



Mains Marathon
Compilation

3rd Week June, 2024

INDEX

Examine the multifaceted vulnerabilities faced by the elderly population in India and suggest comprehensive measures to address them. (250 words)	2
Evaluate the challenges and prospects of regulating tourism in Antarctica to preserve its pristine environment. (250 words)	2
Analyze the persistent safety issues in Indian Railways despite numerous improvement plans over the past two decades. [250 words]	3
Examine the key factors contributing to the increasing frequency and intensity of heat waves in Indian cities. Discuss the potential impacts on public health and urban infrastructure. (250 words)	4
What are the arguments for and against providing subsidies for hybrid vehicles in comparison to electric vehicles (EVs)?.....	5
What are the consequences of a one-size-fits-all approach to national exams on the diverse educational needs of students across the country?	6
What are the key components that should be included in India's national security doctrine to address current and emerging threats?	7
What are the primary socio-economic challenges faced by the elderly population in India? What measures can be taken to improve the coverage and efficacy of programs for the elderly population?.....	8
Critically analyze how judicial interventions influence public perception and policy outcomes regarding reservations. (250 words).....	9
Critically examine India's foreign policy towards Myanmar in light of the ongoing political crisis and human rights violations. (250 words).....	10

Examine the multifaceted vulnerabilities faced by the elderly population in India and suggest comprehensive measures to address them. (250 words)

Introduction: Brief contextual introduction

Body: Highlight key vulnerabilities faced by the elderly and measures to address the issues.

Conclusion: Way forward

The elderly population in India faces a range of vulnerabilities due to socio-economic, health, and environmental factors. The aging phenomenon in India is marked by significant improvements in longevity alongside declining fertility rates, leading to an increasing elderly population.

Key Vulnerabilities

- **Restrictions in Activities of Daily Living (ADL):** As elderly individuals age, their ability to perform ADLs worsens. This trend poses significant challenges to their independence and quality of life.
- **Multi-Morbidity:** A high percentage of the elderly population suffers from chronic diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, and cancer, leading to a substantial burden of disease.
- **Poverty:** Economic insecurity is prevalent among the elderly, with many lacking sufficient income to support themselves.
- **Absence of Income:** The absence of regular income sources is a critical issue, with many elderly individuals dependent on limited savings or the support of family members.

Comprehensive Measures

- **Economic Measures:** Expand pension coverage and adequacy to ensure financial security for the elderly. Provide financial literacy programs to educate the elderly on managing finances and accessing government benefits.
- **Healthcare Improvements:** Enhance healthcare infrastructure, especially in rural areas, and establish more geriatric care centers. Expand health insurance coverage under schemes like Ayushman Bharat to include a larger portion of the elderly population. Provide mental health counseling and support services to address issues such as depression and loneliness.
- **Social Support:** Establish community centers and day-care facilities that offer social, recreational, and cultural activities for the elderly. Develop support networks involving NGOs, community volunteers, and local bodies to assist elderly individuals, particularly those living alone.
- **Policy and Governance:** Strengthen and effectively implement the National Policy on Older Persons (NPOP). Enforce laws against elder abuse and ensure that legal aid is available to elderly individuals.

Conclusion

In the Indian context, the elderly face four primary vulnerabilities in their later years: restrictions in activities of daily living, multi-morbidity, poverty, and lack of income. According to the Longitudinal Ageing Survey of India (LASI, 2017-18), approximately 20% of the elderly population experience each of these challenges. Addressing these issues necessitates a comprehensive approach that incorporates principles of inclusion and the implementation of robust social security measures.

Evaluate the challenges and prospects of regulating tourism in Antarctica to preserve its pristine environment. (250 words)

Introduction: Brief contextual introduction

Body: Highlight the challenges and prospects of regulating tourism in Antarctica

Conclusion: Way forward

The 46th Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM-46), held in Kochi, Kerala, highlighted the ongoing debate on Antarctic tourism regulation.

