2. **Update Regulatory Frameworks:** Regularly revising regulations to align with current market dynamics and technological advancements is essential.
3. **Faster Resolution of Cases:** Building on CCI's recent initiatives to streamline processes and reduce investigation times, further efforts are needed to enhance the speed and efficiency of case resolutions.
4. **Global Best Practices Integration:** As CCI collaborates internationally, it should continue learning from global entities, integrating these insights into its regulatory framework, akin to its current international cooperation efforts.



## Topic: Parliament and State Legislatures - structure, functioning, conduct of business, powers & privileges and issues arising out of these

### Issues with the Tenth Schedule

**News:** The article explains the application of India's Tenth Schedule, an anti-defection law, in a recent dispute within Maharashtra's Shiv Sena party. It also highlights the need for reforms in the law to better address political defections and related challenges.

#### What is the Tenth Schedule?

1. **Introduction and Purpose:** The Tenth Schedule, added to the Indian Constitution in 1985, is an anti-defection law. It was introduced to address political instability caused by frequent defections of legislators during the 1960s and 70s.
2. **Key Provisions:** It mandates the disqualification of Members of Parliament or state legislatures if they voluntarily give up their party membership or defy party directives during voting.
3. **Enforcement by the 'Whip':** Party discipline and voting instructions are enforced through a party-appointed 'whip'.
4. **Amendments for Strength:** Originally, it allowed a one-third faction to split without disqualification (paragraph 3). This was removed in 2003 (91st Constitutional amendment act) to strengthen the law against defections.

For more information [read here](#).

#### What are the Issues with the Tenth Schedule?

1. **Misuse for Political Gains:** The Tenth Schedule is often manipulated by lawmakers to defect without facing disqualification. For instance, in Rajasthan in 2019 and Goa in 2022, entire groups of MLAs from one party merged with another, essentially defecting but evading disqualification under the anti-defection law. This tactic undermines the purpose of the Schedule.
2. **Ambiguity in Definition:** The law's criteria for what constitutes defection can be interpreted in various ways, leading to confusion and manipulation. The recent case in Maharashtra illustrates this, where the Speaker recognized the Eknath Shinde faction as the legitimate Shiv Sena, despite claims from the rival Uddhav Thackeray group.
3. **Speaker's Biased Role:** The Speaker's role in disqualification decisions is criticized for potential partiality. The Speaker, expected to be neutral, often makes decisions favoring the ruling party. The Maharashtra case again serves as an example, where the Speaker's decision favored one faction over the other.

For more information on challenges associated with the Tenth Schedule [read here](#).

#### What should be done?

1. **Establish an Independent Tribunal:** To ensure unbiased decisions on disqualification, an independent tribunal, possibly led by judges, should replace the Speaker's authority, as recommended in the **K.M. Singh vs Speaker of Manipur case (2020)**.
2. **Strengthen Inner Party Democracy:** Implementing regular, transparent inner-party elections, monitored by the Election Commission, can reduce defections. This addresses the root cause, as lack of democracy within parties often leads to dissatisfaction and defections.
3. **Clear Guidelines for Faction Recognition:** The Supreme Court, in **Sadiq Ali vs. Election Commission of India (1971)**, proposed a three-test formula—consisting of the party's aims and objectives, adherence to

the party constitution, and majority in legislative and organizational wings—to strictly determine the legitimacy of political factions.

## Subject: Governance

### Topic: Important aspects of Governance - Accountability

#### On the Issues with the Media in India – Beleaguered Indian media: Quo Vadis?

**News:** The article discusses the importance of media in a democracy and the emerging challenges to its working in India. It also highlights steps that can be taken to tackle these challenges.

Since liberalisation in 1991, factors such as economic growth, the freeing of broadcast media from government control and the rise of Internet have led to a rapid rise in the number of media outlets.

#### What is the importance of media?

1. **Lifeblood of Democracy:** A free media is the lifeblood of India's democracy.
2. **Shape Public Opinion:** Media provides the information that enables a free citizenry to make the choices of who governs them.
3. **Ensure Accountability:** The media ensures that those who govern remain accountable to the people.

#### What are the emerging issues with media in India?

1. **Focused on TRP:** TV channels competing for **television ratings points (TRPs)** has led to the media giving up on its objective of providing a public service.
2. **Sensationalisation of News:** The **"breaking news" phenomenon** has led to prioritizing sensationalisation over the actual substance of the news.
3. **Illegitimate Media Trials:** Media is acting as the witness, prosecutor, judge, jury and the executioner – all by itself.
4. **Emergence of Unregulated Social Media:** Social media, with its culture of unverified facts, has led to a new problem.
5. **Lack of Fact-checking:** Journalists now feel pressed to publish without fact-checking.
6. **Defamation of Individuals:** Unverified news can do irreparable damage to innocent people's reputations.
7. **Failing in Ensuring Accountability:** The media's obsession with the superficial and the sensational leads to lowering of quality of public discourse. This harms its role as the watchdog of democracy.
8. **Censorship/ Govt Pressure:** The government has intimidated newspapers and TV channels for publishing uncomfortable news. Journalists have also been arrested under the UAPA.

#### What should be done?

- 1) **Culture of Fact-Verification and Accuracy:** Journalists should not feel pressed to break the news, but make sure their facts and accusations are accurate.
- 2) **Better Journalistic Training:** There should be better journalistic training at media institutes that emphasise values of **accuracy, integrity and fairness** in students. These standards should also extend to media organisations.
- 3) **Multiple Perspectives:** Different perspectives should be welcomed in the media houses that will prevent

them from forcing their own unchecked opinions onto their viewers.

4) **Inviting Feedback from the Public:** Journalists must welcome comments and feedback from their viewers and readers. This will generate trust between the consumers and the media.

5) **Regulation of the Sector:** The government must introduce laws and regulations that limit control of multiple news organisations by a single business or political entity. This will encourage an independent and robust press in the country.

6) **Oversight Mechanism:** A single overseer for print and television news companies (recommended by **TRAI and the IT Parliamentary Committee**), would limit the power of corporate and political interests over the media.

India deserves a media that contributes to shaping an informed, educated and politically aware India which can hold its governments accountable.

## Topic: Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation

### Concerns related to India's Post Office and Telecommunications laws

**News:** The article discusses concerns about new Indian laws allowing postal and telecommunications authorities to intercept communications without clear safeguards against misuse.

