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9 PM Current Affairs Weekly Compilation

For UPSC CSE mains examination

UPSC

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Features :

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

Index

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GS Paper 1

Topic- Salient features of Indian Society

Caste discrimination still shapes Indian cities

News: The article discusses how caste discrimination still shapes Indian cities, despite urbanization offering a potential escape from traditional caste oppression.

What were the views of Gandhi and B.R. Ambedkar on the Indian village?

Gandhi's View: Gandhi viewed Indian villages as self-reliant and equitable communities. He saw villages as centers of non-violent order. He advocated for decentralization of power through Gram Swaraj, believing it would lead to a just society.

Ambedkar's View: Ambedkar rejected village life, seeing it as the foundation of the Hindu caste order. He described villages as "the working plant of the Hindu social order." He Opposed the idea of autonomous village units in the Constituent Assembly, relieved when it was rejected.

What was Ambedkar's view on urbanization?

Ambedkar's Positive View on Urbanization:

Viewed cities as potential spaces for Dalit liberation from caste oppression.
Believed that the anonymity of urban life could help shift from a caste-based to a class-based order.

Challenges Observed in Urban Settings:

Despite opportunities, Ambedkar noted caste's adaptation in cities, affecting housing and employment. Cited his own struggle to find a house in Baroda as an example of persistent caste barriers.

How is segregation evident in Indian cities?

Segregation in Housing: A 2021 consumer survey revealed dietary habits (like eating non-vegetarian food) as a major factor in rental housing decisions, reflecting caste-based preferences.
Policy-Driven Segregation: State policies, such as Uttar Pradesh's 2017 meat shop regulations near religious places, and Gujarat's ban on street food sales on main roads in 2021, enforce segregation influenced by caste.

Impact on Public Services: Research indicates that Dalits and Muslims have the poorest access to municipal infrastructure like clean drinking water and are predominantly found in sacrifice zones near severe environmental pollution sources like landfills.
Topic: Role of women and women's organization

Climate crisis is not gender-neutral

News: This article explains how climate change impacts women and girls more, especially in poor and rural areas. It discusses the need for climate action that includes women, as they can offer important solutions and should be seen as agents of change, not just victims.

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Why is climate crisis not gender-neutral?

Higher Risk in Disasters: Women and children are 14 times more likely to die in disasters, as noted by the UNDP. This shows gender disparities in vulnerability and mortality rates during climate crises.

Increased Domestic Burden: In India, climate-induced crop failures lead to increased workload for women in agriculture, alongside health issues and domestic violence. Men face social stigma from unpaid loans, but women bear the brunt of increased domestic responsibilities.

Gender-Based Violence: Studies link natural disasters to a rise in gender-based violence. Women living in disaster-prone areas experience more intimate partner violence and undernourishment.

Health Risks in Heatwaves: Women, especially pregnant ones, are more vulnerable to health risks during heatwaves. Prolonged heat exposure leads to higher risks of preterm birth and other health complications.

Water Scarcity Impacts: Climate change affecting water availability increases the burden on women, who typically manage water resources in households. This impacts their time for productive work and health care.

For information on **Climate Change and Gendered Vulnerabilities** read here

Why are women important in climate action?

Effective Agricultural Practices: When given the same resources as men, women can increase agricultural yields by 20-30%. This shows their potential in enhancing food security under changing climatic conditions.

Local Knowledge and Solutions: Women, particularly from tribal and rural areas, have been at the forefront of environmental conservation. Their involvement can lead to more effective, locally-relevant climate solutions.

Empowering Women Benefits All: Empowering women with knowledge, tools, and resources enables them to contribute significantly to climate action. This helps in creating sustainable, community-based solutions.

Gender-Specific Needs and Strengths: Recognizing the unique needs and strengths of women in climate action plans leads to more comprehensive and effective strategies. It ensures a gender-balanced approach to climate adaptation and resilience building.

For more information read here

What should be done?

Prioritize Vulnerable Groups in Heatwave Protection: Implement measures to protect groups like outdoor workers, pregnant women, infants, and the elderly from extreme heat, as cities experience excess deaths during heatwaves.

Enhance Water Resource Management: Revitalize traditional rainwater harvesting systems, as exemplified by the work in Tamil Nadu by the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation, to combat water scarcity.

Empower Local Communities: Enable village-level decision-making and action, particularly empowering women in panchayats and Self-help Groups, for effective local climate resilience.

Adopt Gender-Inclusive Climate Policies: Integrate a gender perspective in State Action Plans on Climate Change, moving beyond stereotypes and acknowledging women as key agents of change.

Urban Planning for Heat Mitigation: Adopt strategies like painting roofs with reflective paint, improving tree cover, and enhancing green spaces, as demonstrated by the Mahila Housing Trust in Udaipur, to reduce urban heat effects

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Subject: Geography

Topic- Important Geophysical phenomena

Increasing heatwaves in India: In a heatwave, how do we protect our most vulnerable

News: The article discusses the increasing heatwaves in India and their impact, including rising temperatures, more heatwave days, and a growing number of heat-related deaths and illnesses. It highlights the challenges in accurately reporting and addressing these issues.

For details information on **heatwave** read here

What is the Current Status of Heatwaves?

Heatwaves in India:

2023 marked India's second warmest year in 122 years. (warmest year 2016)
States like Gujarat, Maharashtra, North Karnataka, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, North Chhattisgarh, Odisha, and Andhra Pradesh experience severe heatwaves, with temperatures reaching 45.2°C in parts of Karnataka (Raichur).
The frequency of heatwave days has increased dramatically, from 90 days in the 1990s to 190 days in 2022.

Global Heatwave Status:

Europe's 2003 summer heatwave led to over 70,000 excess deaths across 16 countries, impacting around 400 million people.
In 2022, considered Europe's hottest season, there were approximately 61,672 heat-related deaths across 35 countries, affecting a population of about 543 million.
Countries around the Mediterranean Sea, like Italy and Spain, are significantly affected by heatwaves.

What is the definition of "heat-related death"?

The **US National Association of Medical Examiners** defines it as deaths where high temperatures either caused or significantly contributed to the death, recognizing the multifaceted nature of heat impact on health.

Why there is discrepancies in reporting heat-related deaths in India?

Varying Numbers by Different Agencies: Different agencies like IMD, NDMA, and NCRB report varying numbers (10,545 to 20,615 deaths) due to differing data collection methods.
Environmental Factors Overlooked: The situation in Ballia and Deoria districts, where heatwaves likely contributed to deaths, especially in older individuals with co-morbidities, but were not officially recorded as heat-related. This illustrates how environmental factors are often overlooked in death reports.

Lack of Unified Definition: U.S. National Association of Medical Examiners' definition of "heat-related death" and discusses how non-biomedical factors are often missed in death certificates. This points to the complication of not having a standardized definition impacting consistent reporting.

How are heatwaves affecting public health?

Increased Mortality: There's a notable rise in deaths during heatwaves.
Impact on Vulnerable Populations: Elderly people and those with pre-existing conditions are particularly at risk. For example, during a heatwave in Uttar Pradesh, most of the 150 deaths in a week were among the elderly.
Rising Hospital Admissions: Heatwaves lead to spikes in hospital admissions due to heat-related illnesses, as seen in districts like Ballia and Deoria in Uttar Pradesh.

What initiatives has the Indian government taken to overcome the issue of Heatwaves?

Heat Action Plans: The Indian government has updated Heat Action Plans across 23 states, aiming to strategically combat and manage heatwaves.
Awareness Campaigns: About 100 districts have initiated campaigns to raise awareness about heatwave risks and precautions.
Focus on Vulnerable Groups: These initiatives prioritize protecting high-risk groups like children, pregnant women, the elderly, and people with chronic diseases.
Public Health Preparedness: The Union Health Minister reviewed the preparedness for managing Heat-Related Illnesses (HRIs) on April 3, indicating a proactive approach to addressing the health impacts of heatwaves

GS Paper 2

Subject: Governance

Topic- governance-Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

Issues with India's current liquor policies in India: Huge tax and licence raj in liquor

News: The article emphasizes the need for reform in India's liquor policy, highlighting the problems caused by high taxes and strict licensing. It points out that these policies lead to increased consumption of low-quality liquor, limited market competition, and potential corruption.

What are the issues with India's current liquor policies?