Challenges

- **Fragile Ecosystem:** Increased human presence disrupts wildlife, damages fragile ecosystems, and risks introducing invasive species. The pristine environment is threatened by ship traffic, which pollutes the waters, and tourism activities that add to the global carbon footprint.
- **Climate Change:** The impact of climate change exacerbates these issues by opening new areas for tourism while increasing ecosystem vulnerability.
- **Remoteness and Accessibility:** The extreme remoteness and harsh weather conditions make it difficult to monitor and regulate tourist activities effectively.
- **Fragmented Regulatory Framework:** The current governance framework for Antarctic tourism is fragmented and lacks clear regulations. The Antarctic Treaty prioritizes peaceful use and scientific research, while the Madrid Protocol offers broad environmental guidelines without specific tourism regulations.
- **Self-Regulation by IAATO:** The responsibility for day-to-day management falls largely on the International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators (IAATO), a self-regulatory industry body, which many believe is inadequate to address the growing environmental pressures.

Prospects

- **Comprehensive Framework:** ATCM-46 made progress by focusing on developing a "comprehensive, flexible, and dynamic" framework for regulating tourism and non-governmental activities. A newly established working group will lead this effort over the next year.
- **Sustainable Practices:** Adoption of eco-friendly technologies in transportation and waste management can minimize the environmental footprint of tourism.
- **Tourist Education Programs:** Implementing comprehensive education programs for tourists about the fragility of the Antarctic environment can promote responsible behavior and support conservation efforts.
- **National Legislation:** Countries like India have enacted their Antarctic laws to address tourism issues in the absence of international consensus. Such measures can provide a model for other nations.
- **Designated Visitor Sites:** Restricting tourism to specific areas and creating designated visitor sites can help control and minimize the environmental impact.

Conclusion

Regulating Antarctic tourism is fraught with challenges due to environmental sensitivity, logistical complexities, and international governance issues. Yet, there are promising prospects for effective regulation through enhanced international cooperation, technological advances, sustainable practices, and strong legal frameworks. The efforts at ATCM-46 and the formation of a new working group underscore a renewed commitment to achieving a sustainable future for Antarctic tourism.

Analyze the persistent safety issues in Indian Railways despite numerous improvement plans over the past two decades. [250 words]

Introduction: Brief contextual introduction

Body: Highlight the main issues in Indian railways related to safety

Conclusion: Way forward

The recent collision that occurred in West Bengal has once again raised safety issues in Indian Railways highlighting the need for a strong railway system that can compete with road and air transport to serve the needs of the people and economy.

Issues

Mains Marathon Compilation June (Third Week) 2024

- **Aging Infrastructure:** Much of the infrastructure, built in the 19th and 20th centuries, struggles to handle the ever-increasing traffic and hasn't been fully modernized to meet contemporary safety standards.
- **Track Defects:** Rail fractures due to wear and tear or inherent defects significantly contribute to derailments, a major accident type.
- **Overcrowded Network:** The Indian Railways network is one of the busiest in the world, with heavy passenger and freight traffic leading to congestion. This overcrowding increases the risk of accidents and limits the time available for maintenance and upgrades.
- **Insufficient Maintenance:** Regular and timely maintenance is often hampered by a lack of resources and the sheer scale of the network. Deferred maintenance leads to deterioration of infrastructure, increasing the risk of accidents.
- **Bureaucratic Inefficiency:** The large, bureaucratic structure of Indian Railways often leads to delays in decision-making and implementation of safety measures. Layers of approval and red tape hinder the swift execution of improvement plans.
- **Funding Shortages:** Indian Railways often faces financial constraints, limiting its ability to invest in necessary safety upgrades and maintenance. Budget allocations for safety improvements are frequently insufficient.

Conclusion

The persistent safety issues in Indian Railways are multifaceted, involving systemic, infrastructural, technological, operational, and financial dimensions. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive, sustained, and well-funded effort, along with a shift in organizational culture to prioritize safety. Long-term planning, political will, and a commitment to modernization and maintenance are essential to improving the safety of India's railway network.

Examine the key factors contributing to the increasing frequency and intensity of heat waves in Indian cities. Discuss the potential impacts on public health and urban infrastructure. (250 words)

Introduction: Give a brief context to the question

Body: Highlight key factors that contribute to heatwaves and impact on health and urban infrastructure

Conclusion: Way forward

Indian cities are experiencing a surge in the frequency and intensity of heat waves.