#### What are the Interception-related concerns in the present Post Office and Telecommunications laws?

1. **Lack of Procedural Safeguards:** The new Post Office Act doesn't include necessary procedures to prevent misuse of the power to intercept messages. This contrasts with previous acts, where rules were eventually established, like the Telegraph Rules in 2007 and IT Rules in 2009.
2. **Vague Definition of 'Emergency':** The Act allows interception in 'emergencies' but doesn't define what this means, leading to potential arbitrary use of power.
3. **Privacy Concerns:** Interception without clear rules can infringe on privacy rights, a concern raised in past Supreme Court rulings like the PUCL vs Union of India (1996) case. It emphasized the need for safeguards in communication interception.
4. **Differences from Older Legislation:** Previously, acts like the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885, and the Indian Post Office Act, 1898, required specific conditions like a 'public emergency' or 'public safety' to intercept messages. These conditions acted as checks to prevent arbitrary use of power. The new laws remove these specific requirements, potentially making it easier for authorities to intercept communications without needing to justify it under these stringent conditions.
5. **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights:** Article 17 states that no one should face arbitrary interference with their privacy. As India is a signatory, the new laws might conflict with these international obligations.
6. **Directive Principle 51(c) of the Constitution:** This principle emphasizes respecting international conventions, raising questions about the new laws' alignment with international standards on privacy.

#### What has been stand of the Supreme Court (SC) on the matter or interception?

1. **PUCL vs Union of India (1996):** The SC emphasized that telephonic conversations are private. It stated that phone tapping infringes on freedom of speech (articles 19), permissible only under specific restrictions (articles 19(2)). The Court also noted the right to privacy is part of the right to life and personal liberty (article 21), and any curtailment must follow a lawful, fair, and reasonable procedure.

2. **Distt. Registrar & Collector, Hyderabad & Anr vs Canara Bank (2005):** This ruling established that the right to privacy isn't lost when confidential documents are entrusted to a third party, like a bank, implying similar protections should apply to postal correspondence.
3. **Justice K.S. Puttaswamy (Retd.) & Anr. vs Union of India & Ors. (2017):** The right to communication was declared a part of the right to privacy, protected under Article 21 of the Constitution.

These rulings emphasize the importance of privacy and the need for legal safeguards against arbitrary interception of communications.

#### Way forward:

To ensure the protection of privacy rights under India's Post Office and Telecommunications laws, it's crucial to establish explicit procedural safeguards. These safeguards should prevent the misuse of interception powers by defining 'emergency' situations more clearly. Drawing from historical legal precedents and international human rights norms, the government needs to implement effective accountability measures for authorities involved.

### Topic: The role of NGOs, SHGs, various groups and associations, donors, charities, institutional and other stakeholders

#### Concerns related to India's FCRA- A backsliding

**News:** The registration of the Centre for Policy Research (CPR) under the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) has been revoked by the Union Home Ministry.

#### What is the FCRA?

The FCRA regulates foreign donations and ensures that such contributions do not adversely affect internal security.

It was enacted during the Emergency in 1976 amid apprehensions that foreign powers were interfering in India's affairs by pumping money into the country through independent organizations. For more information [read here](#)

#### Why was the FCRA registration of CPR cancelled?

[Read here](#)

#### What are the concerns related to India's FCRA?

1. **Restrictive Control on NGOs:** India's use of the FCRA to suspend or cancel licenses of NGOs like Centre for Policy Research and World Vision India showcases restrictive control over Civil Society Organizations (CSOs).
2. **Silencing Sensitive Issues:** The government targets NGOs working on environmental issues, civil liberties, and human rights, suggesting an attempt to silence voices on sensitive topics.
3. **Impact on India's Global Reputation:** International bodies like the International Commission of Jurists have criticized the FCRA amendments for being against international law. Additionally, Freedom House downgraded India to an "electoral autocracy" in its Democracy Index, citing erosion of civil liberties as a reason.

4. **Contradiction with Democratic Ideals:** As India positions itself as the 'Mother of Democracy' and a global leader, these actions contradict its democratic aspirations and impact its standing in global freedom and democracy indices.

## Subject: Social Justice

### Topic: Issues relating to Education

#### ASER 2023 report

**News:** The article discusses the '**Beyond Basics**' Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) released by Pratham. It focuses on a survey of rural students aged 14 to 18 years, addressing their educational progress and challenges in India.

#### What were the major findings in the ASER 2023 report?

1. **Enrolment Rates:** Overall, 86.8% of 14-18-year-olds are enrolled in an educational institution. The percentage of youth not enrolled is 3.9% for 14-year-old youth and 32.6% for 18-year-olds. Most of the people in this age group were enrolled in the Arts/Humanities streams.
2. **Foundational skill gaps:** About 25% cannot read Grade 2 text, and over 50% face difficulties with arithmetic skills expected by Grade 5, highlighting a deficit in foundational learning.
3. **Digital technology underutilized:** Despite the high availability of smartphones in rural households (95%), their use for educational purposes is limited.
4. **Gender disparities:** Fewer females (28.1%) are in the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics stream (STEM) stream compared to males (36.3%). Females are better at reading in their regional language, while males excel in arithmetic and English. Males are more likely to own and use smartphones.
5. **Vocational training:** The survey shows a low enrollment in vocational training, with only 5.6% of young people participating. Among these, college students are more engaged, with 16.2% enrolled in courses, usually lasting no more than six months.

#### What were the suggestions provided in the ASER 2023 report?

1. **Pedagogic Reforms for Rural Students:** The report suggests reforming teaching methods to help students who balance academic and farm work, addressing the educational challenges faced in rural areas.
2. **Leverage Smartphones for Education and Address Digital Gender Gaps:** ASER advocates using the widespread access to smartphones (95% of households) for educational purposes and emphasizes closing the gender gap in digital skills, as females lag behind males in smartphone proficiency.
3. **Rethink vocational education:** To increase the 6% enrollment in vocational courses, ASER suggests reimagining vocational training to make it more aspirational and aligned with students' interests.

## Smartphone Impact on Education in India - How smartphones can make education inclusive

**News:** This article talks about how the availability of smartphones is making 'education anytime, anywhere' possible in India. It shows that many young people use phones for both study and fun, and emphasizes the need for flexible, tech-based learning, especially for subjects like agriculture.