Excessive Taxation: India's liquor taxes are extremely high, often above 200% domestically and 150% for customs duties, burdening consumers financially.
Impact on Health: High taxes lead consumers to lower-quality, cheaper alcohol, increasing health risks, especially at the lower income levels.
State Revenue Dependence: States heavily rely on liquor taxes for revenue, but Bihar's prohibition shows alternatives exist for state financing.
Complex Tax System: Liquor is not included under the Goods and Services Tax (GST), complicating the tax structure. Including it could simplify taxation and align it with other products like cigarettes.
Government Monopoly in Sales: Current policies often lead to government monopolies in liquor sales, which can increase corruption and create barriers for private businesses.

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What should be done?

Include Liquor in GST: Simplify the tax system by including liquor under GST, as done with cigarettes, to unify and streamline the tax process.

Encourage Private Distribution: Shift from government monopolies to private distribution of liquor, regulated for safety and age restrictions. This can decrease corruption and open opportunities for ordinary businesses.

Reform Licensing Policies: Simplify licensing for liquor sales and consumption in public spaces to reduce bureaucratic hurdles and promote a healthier business and social environment.

Parental consent before using a child's personal data: Aadhaar-based age tokens can solve a privacy problem

News: The article discusses India's DPDP Act of 2023, specifically Section 9, which requires companies to get parental consent before using a child's personal data, aiming to protect children's privacy online. It suggests using zero-knowledge proofs with Aadhaar, India's digital ID system, to verify age without revealing personal information, making the internet safer for kids.

For details information on **Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, 2023,** read here

What are the issues with India's Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, 2023?

Mandatory Age Verification: The DPDP Act requires businesses to confirm if users are children. This means verifying the age of every user, which is complex and intrusive.

Increased Friction in Online Experience: Age verification adds steps to browsing, disrupting the seamless experience of moving between websites.

Potential for Increased Data Collection: The act could unintentionally give businesses a reason to collect more personal data, under the guise of complying with the law.

Global Precedents: Similar laws, like the UK's Children Online Harms Act, also impose age-gating, suggesting this approach is gaining traction globally.

What is the proposed solution?

The proposed solution to the challenges posed by India's DPDP Act is the use of **zero-knowledge proofs (ZKPs)** in combination with Aadhaar, India's digital identity system.

This method **allows age verification without disclosing other personal information**. By generating a digital token through Aadhaar, users can prove their age anonymously when accessing websites.

This approach **aims to maintain privacy while complying with the age verification** requirements of the law. addresses the friction and privacy concerns by providing a streamlined and secure method for age verification, leveraging India's existing digital identity infrastructure.

This method, while based on India's Aadhaar system, offers a framework that **could be adapted worldwide for online age verification.**

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Topic- Issues Relating to Development and Management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

Youth suicide in India

Context- As per the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) reports, 1.71 lakh people have died by suicide in 2022. The suicide rate has increased to 12.4 per 1,00,000 which is the highest rate ever recorded in India.
As per a current review of adolescent suicides in India, the most reported risk factors were mental health problems (54%), negative or traumatic family issues (36%), academic stress (23%), social and lifestyle factors (20%), violence (22%), economic distress (9.1%) and relationship factors (9%

What are the reasons behind rising youth suicide rates in India?

Suicide is a complex human behavior, and it is difficult to find a single causative factor.However,there are certain common triggering factors of suicides such as-

1) **Young Girls**-There are specific socio-cultural factors for suicide among young girls and women such as-
A) Arranged and early marriages, embracing young motherhood, low social status, domestic violence and economic dependence on men.
B. Gender-based discrimination and rigidity in gender roles are also responsible for young girls' suicides.

2) **Cutting throat competition**- Competitive examinations have pushed many students to the edge. There is tremendous pressure to get into colleges and disproportionate media hype around results and months of pent-up pressures and emotions, all this leads to rise in suicidal tendencies.

3) **Rise in Alcohol and substance use-** There has been an increase in alcohol consumption and substance abuse. They also contribute to youth suicides.

4) **Role of the internet**- A meta-analysis across 19 states in India found that about 20% of college students are addicted to the internet. One-third of young individuals experience cyberbullying, and within this group, one-third report suicidal tendencies. Further, teenagers who spend more than two hours a day on social media exhibit higher suicidal tendencies.

5) **Role of media**-The media has a strong influence on vulnerable young people. There has been a rise in sensational reporting of suicide especially after the suicide of famous actor. As a result of this, there was a significant increase in searches on Google on "how to commit suicide".

What steps can be taken to reduce suicidal tendencies among youths in India?

1) **Help-seeking behavior**- There is a need for encouraging help-seeking behavior among youth.They can be taught problem solving, impulse control and emotional regulation.

2) I**dentification of mental problems**- There should be early identification of mental distress and provision of care in a youth-friendly environment.

3) **Lifestyle changes**- Youth can be encouraged to adopt a healthy lifestyle and maintain a good diet.They can engage in cultivating supportive friendships, yoga and meditation.

4) **Role of family**- There is a need to improve the family environment by reducing domestic violence and alcohol consumption.

5) **Education reform**-The government should undertake educational reforms such as alternative assessment methods and provisions to explore the potential of a young person.

6) **Role of society**-Society should play a constructive role by reducing stigma and discrimination based on caste, religion and sexuality.

7**) Effective implementation of National Suicide Prevention Strategy for India-** The strategy was launched with the objective of reducing suicide by 10% by 2030.It highlighted the significance of inter-ministerial collaboration between the Ministries of Health, Education, Information and Broadcasting, and Social Welfare for better outcome.

Read more- Students suicide in India

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Universal Health Coverage-Indias path to inclusive health care

Context- The World Health Day is observed every year on April 7 by The World Health Organization (WHO). The theme this year is "My Health, My Right". It highlights the significance of health equity. Health equity ensures that every person has an equal opportunity to achieve their highest health potential irrespective of their circumstances. It is determined by social norms, political, legal and other structural determinants. Further, the National Health Policy also talks about Universal Health Coverage as one of its goals. Universal health coverage (UHC) signifies universal accessibility to comprehensive, high-quality health services, without financial hardship.

What are the challenges before India to attain health equity?

1) **Health Disparities-** As per 2011 census, more than 17% of Indias metropolitan area are slums, which face significant health disparities. According to the Indian Council of Medical Research, infectious diseases like tuberculosis are 1.5 times more prevalent in slums compared to non-slum areas.
2) **Social discrimination-** As per the National Family Health Survey (NFHS)-5 (2019-21) data, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes experience higher child mortality and lower immunization rates.
Further, 59% of poor women suffer from anemia which is almost double the rate in the higher income groups.
3) **Rise of non-communicable diseases (NCDs)**-It account for more than 60% of all fatalities in India. As per The Public Health Foundation of India, economic effect of NCDs could cross $6 trillion by 2030.
4) **Paucity of doctors**- WHO data indicates that India has only 0.8 doctors per 1,000 people, which is below the advised ratio. Rural areas have an acute shortage of doctors.
5) **Right to health**- India does not have a constitutional provision for the fundamental right to basic health. The constitutional right to health is critical to break the vicious cycle of poverty and poor health.
6) **Issues faced by migrant workers**- India has a large migrant population. According to UN-Habitat/World Bank, 49% of the urban population lives in urban slums. Urban slums do not have access to clean drinking water and sanitation.

What should be the way forward?

1) **Ensure portability of health care services**- Access to health care should be made more mobile and portable for migrant workers.
2) **Minimize out-of-pocket expenditure**-There is a need to simplify reimbursement processes for reducing out-of-pocket expenditure. The design of cash transfers and reimbursement in India's public healthcare system should be adapted as per the needs of migrant and marginal communities.
3) **Inclusive health systems**-In order to overcome language barriers and diversity in the urban context, there is a need to integrate health management information system dashboards with both public and private systems. This will make the health system more inclusive to all sections of society.
4) **Strengthening primary health care**-There is a need to strengthen and implement community-based primary healthcare in urban and peri-urban areas with seamless referral systems.
5) **Health Literacy**-In order to achieve the target of Universal Health coverage and health equity, there should be more focus on health literacy. India should include health education in National Health Mission. This would empower the people to make educated health decisions.
6) **Leveraging the role of NGOs**- Organizations with a strong local presence are essential for ensuring health equity. In this context, it is important to leverage the role played by the non-governmental organizations and civic societies because they engage directly with grass roots community. They can help in tailoring health initiatives that are culturally sensitive to the community's unique needs.

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7) **Evidence-based practices**-Research institutes and academic institutions can offer insights into health inequalities and the efficacy of health interventions. This will assist in creating evidence-based practices. Read more- Healthcare Initiatives in The Budget

Recent changes in NCERT textbooks: Express View on NCERT revisions: Narrowing the view,

News: This article discusses recent changes in Indian school textbooks by NCERT. These changes overlook important topics like recent research, social media's impact, and climate politics. Instead, they seem to align with the current government's views, avoiding sensitive historical and social issues.