Key Factors Contributing to Heatwaves

- **Global Warming:** The primary culprit is global warming, caused by greenhouse gas emissions. Rising global temperatures create a baseline for hotter weather, making heat waves more likely.
- **Urban Heat Island Effect:** Cities act as giant heat traps. Buildings, roads, and pavement absorb and retain heat more efficiently than natural landscapes. This effect, coupled with reduced vegetation cover, leads to significantly higher temperatures in urban areas compared to surrounding regions.
- **Reduced Water Bodies:** Shrinking lakes, ponds, and rivers due to urbanization and climate change decrease natural cooling mechanisms. These water bodies typically absorb heat and release it through evaporation, helping to regulate temperatures.

Potential Impacts on Public Health

- **Heatstroke and Heat Exhaustion:** Prolonged exposure to high temperatures can lead to heatstroke, a life-threatening condition, and heat exhaustion, which can cause symptoms like dehydration, dizziness, and fatigue.

Mains Marathon Compilation June (Third Week) 2024

- **Increased Mortality:** Studies have shown a correlation between heatwaves and increased mortality rates, particularly among vulnerable populations such as the elderly, children, and those with pre-existing health conditions.
- **Mental Health Impacts:** High temperatures and the stress associated with heat waves can contribute to mental health issues, including anxiety, depression, and heat-induced aggression.

Potential Impacts on Urban Infrastructure

- **Increased Energy Consumption:** Heatwaves lead to higher demand for electricity due to the extensive use of air conditioning and cooling systems. This can strain the power grid and lead to outages.
- **Increased Water Demand:** Heatwaves significantly increase water consumption for drinking, cooling, and irrigation, putting pressure on urban water supply systems.
- **Building Stress:** High temperatures can affect the integrity of buildings, especially those not designed for extreme heat, leading to increased cooling costs and potential structural damage.

Conclusion

The increasing frequency and intensity of heat waves in Indian cities pose a serious threat to public health and urban infrastructure. Addressing climate change through sustainable practices and implementing heat mitigation strategies as implemented in Ahmedabad like promoting green spaces, cool pavements, and improved urban planning are crucial steps towards building more resilient cities.

What are the arguments for and against providing subsidies for hybrid vehicles in comparison to electric vehicles (EVs)?

Introduction: Brief contextual introduction

Body: Highlight arguments for and against providing subsidies for hybrid vehicles over EVs.

Conclusion: Way forward

India's road transport sector, responsible for about 12% of the country's CO₂ emissions, is the third largest greenhouse gas emitter after the energy and agriculture sectors. FAME aims to boost demand for EVs and hybrids through retail subsidies, support the manufacture of components, and develop a nationwide EV ecosystem.

Arguments For Subsidies for Hybrid Vehicles

- **Bridge to EV Adoption:** Hybrids serve as an intermediate step for consumers transitioning from traditional internal combustion engine (ICE) vehicles to fully electric vehicles. They help ease range anxiety and infrastructure limitations.
- **Diverse Consumer Needs:** Hybrids may appeal to a broader audience, including those who are not ready to fully commit to EVs due to concerns about charging infrastructure, range, or initial cost.
- **Reduced Emissions:** Hybrids offer immediate reductions in fuel consumption and emissions compared to traditional ICE vehicles, contributing to short-term environmental goals.
- **Infrastructure Readiness:** Hybrids do not rely as heavily on charging infrastructure, which is still developing in many regions. This makes them more practical in areas with limited EV charging stations.
- **Lower Costs:** Hybrids are generally less expensive than EVs, making them more accessible to a larger segment of the population.

Arguments Against Subsidizing Hybrids over EVs

Mains Marathon Compilation June (Third Week) 2024

- **Complete Emission Reduction:** EVs offer the potential for zero emissions, especially when charged with renewable energy sources. Subsidizing EVs aligns with long-term goals of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and combating climate change.
- **Technological Advancement:** Subsidizing EVs can accelerate advancements in battery technology, charging infrastructure, and overall vehicle efficiency, driving down costs and improving performance over time.
- **Higher Efficiency:** EVs are generally more efficient than hybrids, as they convert more energy from the grid to propulsion compared to the combined internal combustion and electric systems in hybrids.
- **Market Signal:** Subsidies for EVs send a strong signal to automakers and consumers about the future direction of the automotive industry, encouraging investment in EV technologies and infrastructure.
- **Global Trends:** Many countries are setting ambitious targets for phasing out ICE vehicles and promoting EVs. Aligning subsidies with these goals helps ensure consistency and international cooperation on environmental objectives.