### What opportunities does smartphones bring to Education?

1. **Widespread Smartphone Access:** The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2023 shows that 89% of Indian youth aged 14-18 have a smartphone at home, and 92% can use one. About two-thirds of those who know how to use smartphones have used them for their studies, indicating a significant shift in learning methods.
2. **Opportunity for Flexible Learning:** Smartphones offer a chance for flexible, anytime-anywhere education, especially beneficial for working students or those requiring non-traditional education paths.
3. **What challenges does smartphones bring to Education?**
4. **Overemphasis on Entertainment:** Despite high smartphone availability, they are used more for entertainment than education, possibly distracting students.
5. **Exam-Centric Focus:** Current technology solutions in education are mainly geared towards exam preparation, not comprehensive learning or skill development.
6. **Challenge in Knowledge Transfer and Certification:** Despite the easy access to information, the process of knowledge transfer and certification remains a restricted and challenging area.
7. **Misinformation Risks:** The widespread availability of smartphones and cheap data presents challenges in ensuring the accuracy and reliability of educational content.

### What should be done?

1. **Develop Flexible Learning Models:** Adapt open schooling and digital technology to support students who work, as noted in the need for underprivileged students to study while earning.
2. **Focus on Practical and Environmental Education:** Incorporate subjects like agriculture and environmental studies, reflecting the real-life applications and workforce needs, as highlighted by the low study rates in agriculture (0.7%) despite its workforce importance.
3. **Enhance Open Schooling Systems:** Leverage digital technology to strengthen open schooling, providing flexible learning opportunities for working students.

## Topic: Poverty

### Status of multidimensional Poverty in India

**News:** As per the NITI Aayog discussion paper titled 'Multidimensional Poverty in India since 2005-06', approximately 248.2 million individuals in India emerged from poverty over nine years. It also addresses the challenges encountered in tackling multidimensional poverty.

### What is multidimensional poverty?

Historically, poverty estimation was done by mainly focusing on one-dimensional measures – usually based on **income**. However, there was criticism that monetary and consumption-based poverty measures fail to capture the impact of lack of other non-monetary factors on standard of living.

It has been recognized that **poverty has multiple dimensions** that affect individuals' experiences and

quality of life. Qualitative aspects of life such as access to basic services like water and sanitation that may not be directly related to household income, constitute an important part of poverty measurement.

For more information on **Multidimensional Poverty** [read here](#).

For information on **National Multidimensional Poverty** [read here](#).

### What is the status of multidimensional Poverty in India?

1. Multidimensional poverty in India has substantially decreased.
2. In 2013-14, 29.2% of the population was in multidimensional poverty, which dropped to 11.3% in 2022-23.
3. Approximately 248.2 million people have escaped extreme poverty since 2013.
4. Niti Aayog's data shows a decline in poverty from 55.3% in 2005-06 to an anticipated level below 10% by 2024.
5. Similarly, World Bank figures indicate a drop in India's poverty rate from roughly 19% in 2015 to 11.9% in 2021.
6. The Indian government's goal is to further reduce this poverty metric to 1%.

For more information [read here](#)

### How did India achieve this reduction in multidimensional poverty?

1. **Digital Integration:** The 'JAM' trio - Jan Dhan accounts, Aadhaar identities, and mobile phones - played a crucial role in streamlining welfare distribution.
2. **Direct Cash Transfers:** These transfers ensured efficient coverage of various benefit schemes, reducing leakages significantly.
3. **Expanded Welfare Budgets:** Economic growth enabled increased funding for welfare programs, contributing to poverty alleviation.
4. **Targeted Measures:** Focused efforts on health, education, and living standards addressed key aspects of deprivation.
5. **Multidimensional Approach:** Adoption of the multidimensional poverty index (MPI), similar to the United Nations Development Program's method, helped in better targeting and measuring poverty.
6. **Data-Driven Decisions:** Use of National Family Health Surveys for accurate assessment and strategy formulation.

### What are the challenges in countering multidimensional poverty?

1. **Data Quality Concerns:** The rejection of the 2017-18 consumer expenditure survey by the government due to data quality issues highlights challenges in obtaining reliable data.
2. **Regional Disparities:** There are significant disparities in poverty levels across different states, indicating uneven development and the need for region-specific policies.
3. **Educational Outcomes:** The index includes education but does not fully address the quality of education. For example, the learning outcomes in India are not at the desired level.
4. **Policy Direction and Spending:** The report questions the efficiency of current government expenditure, such as free food distribution and cash transfers, suggesting a need for more focused spending on development areas like education quality.

### Way forward:

To further reduce poverty, India needs sustained economic growth and targeted policies for inclusive development. Accurate data collection and a shift in government spending towards areas like education quality are crucial. Addressing regional disparities and focusing on not just the quantity but also the quality of services will aid in balanced and inclusive progress.

## Topic: Issues relating to Health

### On Cervical Cancer – How Indian women can rid themselves of cervical cancer

**News:** The article discusses the causes, prevention and cure of cervical cancer. It highlights the steps taken by the government in this regard and suggests steps to augment cervical care in India.

#### Background:

The government is planning to include cervical cancer vaccine in the universal immunization program. The vaccination campaign targeted at girls in the 9-14 age group is likely to commence this year. Read more on this [here](#).

#### What causes cervical cancer?

The main cause is the presence of **high-risk type of Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) infection**. The risk of its progression to cancer also rises due to factors like; a) low socio-economic conditions; b) low immunity status; c) other genital infections; d. smoking.

#### Is cervical cancer preventable and curable?

Cervical cancer is both preventable and curable if detected early.

**Prevention:** Cervical cancer can be prevented through HPV vaccination of girls.

Cervical cancer has a long pre-invasive phase (from introduction of the virus to developing cancer) that lasts for 10–15 years. This gives a window of opportunity to detect and treat it.

**Cure:** When cervical cancer is detected and managed at an early stage, it is found to have over 93% cure rate.

#### What factors lead to high mortality in the case of cervical cancer in India?

- 1) **Lack of Detection in the Early Stages:** This is due to: a. Lack of awareness. b. Fear of cancer. c. Early symptoms of disease are not evident. d. Women not being screened.
- 2) **Dropping out of Patients:** People not completing their treatment post-screening.

#### What is WHO's global strategy to prevent cervical cancer?

It is along three pillars:

1. Widespread HPV vaccination.
2. Screening of women.
3. Early diagnosis and treatment of cervical pre-cancer and cancer.

#### What has the government done in this regard?

1. **Cancer screening by trained nurses in primary health centers.**
2. **Screening tools** like visual screening tests and HPV tests are simple and easily available.
3. **Evidence-based management algorithms** are in place for guidance (methods that rely on the best available evidence to guide decision-making).