What are the recent changes in NCERT textbooks?

NCERT Textbook Revisions: The textbooks for history, sociology, and political science from classes VI to XII have been revised.
Previous Deletions from Textbooks: Earlier, important sections on Mahatma Gandhi's assassination, the Emergency, Gujarat 2002, and protest movements were removed.
Sociology Textbook Changes: References to the struggles of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe communities, and the impact of large dam projects on tribal groups, were deleted.

What are the criticisms of these changes?

Ignoring Latest Research: The revisions don't adequately incorporate new archaeological findings or historiography, especially regarding the Indus Valley Civilization.
Overlooking Important Topics: Significant issues, such as the exclusion of key areas like India's Northeast region and insufficient coverage of the role of social media in politics and climate change politics, are not adequately addressed.
Promoting a Political Narrative: Critics argue the revisions align with the current government's perspective, potentially skewing historical and social narratives.
Contradiction to Educational Policy: These changes are seen as conflicting with the National Education Policy's aim for an ideologically neutral and comprehensive education.

Way forward -To foster a robust education system, NCERT must update textbooks with the latest research, incorporating recent historiography and political developments, like social media's role in mobilization. The focus should be on promoting objectivity, recognizing social complexities, and ensuring inclusivity of all historical and political perspectives, avoiding any bias or political agenda.

India's struggle with TB drug shortages: Gross mismanagement

News: The article discusses India's struggle with TB drug shortages. Despite plans to eliminate TB by 2025, there are ongoing issues with drug availability. The government's management of the TB program is criticized, and the burden on patients to obtain medicines is highlighted.

For details information on **Eliminating tuberculosis (TB) in India by 2025** read here

What is the current situation with TB in India?

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India is **facing a TB drug shortage**, affecting both drug-sensitive and multi-drug-resistant TB (MDR-TB). India's TB drug supply disruption started in 2022 with drug-sensitive medicines and escalated to include MDR-TB drugs, lasting nearly a year.

For example, a severe shortage of critical MDR-TB drugs occurred seven months ago. In September 2021, India experienced a stockout of the MDR-TB drug Delamanid.

Despite being a significant producer of these drugs, **India's management of the TB program has been inadequate.**

How has the government responded?

The government **renamed the National TB Control Programme to the National TB Elimination Programme**, aligning with the **goal to eliminate TB by 2025.**

Despite the renaming, fundamental issues like drug availability haven't been effectively addressed.

A Health Ministry circular dated March 18, 2024, **acknowledged potential delays in drug supply** due to "unforeseen and extraneous circumstances."

States have been permitted to procure TB drugs locally as a temporary measure for three months.

In cases where **district health facilities can't provide free drugs, patients may be reimbursed for medicines they purchase**, indicating a reliance on patients to manage their own treatment in emergencies.

What are the challenges for patients?

The frequent drug shortages **force patients to either wait for medication or buy it themselves**. Many TB patients in India come from **poor socioeconomic backgrounds, making it hard to afford medicines.** The government's solution of reimbursing patients who buy their own drugs is problematic, as it assumes patients can initially afford the drugs. This approach **adds financial strain to patients already struggling with health issues.**

India's 'National One Health Mission': The advent of a holistic approach to 'one health'

News: The article discusses India's 'National One Health Mission,' which aims to better prepare for diseases affecting humans, animals, and the environment. It involves various ministries and departments working together for disease control, research, and pandemic preparedness. The mission includes setting up a national network of laboratories and using technology like AI for disease monitoring.

For details information on One Health Approach read Articles 1, Articles 2, Articles 3

What is the India's 'National One Health Mission'?

Mission Overview: The 'National One Health Mission' is **India's integrated approach to managing diseases** affecting humans, animals, and the environment.

Participating Bodies: Coordination among 13 Ministries and Departments, including those for Science and Technology, Biotechnology, Health, and Animal Husbandry.

Objectives and Goals: Developing strategies for disease surveillance, research, and response to human and animal diseases.

Focus on Diseases: Tackling diseases that affect humans such as COVID-19, foot and mouth disease, and lumpy skin disease.

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Why is 'One Health' important globally?

1.One Health' is essential globally for integrated disease management across humans, animals, and the environment.
2. It addresses widespread diseases like COVID-19, which affect multiple species,
showing the interconnectedness of health sectors. It also concerns wildlife diseases, like canine distemper, crucial for conservation efforts.
3. It focuses on establishing a global network of 'One Health' institutes for unified disease response strategies.
4. It extends beyond diseases to address wider issues like antimicrobial resistance, food safety, and climate change impacts.
5. One Health' was endorsed during India's G-20 presidency, highlighting the need for international collaboration in health surveillance.

What initiatives has the Indian government taken for the 'National One Health Mission'?

1. The Indian government has **launched the 'National One Health Mission'**, aiming to synergize efforts in managing diseases that impact humans, animals, and the environment.
2. A key step was the **establishment of the National Institute for One Health in Nagpur,** serving as a central hub for coordinating both national and international activities related to health management.
3. Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone for this institute on December 11, 2022, marking a significant milestone in the mission's progress.

What should be done?

1. **Enhance disease management** across human, animal, and environmental sectors by efficiently using the national network of high-risk pathogen laboratories, including BSL 3 and BSL 4 labs.
2. **Apply advanced technologies** such as AI and machine learning to enhance epidemiology and data analysis. This approach can be modeled on the success of genomic surveillance from wastewater, as demonstrated during the COVID-19 pandemic.
3.**Promote active collaboration** between government agencies, NGOs, academia, the private sector, and citizens to advance the 'One Earth, One Health' initiative, aiming for inclusive health management.

ASER 2023 Report for better education

Context - The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2023 was released in mid-January this year. It has highlighted the foundational skill of 14–18-year-old students.

What are the findings of the ASER 2023?

1) **Reading abilities -** The ASER 2023 Beyond Basics survey was carried out in 28 rural districts across 26 States of the country. The report highlighted that overall, 26% of 14–18-year-olds cannot read a standard two-level text in their regional language.
2) **School Enrollment**-As per the findings of the report,57% of the 14–18-year-olds surveyed students, who do not have basic reading skills are enrolled in standard 10 or below. 28% of these children are not enrolled in school, college or a vocational institution.
3) **Fluency and comprehension**-Of the children in standard eight who could not read standard two level text fluently in 2022, almost half could read a standard one level text (i.e., a simple paragraph). Recognizing letters

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or decoding simple words is not the major challenge most face.

4) **Access to reading material**-ASER 2022, and later the State of Elementary Education in Rural India Report highlighted that only a small fraction of rural households has reading materials, other than school textbooks.

5) **Aspiration of students -** The ASER team conducted focus group discussions with children of the 14-18 years old in 3 districts. More than 60% of the surveyed children want to obtain at least a college education, with a higher percentage of girls aspiring for a college education (65%) when compared to boys (59%).

6) **Vocational Education-** In some places vocational education was looked down upon and perceived to be a last resort for those who couldn't get white-collar jobs whereas in places like Solan in Himachal, it was taken with great enthusiasm due to introduction of relevant e vocational programs like tourism and hotel.

What is the reason behind such poor performance of students?

1) **Lack of foundational skills in the primary grades-** As per ASER 2018 report, around 32% of standard seven and 27% of standard eight children could not read a standard two-level text. Thus, it becomes extremely difficult for the children to acquire foundational skills in later grades if they have not acquired it in their primary grades.

2) **Facing embarrassment**-In 2022, nearly half of the kids in eighth grade who couldn't read at a second-grade level could read at a first-grade level. Recognizing letters or decoding simple words is not the major challenge most face.However,they are often ridiculed and therefore, many of these children start to hate reading.

3) **Lack of connections**- As per ASER, almost half of the surveyed 14–18-year-oldss who aspire to become a doctor or join the police department, do not have access to anyone working in that profession.

Read more- On India's Public Education System

What should be the way forward?

1) **Ending the shame**-There is a need for guidance, practice, and lots of encouragement and motivation to children who are not able to read properly.They must not be ridiculed by anyone.

2) **Community libraries**- They can create rich and vibrant spaces that can foster reading, creativity and critical thinking. They need to be managed effectively to rekindle an interest in reading.

3) **Leveraging Technology**-There is a need to leverage digital technology to equip youth with the foundations of their aspired professions and bridge connections with relevant professionals. For ex-A student who wants to become nurse can undertake online foundational courses on nursing and related subjects.

4) **Utilizing data**- Data provided by various surveys can provide crucial pointers for action. It can help in policy formulation and suggesting corrective actions.