Conclusion

Finally, policies must evolve with the changing sectoral landscape & aim towards zero-emissions vehicles because that will help India reach its climate and energy security goals.

What are the consequences of a one-size-fits-all approach to national exams on the diverse educational needs of students across the country?

Introduction: Give a brief contextual introduction

Body: Highlight the negative and positive consequences of the one-size-fits-all approach to national exams

Conclusion: Way forward

The latest instance of a NEET exam over incorrect result, the NET exam being cancelled has once again raised concerns over the institutional integrity of the National Testing Agency.

Negative Consequences of the one-size-fits-all approach

- **Diverse Learning Styles:** Students have varied learning styles and paces. Standardized exams may not adequately measure the abilities of students who excel in non-traditional or practical learning environments.
- **Special Needs and Disabilities:** Students with special needs or disabilities may find standardized tests particularly challenging, and without appropriate accommodations, their true capabilities may not be reflected.
- **Resource Disparities:** Schools in different regions often have varying levels of resources and infrastructure. A uniform exam may disadvantage students from under-resourced schools who have not had access to the same quality of education as those in better-funded areas.
- **Disregard Regional Variations:** Educational needs and resources can differ significantly across regions. A national exam might not consider these disparities, putting students from under-resourced areas at a disadvantage. Eg, Tamil Nadu has always been opposed to the NEET exam as it was against their perfectly functioning state policy of linking medical college admissions to high school performance

Positive Consequences of the one-size-fits-all approach

- **Uniform Benchmarks:** Standardized exams can provide a common benchmark to assess all students, potentially offering a fair measure of academic performance.

Mains Marathon Compilation June (Third Week) 2024

- **Accountability:** They can help in holding institutions conducting examinations accountable for ensuring that students reach a certain level of proficiency.
- **National Standards:** A common examination system can facilitate student mobility across regions and make academic achievements more comparable on a national scale.
- **Data for Improvement:** Standardized test results can provide valuable data to policymakers for identifying gaps in the education system and allocating resources more effectively.

Conclusion

The exam conducting policy of the government needs a quick revamp to build a more consultative and accommodative approach to manage the contradictions and flaws. Finally, the judiciary must bridge the gap left by bad governance and offer detailed recommendations that governments can follow in the near and medium term and the media should play the responsible role of holding all the states accountable even if they belong to the ruling party. At the same time, the long-term solution is improving schooling quality, decentralizing examinations, and institutionalizing strict oversight and governance to restore confidence and credibility.

What are the key components that should be included in India's national security doctrine to address current and emerging threats?

Introduction: Contextual Introduction

Body: What are key components of India that can be included in NSS?

Conclusion: Way forward

Recently, the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) made an interesting comment about the formulation of a National Security Strategy (NSS).

Key Components of India's National Security Doctrine

- **Modernization of Armed Forces:** Continuous investment in advanced technology, modern equipment, and training for the Army, Navy, and Air Force to enhance combat readiness and capability. The NSS is also a prerequisite for the operationalization of theatre commands and transformation.
- **Strategic Clarity and Guidance:** A written NSS provides clear strategic direction and priorities for all security agencies, ensuring cohesive and coordinated efforts.
- **Intelligence Coordination:** Enhanced coordination and real-time intelligence sharing between various intelligence agencies to ensure timely and effective responses to threats.
- **Surveillance Infrastructure:** Expanding surveillance networks using drones, satellites, and advanced surveillance technologies to monitor borders and sensitive areas.
- **Infrastructure Development:** Building and maintaining infrastructure along borders to facilitate quick mobilization and effective patrolling.
- **Strategic Alliances:** Building and maintaining strategic alliances with key global and regional powers to enhance security cooperation.
- **Indigenous Defense Production:** Promoting self-reliance by encouraging indigenous production of defense equipment and reducing dependence on imports.
- **Disaster Preparedness:** Developing comprehensive disaster management plans to deal with natural and man-made disasters.
- **Policy Reforms:** Updating and enacting laws to address new security challenges such as cybercrime, terrorism, and espionage.
- **Awareness Campaigns:** Conducting public awareness campaigns to educate citizens about security threats and the importance of vigilance.