#### What more needs to be done?

1. **Raise Awareness:** Awareness on the causes as well as prevention methods for cervical cancer, HPV vaccine (overcoming vaccine hesitancy), and regarding screening is needed.
2. **Capacity Building:** Capacity building for pre-cancer treatment, quality cancer treatment and palliative



services (care for the terminally ill) and the entire health system is required.

3. **Incorporating New Technologies:** New developments like single dose HPV vaccination, self-sampling for HPV testing, use of AI for diagnosis and treatment should be incorporated.

4. **Strengthening Health Insurance:** Mechanisms to reduce the financial burden for care should be strengthened.

5. **Cooperation with Civil Society:** Strengthening of partnerships with NGOs working in communities, innovators developing new methods of testing, and public health professionals.

6. **Collaborations and partnerships in the latest research** is important.

7. **Incorporating Best Practices:** Adopting successful models in community outreach and care pathways.

## Subject: International Relations

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

#### On India-U.K. Defence Ties

**News:** The article discusses the need for better defense ties between India and the UK. It highlights the sectors of cooperation as well as emerging challenges in this regard.

#### Background:

Recently, India's Defense Minister Rajnath Singh visited the United Kingdom (U.K.) after a gap of 22 years.

#### Why are better defense ties needed between India and the UK?

1) **Chinese Presence in Indian Ocean:** China has emerged as a major naval power whose deployments in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) are expanding rapidly thereby threatening India and **Sea Lines of Communications (SLOCs)**.

2) **India's Naval Modernization Plans:** Indian Navy has several technological gaps when compared to the Chinese Navy. Securing key technologies from the UK will be important in this regard.

#### What are the recent developments in the bilateral defence ties?

1. **Cooperation in Electrical Propulsion Technology:** Indian Navy's aircraft carriers are not powered by electric propulsion technology while the British Navy has mastered this technology. Since the Chinese are already advancing in this field, the British have agreed to train and help establish the necessary infrastructure.

**Note:** Warships integrated with electric propulsion produce a low acoustic signature (low generation of sound, making it harder to detect).

2. **Military Exercises:** Several joint military exercises have taken place between the two countries which signal deeper defence cooperation. The British also plan to train and increase interoperability with the Indian Navy.

#### What are the challenges in the ties?

1) **UK-Pakistan Ties:** U.K. governments have simultaneously supplied India and Pakistan with weapons or curbed weapons exports. This raises questions on British motives and objectives in the Subcontinent.

2) **Khalistan Issue:** Issues surrounding Khalistan and Sikh separatism (allegations of UK harbouring them) remain as a challenge.

### **Consensus regarding cooperation between India and France - Why India Says France Mon Ami**

**News:** The article discusses the strong 25-year partnership between France and India. They want to deepen their ties to address modern challenges like security in the Indo-Pacific, climate change, and technology cooperation.

#### **What is the consensus regarding cooperation between India and France?**

1. **Strategic Partnership Foundation:** Both nations view their alliance as a pillar of stability in a turbulent world, having cultivated ties for over 25 years without major contention.
2. **Focus on Indo-Pacific Region:** Key areas of joint concern include security, climate change, and regional architecture development. France, with its significant Indian Ocean presence, partners with India in addressing these challenges.
3. **Security Cooperation:** They collaborate against traditional threats like piracy and non-traditional ones such as illegal fishing. France's regional military bases, like in La Reunion and Djibouti, facilitate joint naval patrols and resource pooling.
4. **Technology and Digital Initiatives:** Joint efforts in digital technology aim to foster economic growth and sustainable development, emphasizing an inclusive digital environment.
5. **Research and Development:** Collaborations in frontier technologies, such as AI and quantum computing, are central, highlighted by the Indo-French Centre of Excellence in quantum computing.
6. **Environmental Initiatives:** They share a roadmap for developing Green Hydrogen, aspiring to lead in decarbonized hydrogen production.
7. **Defence and Space Collaboration:** Defense relationship is evolving, with India diversifying its defence acquisitions and France emerging as a key supplier. In space, joint initiatives include the Gaganyaan project and collaboration in the upcoming Venus mission.

#### **What more needs to be done to enhance cooperation between India and France?**

1. **Maritime Security Enhancement:** Increase frequency and scale of joint naval exercises, utilizing French bases more effectively for regional security.
2. **Institutional Mechanism Synergy:** Foster better integration between the Indian Ocean Rim Association, Indian Ocean Naval Symposium, and the Indian Ocean Commission, led by India and France for a unified approach to maritime challenges.
3. **Trade and Technology Coordination:** Strengthen collaboration in the EU-India Trade and Technology Council, utilizing France's influence for beneficial outcomes, and align strategies in the Mineral Security Partnership with the US and G7 countries.
4. **Defense Manufacturing Collaboration:** Beyond purchasing French defense equipment, India should focus on manufacturing items like Rafale jets domestically, benefiting from the trilateral partnership with France and UAE, to deepen defense ties.
5. **Joint Research Initiatives:** Expand consortiums involving academic, governmental, and corporate entities for projects in crucial sectors like health and climate change, leveraging the Indo-French Centre of Excellence in quantum computing.

## Challenges faced by IMEC - A revival of the IMEC idea amid choppy geopolitics

**News:** The article discusses the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC), a proposed trade route. It mentions how conflicts like the Yemen conflict and Gaza war affect trade through the Suez Canal, making alternatives like IMEC more important.

### What is the IMEC Project?

India Middle East Europe Corridor is a network of **transport corridors** comprising **railway lines** and **sea lanes** to **promote economic integration** between Asia, the Arabian Gulf, and Europe. For more information on IMEC [read here](#)

### What are the challenges IMEC is facing?

1. **Geopolitical Tensions:** The conflicts in Yemen and Gaza have impacted regional stability, crucial for IMEC's success. The Yemen conflict undermines confidence in the Suez Canal, highlighting the need for alternatives like IMEC.
2. **Turkey's Exclusion and Alternative Proposal:** Excluded from IMEC, Turkey has shown dissatisfaction and proposed an alternative trade route. This route, positioning itself as an alternative to Saudi Arabia, would pass through Iraq to reach the Mediterranean.
3. **Saudi Israeli Link Controversy:** The key part of IMEC, connecting Saudi Arabia to Israel, faces opposition due to longstanding regional disputes. Critics argue that the Arab Street would not support a major trade link between these two nations, especially following the Gaza war.
4. **Uncertain U.S. Support:** The potential political return of Donald Trump casts doubts on the U.S.'s commitment to IMEC. Trump's unpredictable nature raises questions about sustained U.S. interest in such a global project.