Viral hepatitis- A challenge to India's public health

Context- India has one of the highest burdens of viral hepatitis in the world, according to the World Health Organization's Global Hepatitis Report 2024. It's tied with tuberculosis (TB) as the second-largest infectious killer globally.

What is viral hepatitis?

Description-Hepatitis means inflammation of the liver. The liver is a vital organ that processes nutrients, filters the blood, and fights infections. When the liver is inflamed or damaged, its function can be affected. It is often caused by a virus.

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Types-There are five hepatitis viruses that cause liver disease in humans.They are Hepatitis A, B,C,D and E.
Transmission- Hepatitis A and E are transmitted through contaminated food and water, and result in week-long symptoms such as fever, abdominal pain, jaundice (yellowing of skin), dark urine, and pale stools.
WHO report-The recent WHO report pertains to the blood-borne hepatitis B (hep B) and hepatitis C (hep C) viruses. The report does not consider hepatitis D because it only infects people who are already infected with hepatitis B.
Prevention-Hep B can be prevented by vaccination, while hep C can be cured with medication. Hepatitis D can be prevented by vaccinating against hep B.

What are the reports finding about India?

Disease burden-According to the report, India ranks second globally in terms of viral hepatitis cases, representing over 11% of the total burden worldwide.
Diagnosis- The diagnosis of viral hepatitis was extremely low. The report shows that only 2.4% of hepatitis B cases and around 28% of hepatitis C cases were diagnosed.

Read more- Havisure: India's first indigenously developed Hepatitis A vaccine

What's causing the increase in viral hepatitis cases in India?

Viral hepatitis can be transmitted through contaminated blood transfusions, or through contaminated needles.

1) **Hep B**-India's hep B cases are driven up by mother-to-child transmission. This is because most blood banks offer safe blood, and the risk of needle-stick transmission among healthcare workers is low because almost everyone is vaccinated.
2) **Hep C**- According to the WHO report, India is among the ten countries where 80% of infections occur among injection drug users.
3) **Underutilization of existing facilities**- People aren't taking advantage of the free diagnostics and treatment available to them.
4) **Disparity in treatment**- While viral hepatitis causes almost as many deaths as tuberculosis, it doesn't receive as much attention in India. As per the report, none of the diagnosed patients received treatment for hepatitis B, and only 21% received treatment for hepatitis C. In contrast, 95% of diagnosed TB patients in India were given therapy.

What challenges do India face in handling viral hepatitis?

Hep B-There are 3 things that are required to be controlled such as-

A) All newborns need to be fully vaccinated against hepatitis B.
B) Adults who haven't been immunized should also get the shot.
C) Additionally, everyone diagnosed with the infection should receive treatment.

Low coverage- The hepatitis B vaccine was introduced for children in 2007-08 as part of the government's universal immunization program. However, a 2019 study revealed that its coverage ranged from 41% to 62%.
Lack of universal care-The parameters mentioned in the international guideline for initiating treatment exclude 7 to 8 of the 10 people who are diagnosed with the infection. Thus, there is a need to adopt a 'treat all' or universal approach like HIV

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Topic-Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability.

Consequences of applying laws and judgments with retrospective effects: Law in its own time

News: The article discusses how the Indian legislature and judiciary made laws and judgments with retrospective effects in 2012 and 2024. This approach, aimed at protecting sovereignty and democracy, led to unintended economic consequences and questioned the accountability of the judiciary.

What happened in 2012 and 2024 regarding retrospective laws and judgement?

In 2012, a retrospective tax law was passed to tackle tax avoidance by big corporations. In 2024, the judiciary declared electoral bonds illegal, also retrospectively, to prevent corporate influence in politics.

What are the consequences of applying laws and judgments with retrospective effects?

Economic Instability: The retrospective tax law of 2012 led to reduced private sector investment and job losses. This indicates how such laws can create economic uncertainty and discourage investment.
Legal Uncertainty: Applying laws retrospectively creates a sense of unpredictability about the legal environment. Individuals and businesses become unsure if their past actions might suddenly be deemed illegal.
Loss of Confidence: The retrospective application in both 2012 and 2024 cases likely eroded public confidence in the legal system. It implies that laws can change unpredictably, affecting past actions.
Questioning Judiciary's Role: It raises questions about the judiciary's accountability and its impact on economic and legal stability.
Violating Individual Rights: it can lead to the violation of individual rights, as actions that were legal at the time they were taken are judged illegal in hindsight. This was a concern with the invalidation of electoral bonds in 2024.

What should be done?

Ensure Judicial Prudence: The judiciary's decision on electoral bonds in 2024 overlooked practical consequences, like returning to less transparent political funding methods. The courts should balance legal principles with practical outcomes.
Enhance Transparency in Political Funding: The electoral bond scheme, though flawed, was a step towards transparency compared to the previous anonymous system. A revised version could improve political funding transparency.
Strengthen Checks and Balances: Like the government, which is accountable to voters and oversight bodies, the judiciary also needs mechanisms for accountability, perhaps through public opinion surveys or other independent reviews.
Learn from Past Experiences: The UPA-2 government's downfall due to perceived corruption highlights the need for transparent governance and the power of public opinion in a democracy.

Network effects and their impact on digital markets: Managing competition in a digital world

News: The article discusses how network effects in digital products can lead to monopolies. It explores past regulations in industries like telephony and suggests a multi-stakeholde approach, inspired by internet governance, to regulate the digital economy and ensure competition and innovation.

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What is the network economy?

The network economy is where products or services gain more value as more people use them, due to network effects.

Examples include Google Search, Facebook, and WhatsApp, which dominate the market because their value increases with each new user.

Digital networks can lead to monopolies, as seen with AT&T in telephony a century ago.

This economy's significance is growing, with digital networks now a major part of the global GDP, underscoring the necessity for effective regulatory measures.

What are network effects and their impact on digital markets?

Network Effects Defined: Network effects occur when a product or service becomes more valuable as more people use it. This is common in the digital economy.

Impact on Market Dynamics: Strong network effects can lead to monopolies or oligopolies as dominant players emerge. For instance, Google Search and Facebook have become almost indispensable due to their vast user bases.

Historical Context: Similar effects were seen in traditional network industries like telephony, where companies like AT&T once described their services as natural monopolies.

Digital Examples: Today, platforms like WhatsApp and Android OS demonstrate network effects by becoming more functional and essential as more users join.

Economic Implications: As these networks grow, their role in the economy expands, significantly influencing GDP and requiring new forms of regulation to manage their dominance and ensure fair competition.

How have governments historically managed networks?

Regulatory Measures: Governments have traditionally managed networks such as telephony through strict regulatory frameworks intended to prevent monopolies and ensure competitive markets.

Licensing and Price Controls: These regulations often included licensing requirements, territorial subdivisions, and price controls to encourage market entry and competition.

International Frameworks: At a global level, entities like the International Telecommunication Union were set up to oversee network standards and practices internationally.

Results of Regulation: Despite regulatory efforts, these measures often resulted in slowed innovation and perpetuated high costs, maintaining the dominance of a few players in the industry.

What should be done?

Implement Ex Ante Regulation: Proactive regulations are recommended to prevent anti-competitive practices in digital markets before they become dominant. This approach has been endorsed by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Finance and the Committee on Digital Competition Law.

Adopt Multi-Stakeholder Governance: Following the internet governance model, a multi-stakeholder approach involving academia, startups, industry, and civil society can ensure fair representation and prevent any single entity from dominating.

Maintain Minimal Government Interference: The government should avoid direct intervention while retaining oversight to address national security and public interest concerns, promoting a balance between regulation and innovation.

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Subject: International Relations

Topic-India and its neighbourhood- relations.

Concerns in Myanmar: For peace, Myanmar needs outside help.

News: The article discusses the ongoing conflict in Myanmar, involving the military government (SAC) and the Resistance. The UN is worried about rising violence, and there's a need for external aid and peace efforts. India, as a neighboring country, could help resolve this crisis.

For detail information on **Myanmar crisis** read Article 1, Article 2, Article 3

What are the main concerns in Myanmar?

Escalation of Conflict: The UN has expressed deep concern over the worsening situation and the increased conflict in Myanmar.
Risk to Civilians: Civilians are seriously at risk due to the ongoing violence.
Expansion in Rakhine State: Conflict is expanding in Rakhine State, known for existing vulnerabilities and discrimination, potentially inciting more communal tensions.
Forced Military Recruitment: A new conscription law leads to the forcible recruitment of youth, exacerbating the crisis.
Increased Air Strikes: There's been a fivefold increase in air strikes by the military in the last five months.
Aid Delivery Challenges: The flow of aid is minimal and hindered by logistical challenges in the conflict-ravaged nation.
Lack of Consensus: There is a significant challenge in de-escalating violence and delivering humanitarian aid due to the animosities between the SAC and the Resistance.

What should be done?

Establishing Dialogue: There's a need for an innovative dialogue mechanism among all relevant parties.
Humanitarian Corridor: Thailand considers creating a "humanitarian corridor" inside Myanmar.
External Assistance: Aid from ASEAN countries, China, India, and Bangladesh is crucial. India and other neighbors should develop practical, context-aware proposals to advise policymakers.
Addressing the Constitution Issue: Finding a middle ground between SAC's 2008 constitution and the Resistance's demand for a new constitution is important.
Ensuring Regional Stability: Addressing Myanmar's crisis is vital for the peace and progress of the region.

Importance of Arctic for India

Context- In March 2024, India has successfully completed its first winter mission in the Arctic. While scientists will be proud, India's previous hesitation to undertake a year-round Arctic mission needs reflection. For more than ten years, India's National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research didn't find the necessity of winter Arctic mission.

What are the reasons for Indias change in policy towards the Arctic region?

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1) **Climate change-**Scientific data revealed that the Arctic was warming faster than expected. When proof linked severe climate events in India to the melting Arctic Sea ice, decision-makers felt the need to change policy towards the Arctic.

2) **Geo-economic reasons-** New Delhi is interested in using Arctic Sea routes, especially the Northern Sea Route, for Indi**an trade. This could lower costs and save time, fuel, and enhance security for shipping goods.**

3) **Geopolitical reasons**-Russia's decision to grant China an expanded access to the Northern Sea Route has necessitated the need of enhanced involvement of India in the arctic region.

What is Indias present policy towards Arctic regions?

India's current policy is to work with Arctic nations on green energy and clean industries to enhance its reputation as a responsible stakeholder.

1) **Denmark and Finland**- India has collaborated in areas such as waste management, pollution control, renewable energy, and green technology.

2) **Norway**- Ties with Norway will emphasize on scientific research and climate/environmental protection. These are 2 of India's six Arctic Policy pillars. Partnership with Norway could help in tackling issues such as the blue economy, connectivity, maritime transportation, investment and infrastructure, and responsible resource development.

While India is interested in benefiting from seabed mining and resource exploitation in the Arctic, it should demonstrate its commitment to the principle of environmental sustainability.

GS Paper 3

Subject: Indian Economy

Topic- Indian Economy and issues relating to Planning, Mobilization of Resources, Growth, Development and Employment.

India's labor market and employment situation: Has the growth of our economy translated into domestic jobs?

News: The article discusses how India's job market is recovering, especially in non-farm sectors. It mentions improvements in manufacturing jobs, a rise in skilled youth employability, and a shift from agricultural to non-agricultural work.

What are the two recent assessments of India's labor market and employment situation?

1. **The International Labour Organization (ILO)** and the Institute for Human Development (IHD) released the India Employment Report 2024, focusing on youth employment. It highlights the improvements in job creation, especially for the younger population. The report shows a significant drop in graduate youth unemployment, from 35.4% in 2017-18 to 28% in 2022-23.

2. The **World Bank's South Asia Development Update (SADU)** focuses on employment in India

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For more information on India Employment Report 2024 read here

What are the major findings of World Bank's South Asia Development Update (SADU) assessments?

The report shows a **decline in the overall employment ratio** from 64.1% in 1999-00 to 58.2% in 2021-22, mainly due to reduced agricultural jobs.
However, there's an **increase in non-farm employment**, with the ratio rising from 25.7% to 33.3%.

SADU highlights the growth in larger non-agricultural firms. The **number of factories with over 100 workers rose**, indicating a shift towards more substantial employment sources.
The **workforce in larger factories (100+ workers) has been growing faster than in smaller factories**, suggesting a trend towards larger-scale employment.

What are the significant setbacks to the Indian labor market?

The Indian labor market faced significant setbacks due to:
Bad debts in the banking system, affecting investments and job creation in the corporate sector.
The COVID-19 pandemic, leading to economic slowdown, job losses, and reverse migration, especially impacting agricultural employment.
The manufacturing sector experienced a trough in job creation between 2012 and 2019, linked to these economic challenges.
A sluggish phase in manufacturing employment was observed, particularly from 2011-12 to 2016-17, as the sector grappled with these issues.

What are the future prospects for India's labor market?

The future prospects for India's labor market appear promising due to several factors:

Continued growth in the manufacturing sector, as seen with 3.74 million jobs added in 2021-22.
Improvement in tertiary education leads to **higher employability among graduates.** The National Employability Test score increased from 33.9 in 2014 to 51.3 in 2024.
A **decline in youth unemployment rates**, with graduate unemployment dropping from 35.4% to 28% from 2017-18 to 2022-23.
Increased focus on skilling the youth, enhancing labor productivity, and creating more secure jobs with benefits and social protection.

Globalisation of Indian rupee

Context- Prime Minister has recently asked the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to prepare a 10-year strategy to make the Indian rupee a globally "accessible and acceptable" currency.
What are the advantages of globalized currency?
1) The overseas demand for globalized currency for trade and reserves would cheapen credit within the country.
2) After attaining global currency status, there would be more demand for rupee denominated bonds. This will push their yields down, which will ensure availability of funds at lower rates.
What are the hurdles in the globalization of Indian currency?

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1) **Lack of full rupee convertibility**- India will have to turn the rupee fully convertible to make it a global currency.Currently,Indian currency is partially convertible.

2) **Asian currency crisis**- Policymakers were worried after the Asian currency crisis of 1997. Many open economies suffered from capital flight. Since then, India has maintained restrictions on converting rupees into foreign currencies. There's an annual limit on conversion and specific channels for settling commercial trades.

What steps can be taken to make to ensure globalization of Indian currency?

1) **Fiscal discipline**- It is important to ensure that India's currency doesn't lose its value due to inflation. This requires maintaining fiscal discipline.

2) **Robust banking system**-India needs a strong banking system that can withstand shocks. This requires transparency and efficiency throughout the financial sector.

3) **External balance stability**-There should be stable external balances to ensure sustainability. India must prevent its trade gap from widening due to unforeseen events

4) **Role of RBI**-It is important that the market sets the external value of the rupee, with the RBI playing a non-distortive role.

What should be the way forward?

1) L**everaging Technology-**Technology may give RBI's e-rupee an advantage as a central bank digital currency (CBDC) for global use. It should be designed not only for low costs but also for ensuring maximum privacy.

2) **Expansion of e-rupee usage**- Indian diaspora should be encouraged to use e-rupee for making low-cost cross-border transfers. However, it is important to ensure that this expansion is not affected by geopolitical sanctions.

3) **Ease of programming of e-rupee**- It is directly issued by RBI and doesn't involve intermediary risks.Thus,it may attract international users if it is able to offers users an easy way to program it.For ex-for making routine payments. This is indeed one of the unique features of CBDC software.

Currently, the e-rupee is only an experiment, with online bank-to-bank UPI transfers being given too much importance.However,it's also RBI's best bet for a global play.

Solutions for job creation: India's missing jobs

News: The article discusses India's job creation challenges. It mentions Meta opening a data center in India but highlights that India needs many more jobs. It critiques India's reliance on services for economic growth and suggests diversifying into high-tech, startups, green energy, and manufacturing to create jobs.

For details information on **Employment status in India** Article1, Article2,

What is the current job situation in India?

Low Employment Rate: Only 46.6% of India's working-age population is currently employed, which is significantly lower than the approximately 70% seen in other emerging markets.

Job Creation Needs: India needs to create 90 million new non-farm jobs by 2030 to keep pace with its growing working-age   population.

Service Sector Focus: The Indian economy has heavily focused on service industries, employing 5.4 million in IT and back-office roles, but faces challenges such as automation reducing job opportunities.

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What challenges are the service sectors facing?

IT Sector Decline: For the first time in 25 years, the IT sector, a cornerstone of India's service economy, has experienced shrinkage, influenced by increasing automation and artificial intelligence. **Low Wages and Migration:** Many workers in low-skilled service jobs earn so little that they preferred staying in their villages after the COVID-19 lockdowns, rather than returning to urban jobs.

Skill Gap: There's a significant skill shortage in the country, with the 2023 India Skills Report indicating that only half of young Indians are employable, which limits their ability to participate in more advanced, skill-intensive service roles.

What are the proposed solutions for job creation?