### How does IMEC benefit India?

1. **Enhanced Container Shipping:** For India, particularly the southern region, IMEC holds the potential to reduce delivery schedules by up to 40%. This improvement hinges on the development of dedicated freight corridors as part of a comprehensive all-India network, thereby making trade faster and more efficient.
2. **Reduced Logistics Costs:** Aligning with India's National Logistics Policy of 2022, IMEC could help in reducing logistics costs to global levels by 2030.
3. **Optimizing Transport Modes:** Currently, 70% of India's containers move by road. IMEC could shift this towards a more balanced split among road, rail, and coastal shipping, as recommended by industry experts.
4. **Integration with Indian Ports:** The corridor plans to integrate with major Indian ports like Mundra and Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust, enhancing their global connectivity and trade capacity.
5. **Support for the Hydrogen Economy:** IMEC includes plans for hydrogen pipelines, which could benefit India in the transition to a decarbonized economy.

### Way forward:

The future of IMEC hinges on overcoming geopolitical hurdles and infrastructure challenges. Successful resolution of issues, like Turkey's exclusion and the Saudi Israeli link, will be crucial. With potential global financing and support, especially from the U.S., Europe, and Saudi Arabia, IMEC could become a major, transformative trade route, benefiting regional economies and enhancing global trade connectivity.

## On India's Multi-Alignment Policy – Express View on Modi-Putin call

**News:** The article discusses the state of the current global geopolitics and how India is navigating its relations amidst these challenges through its Multi-Alignment Policy.

### What is the state of the current global geopolitics?

The current geopolitical scenario is marked by increasing power rivalries. For instance:

- Conflicts in Europe and West Asia – between Russia and Ukraine, Israel and Hamas.
- Rivalry between the US and China on economic, technological and strategic fronts.

### How is India dealing with these developments?

India has managed to engage with diverse partners who are often against each other. Its current “**multi-alignment**” policy is guided by national interest and the need to forge bilateral relationships. For instance:

- 1) Engaging with Russia:** Recently, India's PM and Russian President Vladimir Putin had a phone conversation. They reportedly discussed the “**special and privileged strategic partnership**”, the Ukraine conflict and a deepening of bilateral ties.
- 2) Engaging with Iran:** Recently, India's External Affairs Minister visited Iran where he finalised cooperation on developing the Chabahar Port.
- 3) Maintaining Ties with USA:** The US put considerable pressure on India to take a stronger position against Russia's aggression in Ukraine. However, India maintained its relations with both the major powers.
- 4) Maintaining Ties with West Asia:** India has deep partnerships with Israel and Saudi Arabia, even though they are in a regional cold war with Iran.

At the same time, India hasn't compromised on its core principles: that **war cannot be a solution** (in context of the Ukraine conflict) and **zero tolerance for terror** (in context of the Houthi attacks).

### What are the factors which have allowed India to maintain this stand?

- 1. Economic Rise:** The size of India's market as well as its potential for future growth gives it both strategic and diplomatic weight.
- 2. Counterbalance to an Aggressive China:** As China has grown more aggressive in Asia and beyond, the US and the West see India as a crucial regional counterbalance.
- 3. Democratic Credentials:** Its credentials as a liberal, pluralist democracy make India an attractive partner.

Hence, to navigate the current delicate geopolitics and geoeconomics to secure its interests, India must ensure it does well on all these fronts.

## Topic: Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests

### Taiwan's elections and the Indo-Pacific

**News:** The article discusses the reactions of major world powers after the recent Taiwan election results. It also highlights why Taiwan is an important player in global geopolitics and India's stance on the same.

### Background:

Lai Ching-te, the candidate of the ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), emerged as the winner of the Taiwan elections. It has now won 3 presidential elections in a row with its stance of independence (rejecting China's assertion of sovereignty and unification).

It also rejects the **1992 consensus** which declares that both entities accept that there is only one China but referred to as the PRC and the other as the Republic of China.

### What has been the reaction of the major powers to the election result?

1. **China:** Chinese Foreign Minister reiterated that it cannot change that there is only one China in the world and Taiwan is a part of China.
2. **USA:** It has welcomed the elections as a demonstration of Taiwan's vibrant democracy but also reiterated that it does not support the island's independence. It emphasises the need to maintain peace and security in the Taiwan Strait.
3. **Japan:** It has also congratulated Taiwan on its democratic polity and the shared values between the two countries.

### Why is Taiwan an important player in global geopolitics?

1. **Economic Weight:** Taiwan is a major trading power and the world's **16th largest economy**.
2. **Major Source of Semiconductors:** It is the source of **92% of the world's most advanced logic chips** and it **fabricates 55% of the semiconductors** embedded in vehicles, laptops, tablets and smartphones all over the world.
3. **Major Maritime Trading Route:** Any conflict in the Taiwan Strait would affect critical digital supply chains and the nearly **60% of global maritime trade** that moves through the South China Sea and the Taiwan Strait.

### What is India's changing stance with respect to Taiwan?

India has a stake in the maintenance of peace and security in the Indo-Pacific, with Taiwan at its centre. It maintains **non-official relations with Taiwan**. Lately, the following changes have occurred with respect to its stance on the Taiwan issue:

- 1) **Expansion of Economic Relations:** Trade and investment relations between the two countries have recently expanded significantly.
- 2) **Direct Criticism of China:** India for the first time in 2022, criticised China for its "militarisation of the Taiwan Strait".
- 3) **Not Affirming the One-China Principle:** India has lately stopped reaffirming the [one-China principle](#). Its stance is now more aligned with its partners in the QUAD.

### What is the impact of Taiwan's stability on India?

1. **Technology:** Taiwanese companies are integral to India's ambition in technology. **Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC) and United Microelectronics Corporation (UMC)** are central to India's efforts to develop modern semiconductor capacity.
2. **Manufacturing:** Major Apple suppliers such as Foxconn and Pegatron, both Taiwanese firms, are vital to India's manufacturing sector. Their involvement is crucial for India's goal to attract global supply chains.
3. **Geopolitical Stance:** A stable Taiwan Strait is beneficial for India. An autonomous Taiwan aligns with New Delhi's interests. Stability in Taiwan helps ensure the smooth operation of technology and manufacturing collaborations between the two nations.

## Topic: India and its neighborhood-relations

### On India-Maldives Relations – Don't overreact

**News:** The article discusses the recent developments in India-Maldives ties, especially Maldives' insistence of the removal of Indian troops from Maldives.

A detailed article on **India-Maldives relations** can be [read here](#).