Global Capability Centres (GCCs): Expansion of GCCs is suggested, with current employment at 1.6 million and expected growth to 4.5 million by 2030. These centers offer services ranging from finance and HR to tech innovation, helping India become a major exporter of services. **Tech Startups:** Encouragement for tech startups to scale up, leveraging India's capabilities in AI, SaaS, defense, and Greentech, which could lead to significant employment gains both directly and indirectly. **Green Energy:** Focus on renewable energy with plans to install 500 gigawatts by 2030, aiming to create 50 million new jobs in the green economy. **Manufacturing Sector:** Revitalizing the manufacturing sector is crucial, especially for small and medium enterprises that are less prone to automation and can employ more people. This effort should be supported by digital infrastructure to boost their competitive advantage

Concerns related to India's interest rates: Last-mile transmission a big hurdle to policy rate cut

News: The article discusses why India's central bank, the RBI, hasn't reduced its main interest rate. Despite the RBI increasing this rate before, banks haven't fully passed these increases to borrowers. This incomplete adjustment is one reason the RBI is cautious about changing rates now.

For details information on **marginal cost of funds-based lending rate** read Article 1, Article 2

What are the major concerns related to India's interest rates?

Incomplete Transmission: Despite the RBI increasing the repo rate by 250 basis points, banks have only raised the weighted average lending rate on fresh loans by 185 basis points, indicating incomplete transmission. **EBLR vs. MCLR:** Loans tied to the External Benchmark-based Lending Rate (EBLR) quickly adjust with the repo rate, while those tied to the **Marginal Cost of Funds-based Lending Rate (MCLR) lag behind**. For instance, between May 2022 and March 2024, the median one-year MCLR only rose by 155 basis points, compared to a 250 basis point increase in the repo rate.

What are the reasons for Slow MCLR Adjustment?

Complex Pricing Mechanism: MCLR-based loans factor in the bank's cost of deposits and other margins, making rate adjustments more complex and slower than EBLR-linked loans. **Competition Concerns:** Banks are cautious in raising MCLR rates due to fears of losing loan accounts to

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competitors, affecting their market share. This hesitance impacts the rate adjustment pace.
Selective Deposit Rate Increases: Banks have raised rates mainly for short-term deposits, affecting the cost basis for MCLR and subsequently delaying the transmission to MCLR-linked loan rates.

TRANSMISSION TROUBLE

OVER 40% of the system credit is not linked to the repo rate

LOANS linked to marginal cost of funds-based lending rate (MCLR) are lagging the rate hikes

THE MCLR depends on the cost of deposits. Corporate loans are still on the MCLR

What is the RBI's View on the Transmission of Rate Changes?

Ongoing Transmission: The RBI acknowledges that the transmission of rate changes to lending rates is still in progress, indicating a gradual process.
Goal of Fuller Transmission: The central bank is committed to ensuring a fuller transmission of policy actions, highlighting its efforts to make interest rate changes effectively impact lending rates.
Anchoring Expectations: The aim of anchoring household inflation expectations through effective rate transmission is indeed a part of the RBI's strategy, as outlined by the Deputy Governor

Significance of Decentralized industrialization model

Context-The article highlights the reason behind Tamil Nadu's success in achieving industrialization and diversification beyond agriculture.Tamilnadu is India's No.1 state in terms of economic complexity, measured by the diversity of its gross domestic product (GDP) and employment profile.
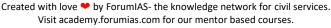**What is the share of respective industries in Tamilnadu 's GDP?**
According to the data table, Tamil Nadu's farm sector contributes less to its gross value added (GVA) and employs fewer people compared to the national average. However, the state has higher shares of industry, services, and construction in its economy compared to the whole of India.

SECTOR-WISE SHARES OF GVA & WORKFORCE: 2022-23 (%)

	Gross Value Added*		Workforce	
	All-India	Tamil Nadu	All-India	Tamil Nadu
Agriculture	18.19	12.55	45.76	28.87
Industry**	18.80	22.69	12.27	17.88
Construction	8.84	11.70	13.03	18.04
Services	54.18	53.05	28.94	35.21

*At Basic Prices; ** Includes manufacturing, mining, electricity and utilities. GVA is GDP net of product taxes and subsidies.   Source: National Accounts Statistics and Periodic Labour Force Survey.

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What are the reasons behind TN's relative success in achieving industrialization and diversification beyond agriculture?

1) **Cluster-based industrialization-** Tamil Nadu's economic shift hasn't been driven much by big corporations but by medium-sized businesses whose turnover range from Rs 100 crore to Rs 5,000 crore. The state's industrialization has also been more widespread and decentralized, focusing on the development of clusters.

For ex- Tirupur for cotton knitwear, Coimbatore for spinning mills and engineering goods, Sivakasi for safety matches etc.

2) **Sub-specialized clusters-**There are many sub-specialized clusters that have developed in small towns or areas near cities in Tamilnadu.These clusters provide jobs for people from nearby villages and prevent rural to urban migration.

Further, these clusters have helped in providing job opportunities beyond farming and reducing the number of agriculture dependent population in Tamilnadu.

Read more- Challenges with India's service-driven growth

3) **Grass root entrepreneurship-** Recent decentralized industrialization in Tamil Nadu has been led by entrepreneurs from ordinary farming backgrounds and local merchant communities.

For ex-Coimbatore's spinning mills, foundries, machines and pumps & valves etc ,were mostly started by Kammavar Naidus.

4) **Diverse entrepreneurial culture-** Tamil Nadu's entrepreneurial culture is diverse, spreading among different communities and across various industries. For ex- Christians-MRF, Johnson Lifts and Aachi Masala Foods and Muslims -Farida Group etc.

The grassroots entrepreneurship, along with substantial investments in public health and education, helps in explaining Tamil Nadu's relative success in industrialization and diversification away from agriculture.

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

India's solar energy capacity: The 'import restrictions' on solar PV cells

News: The article discusses India's Ministry of New and Renewable Energy re-introducing the **Approved List of Models and Manufacturers of Solar Photovoltaic Modules (ALMM)**. This list encourages the use of locally made solar equipment in government projects to reduce dependence on imports and support India's solar industry.

What is the status of India's solar energy capacity?

India's solar energy capacity is growing, aiming for 500 GW from non-fossil fuels by 2030. India heavily relies on imports to meet its solar energy needs, particularly from China and Vietnam. China is a major supplier, contributing to 53% of India's solar cell imports and 63% of solar PV modules. In the past five years, India's solar import value reached approximately $11.17 billion. China's dominance in the sector is further highlighted by its 80% share in global manufacturing capacity for key solar components.

For details information on **India's solar energy status** read here

Why is China a leading exporter?

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1.**Lower costs of power supplied to the industry play a significant role**, as electricity is a major part of production costs. For instance, electricity accounts for over 40% of the costs in making polysilicon and around 20% for ingots and wafers.

2. The Chinese government has **strategically prioritized solar PV as a key sector**, supporting it through policies.

For details information on **Challenges faced by local solar panel manufacturers** read here

What incentives has the Indian government taken to improve its solar energy capacity?

1.**Reintroduced ALMM:** The Indian government reintroduced the Approved List of Models and Manufacturers (ALMM) to prioritize domestic solar products in government projects. The ALMM list aims to support local manufacturers and was reactivated as part of India's strategy to reduce import dependence and boost local manufacturing in the solar energy sector.

For details information on ALMM read Article 1, Article 2

2.**The Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme,** with an allocation of ₹19,500 crore, is aimed at scaling up the entire solar manufacturing chain in India.

3.**Customs duties** of 40% on solar PV modules and 25% on solar cells were introduced to reduce dependency on imports. However, these duties were later halved due to slow solar capacity additions and pressure from low-cost imports.

What is the future of India's solar energy capacity?

Government Ambitions: India aims for 500 GW of non-fossil fuel capacity by 2030, emphasizing solar power.

Rapid Demand Growth: India is experiencing the fastest growth in electricity demand among major economies, partly driven by efforts to combat extreme weather.

Vast Potential: With an **estimated solar potential of 748.99 GW,** India has a significant opportunity to harness solar energy

Subject: Agriculture

Topic- Issues related to Direct and Indirect Farm Subsidies and Minimum Support Prices; Public Distribution System - Objectives, Functioning, Limitations, Revamping; Issues of Buffer Stocks and Food Security,economics of animal rearing

Improving Agri food space in India

Context- The current government is requesting different ministries to develop plans that they want to announce within the first 100 days of their third term. The ministries are contacting various experts to help them frame the right policy framework that is in sync with the vision of Viksit Bharat@2047. To improve Agri food space, there are certain suggestions that stem from discussions with experts at a four-day forum hosted by the Asian Development Bank on food security in response to climate change.

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Why does India need an improvement in Agri food space?

1) **Rise in population**-India's population is expected to reach about 1.6 billion by 2047, leading to more mouths to feed. In this context, agriculture must increase production of food, fiber, and biofuels while using fewer resources. This requires efficient use of land, water, labor, and inputs like fertilizers and machinery.
 2) **Impact of climate change**- Indian agriculture system is being threatened by extreme weather events triggered by global warming. The El Niño effect last year caused agricultural GDP growth to decline from 4.7% in 2022-23 to only 0.7% in 2023-24, according to the second advanced estimate. It encourages knee-jerk actions like banning exports, imposing limits on traders' stocks etc.
3) **Urbanization of India**- By 2047, over two-thirds of India's population will live in cities, up from around 36% now. Migration from rural to urban areas for better jobs is a natural process that cannot be stopped. It implies that a lot of food will have to be transported from rural to urban areas which requires upgradation of existing infrastructure of transportation and processing etc.
 4) **Fragmentation of land holdings**- Indias farming is fragmented into smaller and smaller holdings that prevents the scale that is demanded by processors, organized retailers, and exporters.
5) **Challenges of malnutrition**-India has one of highest number of stunted and wasted children. In the backdrop of these challenges, there is a need to move beyond simple food security to nutritional security.
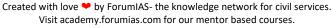
Read more- Farmer's Suicides In India

What are the suggestions made by the expert to improve Indias Agri food space?

1) **Invest in R&D**-India needs to improve its total factor productivity (TFP). This can be done by putting in more resources in Agri-R&D, innovations and extensions.
Note- TFP-It measures the amount of agricultural output produced from the combined set of land, labor, capital, and material resources employed in farm production.
2) **Promoting Smart Agriculture**-To overcome the challenges posed by climate change, the government should invest resources to create climate-resilient (smart) agriculture. It requires investments in seeds that are heat and flood-resistant and that could enhance efficiency of the irrigation system.
3) **Logistics revolution**-In order to tackle the increase in migration from rural areas, there is a need for a massive logistics revolution that is, from transporting to stocking to processing and organized retailing. This logistics revolution requires updating laws that align better with the market to build effective value chains. The new government should bring these changes.
4) **Scaling up activity of small farmers**- There is a need to bring small farmers together, through Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) or cooperatives (as was done in the milk sector, a la AMUL). This will create a scale that is demanded by processors, organized retailers, and exporters.
5) **Fortification of food crops**-To address the challenge of malnutrition, there is need to fortify staples with micro-nutrients. The government should fortify rice with beta carotene because rice is Indias first crop, and most of those children who are malnourished today consume a lot of rice.
6) **Leveraging role of private sector**- The government must provide a conducive policy framework to encourage participation of the private sector in building efficient value chains and produce seeds that are climate-resilient and more nutritious.Further,the government can devise PLI-type schemes for food systems transformation.
7) **Direct transfer approach**- There is a need to rationalize Indias subsidy regimes, be it fertilizers or food. Switching from price subsidies to direct income transfers for beneficiaries can save at least 25 to 30 percent of the Rs 4 trillion subsidy on food and fertilizers.

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Beekeeping in India: The increasing profitability of apiculture

News: This article discusses the growth and potential of India's beekeeping industry, highlighting its significance in agriculture and exports.

For details information on **Apiculture- Scope and Opportunities** <u>read here</u>

What is the current state of beekeeping in India?

1. India is the sixth-largest global exporter of honey.
2. Since 2005-06, honey production in India has increased by 240%, and exports have grown by 260%.
3. From 2018-19 to 2022-23, domestic production rose by 72% (from 77,000 tonnes to 133,000 tonnes), and exports increased by 86% (from 43,000 tonnes to about 80,000 tonnes).
4. Currently, about 80% of India's honey exports go to the United States, with smaller quantities shipped to the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Libya, Morocco, and Canada.
5. Beekeeping is primarily practiced in Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Punjab, Bihar, and Maharashtra.

What are the benefits of beekeeping?

Economic Growth: Beekeeping significantly contributes to agriculture and exports, with Indian honey exports growing faster than production rates, showcasing its profitability.
Health Benefits: Honey is recognized for its health-enhancing properties, including boosting immunity and having antibacterial effects, which became particularly valued during the pandemic.

Agricultural Benefits: Honeybees are crucial for pollinating approximately 16% of the world's important flowering plant species, enhancing crop yields and quality significantly. For instance, honeybee pollination can increase seed production of radish by 22-100% and of cabbage and cucumber by up to 400%.
Pharmaceutical and Cosmetic Industry Demand: By-products like royal jelly, bee wax, and propolis are in high demand due to their beneficial properties, supporting various industries.

What Challenges Does the Indian Honey Sector Face?

Market Diversification: Currently, nearly 80% of Indian honey exports are to the United States, indicating a heavy reliance on a single market.
Quality Issues: There is rampant adulteration of honey with sugar syrup, which negatively affects the reputation of Indian honey both domestically and internationally.
Geographic Limitation: Beekeeping is confined primarily to certain states (Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Punjab, Bihar, and Maharashtra), limiting national production capacity.

What Government Initiatives Support Beekeeping?

National Beekeeping and Honey Mission: This initiative was launched to accelerate the technological modernization of the beekeeping sector and improve productivity.
National Bee Board: Part of broader efforts to support the honey industry, this board plays a role in technological advancements and sector growth.
 "Sweet Revolution": Introduced in 2017 to expand and enhance the honey sector along the lines of the Green and White Revolutions.
ICAR's Research Projects: The Indian Council of Agricultural Research conducts an all-India coordinated

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research project on honeybees and pollinators to boost honey output and overall quality through specific regional strategies.

Subject: Environment

Topic- Conservation, Environmental Pollution and Degradation, Environmental Impact Assessment.

Issues related to animal rescue and capture

Context-The article highlights the significance of properly rescuing animals in the wake of escalating frequency of human-wildlife interactions.

Rescue can be defined as an act of saving or being saved from danger or difficulty. Rescue situations often involve leopards stuck in wells, elephants stranded in water tanks, snakes in homes, or lost elephant calves separated from their herds.

What are the problems with the animal capture and relocation approach to minimize human-wildlife conflict?

1) **Complex Process-**It is a complex process that requires chemical and physical immobilization of animals. Further, it needs a balanced team of experts, each with their specific role. However,domain experts are not easily available.

2) **Violation of governments guidelines**-Guidelines issued by the central government discourage the capture of leopards on mere sight. When leopards kill livestock or elephants damage crops, it affects communities, but it might not always justify capturing them under the pretext of rescue.

3) **Physical damage**- It can hurt them physically, cause injuries, and stress them out, making it harder for them to survive after release. For ex- an elephant taken from a coffee plantation was released 200 km away into unfamiliar territory. Later, it wandered into a neighboring state. Another attempt to rescue it ended with its death.

4) **Disruption of ecosystems**-Relocation of a wild animal disrupts two ecosystems, the one from where the animal is taken from, and the one to which that animal is introduced.

Read more- [Need for new definition of elephant corridors](#)

What should be the way forward?

1) **Proper Evaluation**-There should be a realistic assessment of the situation. This requires identifying the problem, limiting any factors that may cause stress to animals, ensure that other proactive measures have been exhausted before resorting to animal capture.

2) **Karnataka Model**- Proactive mitigation strategies to avoid human animal conflict should be promoted. This includes early warning systems, regular monitoring, fencing, better lighting, public education, and improved waste management to reduce, or better prepare communities for potential interactions with wildlife. This has been adopted by the Karnataka Forest department.

3) **Integrating the welfare of animals and humans**- The term "rescue" often suggests a conflict between

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species that is either animals are threatened by humans or humans feel threatened by wild animals. Trying to "rescue" in these situations can make one side look like the villain, harming trust in conservation efforts. Thus, there is a need to view communities as including both humans and animals, rather than creating divisions through wildlife management.

Current state of global coal power - problem with coal

News: The article discusses the global challenge of reducing coal use in power plants to fight climate change. It highlights the increasing number of coal plants in China and India and the slow decommissioning of such plants in the U.S., which is hindering efforts to meet climate goals.

What is the current state of global coal power?

Global Coal Power Increase: Global coal-fired power capacity grew by 2% last year, marking the highest annual increase since 2016.
China's Commitment and Progress: China has pledged to retire 30 GW by 2025 but added two-thirds of the world's new coal plants in the past year, significantly boosting its capacity.
US Deceleration: The U.S. decommissioned only 9.7 GW of coal power in 2023, down from 14.7 GW the previous year. The US Energy Information Administration estimates a 10 per cent reduction in coal use by 2025.
Retirement Goals: To phase out current coal capacity by 2040, the world needs to retire an average of 126GW of coal power plants annually for the next 17 years. However, only a sixth of this target was achieved last year.