#### What are the recent developments in India-Maldives ties?

Since the election of Mohamed Muizzu as president, Maldives has been moving away from India and closer to China, as visible in the recent China-Maldives joint statement.

Maldives has proposed the removal of Indian troops by March 15.

For more on this, [read here](#).

#### What are the factors which have led to an anti-India Maldivian stance?

1) **Internal Politics of Maldives:** The withdrawal of Indian troops was an election promise by the current political leadership. It is not a strategic concern as India reportedly has less than 90 soldiers in Maldives.

2) **Big-Brother Syndrome:** Militarily, economically and strategically, India has a huge impact on its neighbors.

3) **India's Internal Politics:** Some aspects of India's internal politics, such as an expansionist rhetoric, religion, illegal migration, social media jingoism and calls for boycotting a smaller neighbor – may lead to an anti-India sentiment.

4) **Geopolitics:** Smaller countries like Maldives usually try to use the rivalries among greater powers (India and China) to their own advantage.

#### Why is Maldives anti-India stance problematic?

It does not consider Maldives' geography and convergent interests with India.

**For instance,** Maldives is only 700 km from the Indian coast and over 6,000 km from China. India was the first to help Maldives during the tsunami in 2004 and the drinking water crisis in 2014.

#### How should India react to these developments?

Delhi must continue to engage with the political leadership of Maldives as well as its people. As External Affairs Minister Dr S Jaishankar said – It can't be guaranteed that every country will support or agree with India every time. Hence, as the regional power, it should not overreact to Maldives' concerns.

### On the Challenges of India-Iran Bilateral Ties – Iran, also ran

**News:** The article discusses the challenges in India-Iran Bilateral Ties in context of Foreign Minister S Jaishankar's recent Iran visit.

Foreign Minister Jaishankar's recent meetings with the Iranian leadership indicate a willingness to revive India-Iran ties.

#### What are the challenges in India-Iran Bilateral Ties?

1. **India's Support to US Sanctions on Iran:** Bilateral ties deteriorated after India stopped Iranian oil imports following US exiting the Iran nuclear deal (**ICPOA**) and imposing sanctions against Iran.

2. **China's Expanding Presence:** China deepened its ties with Iran by signing a 25-year comprehensive cooperation agreement. Beijing has also been buying Iranian oil.
3. **Changing Situation in Afghanistan:** India relied on the working relationship between US and Iran to protect its Afghan strategic interests. However, souring of US-Iran ties and US withdrawal from Afghanistan has left India in a tight spot with respect to Afghanistan.
4. **India's Ties with Sunni Arab Countries and Israel:** Simultaneously, India's improving ties with Arab nations and Israel (such as platforms like [I2U2](#)) is a challenge due to Shia Iran's hostility to these countries.
5. **Geopolitical Balancing:** India is caught between the Iran-Russia-China on one hand and the US-Israel-Arab partnership on the other hand. The Gaza conflict and the current situation with Houthi rebels in Yemen shows that the two groupings are still hostile.

#### What should be the way forward for bilateral relations?

1. **Not Completely Abandoning Iran:** According to the author, given the modernisation drive in Gulf Arab states, Israel's economy and growing India-US strategic partnership, India's interests lie with this grouping. However, India should not completely isolate Iran. It should utilise the strategic need of Iran requiring India to balance China.
2. **Focus on Connectivity:** Cooperation regarding the Chabahar port and the International North-South Transport Corridor should be undertaken.

## GS Paper 3

### Subject: Indian Economy

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

#### Increased capital expenditure by Indian states- States are spending

**News:** The article discusses how state governments in India veered towards the path of fiscal consolidation after the COVID-19 pandemic. They are now spending more on capital expenditure rather than just on regular expenses like salaries and pensions.

#### How have state governments managed their finances Post-COVID-19?

1. Post COVID-19, state governments in India kept their fiscal deficits below 3% of GDP in 2021-22 and 2022-23, lower than the allowed limits of 4.5% and 4%.
2. States spend more than the central government, accounting for over 60% of total government expenditure.
3. In 2023-24, states (excluding Arunachal Pradesh, Goa, Manipur and Meghalaya) shifted focus to capital expenditure with a 45.7% increase, while regular expenses grew only by 9.3%.
4. The ratio of capital outlay to total expenditure hit an eight-year high of 14.1%, indicating more spending on productive assets.

#### What drives the increased capital expenditure?

Increased capital expenditure by Indian states is driven primarily by two factors:

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1. **First**, proactive policies by the Union government, including the **early release of tax devolution funds**. In 2023-24, Rs 973.74 billion was approved, with Rs 590.3 billion disbursed for capital projects by November.
2. **Second**, states' own revenues have shown robust growth. **Tax and non-tax revenues grew by 11.5% and 19.5%, respectively**. This indicates improved tax administration efficiency and economic formalization.
3. **Thirdly**, the state tax revenues outpacing nominal GDP growth, estimated at 8.9% according to the National Statistical Office's First Advance Estimates, suggests two key aspects. Firstly, it reflects enhanced **efficiency in tax administration** by the states, indicating better collection and management of taxes. Secondly, it points to an **increase in the formalization of the economy**.
4. **Additionally**, significant revenue from the mining sector, boosted by reforms like e-auction of mining leases, contributed to this growth, particularly in mineral-rich states.

### What are the challenges?

1. Overall revenue receipts grew by only 5.5% due to a 29.2% reduction in grants from the Union government.
2. States increased market borrowings to a record Rs 5.8 trillion in nine months, mainly for capital expenditure.
3. States might slightly exceed their fiscal deficit target of 3.1% of GDP, potentially reaching up to 3.3 - 3.4%.

## Effectiveness of IBC, 2016 - A performance appraisal of IBC

**News:** The article discusses the effectiveness of India's Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), 2016. It evaluates how well the IBC resolves financial distress in companies, improves bank balance sheets, and benefits the economy, despite some challenges in efficiency and asset value realization.

### What is the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC)?

The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code was enacted in 2016, and it replaced all the existing laws with a uniform procedure to resolve insolvency and bankruptcy disputes. The code aimed to address the issue of Non-performing Assets (NPAs) and debt defaults.

For more information on IBC [read here](#).