What are the challenges in transitioning to green energy?

Economic Constraints: Emerging economies like India face the challenge of balancing coal phase-out with poverty alleviation and employment, as the coal sector is a major employer.
Insufficient Decommissioning: Globally, coal power decommissioning is not keeping pace with targets, with only a fraction of the necessary 126 GW retired annually.
Technological and Financial Barriers: The adoption of carbon capture technologies is limited due to high costs. Financial support from developmental finance institutions is crucial but currently inadequate.
Mismatched Growth: The expansion of renewable energy does not yet match the rising electricity demand in many countries, hindering the transition to greener alternatives.

Way forward -To advance the green transition, increased investment in renewable energies is necessary. Financial institutions must support technologies like carbon capture. Policies should encourage the decommissioning of coal plants to meet the global target of 126 GW annually and align with the Paris Climate Pact goals.

Recent SC judgement on Jim Corbett National Park

News: The Supreme Court of India recently ruled against the illegal cutting of 6,000 trees in Jim Corbett National Park, emphasizing the need to prioritize eco-centric approaches over human-centered ones for conservation.

What is the recent SC judgement on Jim Corbett National Park?

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Illegal Felling Exposed: The Supreme Court highlighted the collusion among politicians, forest officials, and local contractors in the illegal cutting down of 6,000 trees in Jim Corbett National Park. This action violates conservation-focused laws such as the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, Project Tiger, and the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980.

Shift in Conservation Approach: The court criticized the current anthropocentric methods of conservation and advocated for an ecocentric approach, prioritizing nature and ecosystem integrity over human benefits.

Ban on Tiger Safaris: It banned tiger safaris in the core areas of national parks to reduce disturbance to wildlife and natural habitats, stressing that wildlife must not be treated like zoo exhibits.

Committee Formation: The court ordered the formation of a committee to evaluate the feasibility of permitting tiger safaris in peripheral areas, reflecting a balanced approach to conservation and tourism.

Precautionary Principle Invoked: The judgment applied the precautionary principle, emphasizing preventive action in environmental governance to minimize harm to biodiversity and ecosystems.

What did the Supreme Court miss in its judgment?

Lack of Defined Methodology for Restoration: The court's intention to assess and recover costs for the damage to Jim Corbett's green cover lacks a clear methodology, making actual restoration doubtful.

Inadequate Compensation Methods: The existing financial mechanisms, such as the compensatory afforestation levy and net present value (NPV), introduced by the Supreme Court in 2002 after the T.N. Godavarman case (1996), do not fully account for the broader environmental damages. They fail to consider the broader ecological harm caused by deforestation beyond just tree loss. The recent Supreme Court judgment did not address these limitations.

For details information on **Godavarman case** read here

Underestimation of Ecosystem Services: The court could have emphasized the importance of ecosystem services, which are more valuable than the revenue from eco-tourism. A methodology for evaluating such services, as discussed in the **International Court of Justice's 2018 Costa Rica v. Nicaragua case,** could have been considered.

Focus on Eco-Tourism over Biodiversity: The emphasis remains on eco-tourism for revenue, despite significant biodiversity losses, including a 90% reduction in area under four biodiversity hotspots and 12% of species being endangered.

How precautionary principle is helpful in tackling environmental problems?

Prevents Irreversible Damage: The precautionary principle states that the lack of full scientific certainty should not delay actions to prevent environmental harm, especially when the damage could be serious or irreversible.

Applied to Biodiversity: Norman Myers highlights its importance for biodiversity, noting that unchecked mass extinction could impoverish the biosphere for millions of years.

Supports Endangered Species: The principal underscores actions to protect the 12% of endangered animal species in India, as identified by the IUCN's Red List.

Conflict between renewable energy development and the protection of the Great Indian Bustard in India

News: The article discusses the conflict between renewable energy development and the protection of the Great Indian Bustard in India. It covers court decisions on whether to place power lines underground to prevent

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the birds from dying due to collisions. It mentions different viewpoints from environmentalists, the government, and energy companies.

For details information **Great Indian Bustard** read here

What is the issue with the Great Indian Bustard?
Endangered Species Protection: The Great Indian Bustard is critically endangered, listed by IUCN in 2013 and included in CMS COP13 as an endangered migratory species in 2020, emphasizing the need for strict protection.
Habitat Collision: The Great Indian Bustard, a critically endangered bird, frequently collides with overhead power lines in its desert habitat, leading to fatal accidents.
Population Decline: From over 1,500 individuals in the 1970s, the population dwindled to less than 150 by 2018 due to these collisions.

Energy Development vs. Conservation: The bird's habitat overlaps with areas ideal for wind and solar energy, creating a conflict between renewable energy development and species conservation.

How has the Indian Supreme Court responded to the issue of the Great Indian Bustard?

Initial Order: In April 2021, the Supreme Court mandated the undergrounding of power lines in an 80,688 sq. km area to prevent bustard collisions.
Industry Challenges: Faced with industry backlash over high costs and feasibility concerns, the court reconsidered the decision.
Revised Order: In March, the area required for underground wires was reduced to 13,663 sq. km, focusing on the 'priority' bustard habitat.
Balancing Act: The court aimed to balance conservation needs with India's renewable energy goals, reducing the scope of mandatory underground wiring while still addressing the threat to the bustards.

What are the challenges of Undergrounding power lines?

High Costs: The cost of undergrounding is estimated to be over 150,000 crore, which could increase power tariffs in the states involved. For future projects, underground wires could push costs up by approximately 80%, making them unviable.
Technical Feasibility: Industry representatives mentioned that undergrounding is feasible in urban areas for shorter distances, but in vast desert areas, it presents significant technical challenges.
Slow Implementation: Three years post the initial Supreme Court order, minimal undergrounding has been achieved. A 10-km segment of a 66 KV line in Gujarat is one of the few that has been laid underground.
Financial Impact: The potential financial impact on consumers and the viability of renewable energy projects due to increased costs was a significant concern raised by the energy industry and noted in court discussions.

What is the future for the Great Indian Bustard?

The future of the Great Indian Bustard remains uncertain. With continued habitat encroachment and the challenges of implementing protective measures, the species faces a high risk of extinction. The outcomes of ongoing legal and environmental management efforts will play a critical role in determining the survival of this endangered bird.

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Subject: Internal Security

Topic- - Various Security Forces and Agencies and their Mandate.

Modern Warfare-Importance of absorption of technology

Context-In the backdrop of evolving character of warfare, the Indian Army is poised to embrace technology to keep itself ahead of its adversaries. Thus, it is observing the year 2024 as the 'Year of Technology Absorption'.

What does technology absorption mean?

Absorption implies the acquisition, adaptation and integration of technologies into existing structures. The existing structures are called legacy systems.
The absorption of technology will be mainly in terms of disruptive technology. This comprises of artificial intelligence, autonomous weapon systems such as drones, sensors, robotics, space technology, and hypersonic weapon systems.

Read more- Modern Warfare

Why is sole focus on disruptive technology not advisable?

1) The Russia- Ukraine and Armenia-Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh) have demonstrated the fact that technological advances alone will not ensure victory in the war. After initial setbacks, Russian army has employed traditional methodologies to fight the war and made significant advances. Thus, discarding the prevailing systems to be substituted by the disruptive technology will not be advisable.

2) In wars, technical countermeasures can rapidly reduce the effectiveness of new technology-based weapons used by an enemy.

What should be the way forward?

1) **Balance between modern and traditional systems**-It is important to consolidate traditional defense lines and create a stronger military industrial base. The Indian military is doing the right thing by focusing on disruptive technologies and indigenous upgrades in defense manufacture in tandem.
2) **Adapting to new conditions-** The most important adaptations are not technological but rather operational and tactical.Thus,there is a need to bring changes in the way armies use the tools at their disposal. For ex-in present battle conditions, weapon platforms such as tanks must adapt to become more survivable because they can be easily tracked by sensors in the battlefield.
3) **Democratization in usage of technology-**It is important to understand new technologies, their possibilities, and where they can be employed. Thus, this understanding should be seen at all levels of military units, not only in higher echelons.
4) **Attention to macro level aspect-** There should be enhanced attention to macro level aspects like-how organizations work, managing people better, training specialists at all levels etc.

The strategic competition and engagements in the future will inevitably be decided by the nation's edge in absorbing the use of disruptive technologies

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