### What is the impact of the IBC on banks and the economy?

1. **Reduction in Non-Performing Assets (NPAs):** The IBC helped decrease the NPA rate of banks significantly, from a peak of 14.8% in September 2018 to a low of 3.2% by September 2023.
2. **Increase in Bank Profits:** Banks experienced a remarkable turnaround, recording a historic profit of ₹2.63 trillion in 2022-23, compared to a loss in 2017-18.
3. **Improvement in Corporate Balance Sheets:** Post-IBC, firms showed enhanced performance with more robust balance sheets, better leverage management, and an improved interest coverage ratio exceeding 3.5.
4. **Enhancement in Corporate Governance:** There was a notable improvement in corporate governance, indicated by a reduction in related party transactions, as identified in a study post-IBC.
5. **Global Ranking Improvement:** India's ranking in global insolvency resolution improved drastically, moving from 136th to 52nd within the first three years of the IBC's implementation.

### What are the concerns related to the IBC?

1. **Inefficient Time Management:** The resolution processes under IBC are prolonged, averaging 867 days, far exceeding the intended 180 days.



2. **Gap in Asset Value Maximization:** Resolutions are realizing only 86% of the fair value of the companies, indicating a shortfall in achieving the desired value maximization.
3. **High Incidence of Liquidation:** The IBC results in more liquidations than rescues, particularly impacting companies that were already sick or defunct at the time of entering the process. Most companies going into liquidation were already sick or defunct, having assets valued at about 5% of their claims.
4. **Methodological Issues in Appraisal:** Some appraisals of the IBC's performance use flawed methodologies, like focusing solely on recovery rates, which overlook other important factors like realizations from equity holdings or the resolution of guarantors.

#### What is the way forward?

To improve the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), stakeholders like the government, adjudicating authority, debtors, creditors, and professionals should play their roles more effectively. This does not require legislative changes but rather better implementation and adherence to the IBC's processes, particularly in ensuring time-bound resolutions and maximizing the value of stressed assets.

### On Income Poverty in India – In Viksit Bharat, rural real wages are in decline

**News:** The article discusses the current status of poverty in India, especially focusing on agricultural wages and unemployment rates.

#### What is the current status of poverty in India?

According to NITI Aayog's [National Multidimensional Poverty Index \(NMPI\)](#), 248.2 million Indians have been lifted out of poverty in the last 9 years.

NITI Aayog argues that NMPI is a better measure to estimate poverty than the traditional estimates based on income/consumption.

However, there is a doubt over sustainability of a development model that improves access to public utilities but does not enhance the quality of these services or income levels.

Therefore, household income is still an important indicator of poverty levels. Hence, importance should be given to **income poverty, real wages, and unemployment** in the country.

**For instance**, India still has the largest number (160 million) of people under extreme poverty in the world as per the **World Bank's** estimate based on \$2.15/capita/day income.

Since most of these poor people are in rural areas, it is important to look at employment in agriculture and the real wage rates in rural areas.

#### What is the status of these indicators?

1. **Low Growth in Real Agricultural Wages:**
  - a. During 2009-10 to 2013-14, real agriculture and non-agriculture rural wages grew at 8.6 per cent and 6.9 per cent per annum respectively.
  - b. However, during 2014-15 to 2018-19, this decelerated to 3.3 per cent and 3 per cent per annum respectively.
  - c. In the last five years 2019-20 to 2023-24, it has become negative for both agriculture (-0.6 per cent) and non-agriculture (-1.4 per cent). Reasons behind this include COVID-19 and more people moving into the agricultural workforce.

2. **High Unemployment Rates Persist:** As per ILO, it averaged around 8.4% during 2004-05 to 2013-14 and roughly 7.9% during the last 10 years. So, the growth model has not seen a significant reduction in unemployment.

The government data shows that in rural areas, real wages have had negative growth in the last 5 years. In this regard, there is a need to create more employment-intensive growth processes.

## Subject: Agriculture

### Topic: Storage, transport and marketing of agricultural produce

#### On the Policy regarding Stocking and Export of Agricultural Commodities

**News:** The article discusses the drawbacks of the measures that have been taken to maintain foodgrain stocks and prevent food inflation India. It also suggests a way forward in this regard.

#### Background:

Wheat stocks in government warehouses are currently at a 7-year-low. According to the author, this is not a concern currently, but may become one in the future.

#### What measures have been taken by the govt to maintain stocks and prevent food inflation?

1. **Export Curbs:** Banning wheat and non-basmati white rice exports. For more on **Ban on Rice Exports**, [read here](#).
2. **Stocking Limits:** Not permitting large retailers and traders to hold more than 1,000 tonnes of wheat.
3. **Sale of Buffer Stock in Open Market:** Selling grain from the [Food Corporation of India](#)'s stocks in the open market (which keeps the prices in check).
4. **Usage Restrictions:** There have been curbs on diversion of cane juice and intermediate-stage molasses for ethanol production by sugar mills.
5. **Allowing Imports in certain cases:** In the case of pulses and edible oils, imports have been allowed at nil or low duties to deal with supply-side challenges.

However, this policy hasn't been followed in the case of wheat, rice and sugar. This might be due to political pressure (as the growers of these crops are politically more organised and don't want the price of their crops to go down due to cheap imports).

#### What can be the emerging challenges?

In the case of wheat, if the yield of the current wheat crop (due for harvesting from March-end) is low, it will lead to supply challenges.

#### What should be done?

- 1) **Not putting Export or Stocking Controls:** Allowing imports (like in the case of edible oils and pulses) without applying export and stocking controls is required in all agri-commodities.
- 2) **Policy Consistency:** India's farm sector has suffered from lack of policy stability and predictability. This impacts investments in processing, warehousing, marketing and research.

3) **Long-Term Vision:** A strategic vision for Indian agriculture, going beyond just focusing on short-term issues like food inflation, is important.

## Subject: Science & Technology

### Topic: Indigenization of technology and developing new technology

#### The problem with India's science management

**News:** The article discusses the issues with India's science management.

Scientific advances leading to deployable technologies are important for sustained economic progress for any nation.

#### What steps are being taken in this regard?

The government has tried to overhaul India's science establishment through the following steps:

1. Setting up of [National Research Foundation \(NRF\)](#)
2. **Restructuring of the DRDO.**

#### What are the issues with India's science management?

1. **Low R&D Expenditure:** India's expenditure on R&D is very low (around 0.7% of GDP, compared to 3.5% for USA and 2.4% for China).
2. **Slow Progress in Key Fields:** Fields such as India's **space programme, nuclear energy, genomics, robotics, and AI** are witnessing slow progress.
3. **Public Sector Dominance:** This leads to issues related to governmental bureaucracy, such as slow approvals for funding.
4. **Long-Term Funding Issues:** Commitment to long-term steady funding of critical projects is missing.
5. **Issues with Senior Scientists in Leadership Positions:** Some of the issues with their working include micromanaging institutions' accounts, and a lack of accountability.
6. **Concentration of Power:** Since only a handful of institutions (like IITs) had exclusive access to scientific equipment, abuse of power happened by those in control. Appointments, awards, foreign accolades and support from the system became their monopoly.

#### Why is the assumption that only scientists can lead scientific institutions incorrect?

1. **First, administering of a complex organisation** cannot be performed as a side-project of a 'working' scientist. Also, there is a difference between a good scientist, who is generally driven by individual considerations, and a good administrator, who must be organisationally driven.
2. **Second, scientists are not trained** to prioritise between time, cost, or precision, in making administrative decisions.
3. **Third, there is scope for conflict of interest.** Being an academic within the same institution in which one has administrative control can lead to an abuse of power.

#### What should be done in this regard?

1. **International Best Practices:** For instance, universities in USA follow a separation of administrators and scientists in their science administration.
2. **Constituting a Central Service:** Scientists could be selected and trained as part of an all-India science administration central service.

The administrative setup of a science establishment is its core. Without addressing these concerns, India's science establishment will continue to do injustice to its economic and strategic aspirations.

## Subject: Environment

### Topic: Environmental Pollution and Degradation

#### Need for a detailed air quality management plan in India

**News:** This article discusses India's challenges with air pollution and proposes a detailed plan. It suggests creating an advanced air quality framework using science, technology, and policy to monitor and manage air pollution more effectively across different regions of India.

#### Why is there a need for a detailed air quality management plan in India?

1. **Severe Air Pollution:** Indian cities are grappling with high levels of air pollution, as highlighted during events like COP 28.  
For information on COP 28 [read here](#).
2. **Mixed Results from Existing Plans:** The National Clean Air Action Plan (NCAP) launched in 2019 shows mixed results, indicating the need for more effective strategies.  
For information on NCAP [read here](#).
3. **Health and Climate Risks:** Air pollution in India, caused by fossil fuel combustion, industrial processes, and biofuel burning, poses health risks and contributes to climate change.
4. **Diverse Climatic Conditions:** India's varied micro-environments and climatic conditions make a one-size-fits-all approach ineffective.
5. **Lack of Comprehensive Data:** Current efforts are mainly urban-focused, and there's a lack of systematic emissions inventory and monitoring.
6. **Baseline Pollution Levels:** Research by NIAS shows baseline levels of pollutants like PM2.5 are higher than WHO guidelines, emphasizing the need for localized standards.

#### What has been done to address air pollution in India?

1. **Implementation of National Clean Air Action Plan (NCAP):** Launched in 2019, the NCAP was India's major initiative to reduce air pollution levels in its cities.
2. **Establishment of Air Quality Monitoring Networks:** Enhanced monitoring systems have been set up in urban areas to regularly track air pollution levels.
3. **Research Initiatives by NIAS:** The National Institute of Advanced Studies conducted research to establish baseline levels of major air pollutants in various climatic zones.
4. **Technology Integration for Emission Tracking:** In Bengaluru, drone-based artificial intelligence was used for the first time to identify emission hotspots, a step towards precise pollution source identification.

5. **Policy Formulation at Urban Levels:** Focused efforts on analyzing and managing air pollution in urban areas, acknowledging the severity of pollution in these regions.
6. **15th Finance Commission Funding:** Allocated funds to states specifically for air quality management, encouraging state-level initiatives and actions.

#### What should be done to address air pollution?

1. **Strengthen Key Input Parameters:** Before developing an air quality early warning system, focus on reinforcing two critical aspects: **creating a detailed inventory of emissions and conducting comprehensive air-shed mapping.** This foundational work is essential for accurate forecasting and effective management of air quality.
2. **Tailor Strategies to Diverse Environments:** Address air quality in rural, urban, and industrial areas with strategies specific to each region's climatic conditions.
3. **Incorporate Advanced Technology:** Incorporate Advanced Technology entails using innovative tools in air pollution management. This includes drone-based AI for pinpointing emission hotspots, as demonstrated in Bengaluru, and CubeSats, small satellites offering detailed environmental monitoring, crucial for air quality analysis in India.
4. **Expert Collaboration:** Form a consortium of domain experts, health scientists, and policy specialists for integrated air quality management.

## Subject: Internal Security

### Topic: Security challenges and their management in border areas

#### Challenges faced by the Indian Army- What India's Army Chief needs to do in the face of two-front threats

**News:** The article discusses the annual media briefing held by the Indian Army Chief on January 11. It covers India's military strategic security issues, including border management, internal security challenges, and the Army's modernization efforts. The focus is on General Manoj Pande's recent briefing and his views on these topics.

#### What are the current security challenges faced by the Indian Army?

1. **In Manipur:**  
Decreased violence, but recovery of only 30% of 5,000 stolen small arms.  
Persistent ethnic conflicts and potential for spreading instability.
2. **At the Indo-Myanmar Border:**  
Volatile situation with infiltration challenges due to **Free Movement Regime.**  
Smuggling of narcotics and contraband across the border.  
Only 20 Assam Rifles units were available for border sealing.
3. **Challenges in Jammu & Kashmir:**  
Acknowledgment of tactical setbacks with 20 soldiers lost in recent ambushes.  
Need for new approaches in the long-standing counter-insurgency campaign.
4. **Northern Border with China:**  
High operational preparedness required along the Line of Actual Control.

Ongoing efforts to return to the pre-2020 status with China.  
Trust deficit leading to continuous robust military deployment.

**How is the Indian Army addressing these challenges?**

1. **In Manipur**, the Army collaborates with central and state agencies to restore stability, addressing the decrease in violence but facing the challenge of unrecovered stolen arms.
2. **On the Indo-Myanmar border**, the Army and Assam Rifles work together to manage security threats, despite the Free Movement Regime complicating border control.
3. **In Jammu & Kashmir**, the Army is adapting tactics and learning from recent setbacks, including 20 soldiers lost in ambushes.
4. **Along the China border**, the Army maintains a high operational readiness and robust deployment, focusing on returning to the pre-2020 status and managing the trust deficit.

**What should be the way forward?**

Moving forward, the Indian Army should continue its efforts in current operations, especially in areas like Manipur, along the Indo-Myanmar border, Jammu & Kashmir and China border. Simultaneously, it is important to focus on integrating new technologies and preparing for climate change impacts. This dual approach of consolidating current strategies while embracing innovation and environmental considerations will be crucial for future readiness and effectiveness.