Mains Marathon Compilation June (Third Week) 2024

- **Decision Making:** Clear operational procedures and simple decision-making are the most important factors. A decentralized Directive Style of Command (DSOC) is eventually required to replace the system, which suffers from over-centralization.
- **Accountability:** The current reviews by the Parliamentary Standing Committee and Auditor General are sub-optimal. They need support from net-assessment and statistical tools for periodic audits and dynamic goal setting. Using the NSS for peer review by think tanks can reduce ambiguity and enhance accountability.

Conclusion

Incorporating these components into India's national security doctrine will provide strategic clarity, operational efficiency, and a comprehensive approach to address both current and emerging threats. This doctrine should foster a "whole of nation" approach, build synergy across various sectors, and harness comprehensive national power (CNP). By doing so, India can ensure a secure and stable environment conducive to its growth and development in the increasingly complex global landscape

What are the primary socio-economic challenges faced by the elderly population in India? What measures can be taken to improve the coverage and efficacy of programs for the elderly population?

Introduction: Brief contextual introduction

Body: Highlight the challenges and measures to improve the efficacy of programs related to the elderly.

Conclusion: Way forward

A study by HelpAge India of a cross-section of elders across the country found that only 15% of them had a source of income. India's growing elderly population faces a unique set of socio-economic challenges.

Primary Socio-Economic Challenges Faced by the Elderly Population in India

- **Financial Insecurity:** A large portion of the elderly lack formal pensions, relying on children or meager savings. This can lead to poverty, especially for widows or those with limited social support.
- **Healthcare Burden:** Increased chronic health issues and out-of-pocket medical expenses can be overwhelming, especially for the poor. Access to affordable and quality healthcare services remains a concern.
- **Social Isolation and Neglect:** Nuclear families becoming more common can lead to feelings of loneliness and isolation among the elderly. Additionally, neglect and abuse by caregivers are emerging problems.
- **Lack of Skill Development Opportunities:** Rapid economic changes leave many older adults without the skills needed for new employment opportunities.
- **Gender Disparity:** Elderly women are particularly vulnerable due to factors like lower literacy rates, higher poverty rates, and limited inheritance rights.

Measures to Improve Programs for the Elderly:

- **Universal Pension Scheme:** Expanding social security coverage and providing a minimum pension for all elderly can offer financial security.
- **Affordable Healthcare:** Subsidized medical insurance, geriatric care facilities, and doorstep healthcare services can improve access to healthcare.
- **Promoting Eldercare Awareness:** Public awareness campaigns and support groups can address social stigma and encourage intergenerational bonding.
- **Skilling and Re-skilling Initiatives:** Programs can equip seniors with relevant skills to re-enter the workforce or participate in income-generating activities.
- **Empowering Women:** Promoting women's education, financial independence, and inheritance rights can improve their well-being in old age.

Mains Marathon Compilation June (Third Week) 2024

- **Strengthening Legal Protections:** Laws against elder abuse and ensuring their property rights can create a safer environment.
- **Technology for Accessibility:** Investing in technology like telemedicine and digital literacy programs can bridge the digital divide and improve access to services.

Conclusion

India can ensure that its senior population lives with dignity and security during their golden years by putting these policies into place and building a stronger social safety net.

Critically analyze how judicial interventions influence public perception and policy outcomes regarding reservations. (250 words)

Introduction: Contextual Introduction

Body: How do judicial decisions influence public perceptions and policy outcomes on reservation?

Conclusion: Way forward

Judicial interventions in India's reservation policies profoundly influence public perception and policy outcomes by balancing constitutional mandates with socio-political realities. The judiciary, through ***the "strict scrutiny"*** doctrine, often strikes down reservation policies deemed to exceed constitutional limits, as seen in the recent Patna High Court judgment that invalidated the 65% reservation in Bihar based on the 2023 Caste Survey.

Influencing Public Perception

- **Framing the Debate:** Judicial interventions significantly influence public perception, often igniting debates on social justice and merit. Striking down expansive reservation policies can lead to public dissent and highlight societal tensions. For example, the nullification of reservations for Jats, Gujjars, Marathas, Patidars, and Muslims reflects deep-seated frustrations and complexities within India's caste dynamics.
- **Discourse on Merit and Efficiency:** The judiciary's focus on merit and efficiency in administration often conflicts with the socio-political drive for broader inclusion. The insistence on maintaining the 50% cap, as seen in judgments like M.R. Balaji (1962) and Indra Sawhney (1992), aims to protect the integrity of merit-based systems.
- **Fueling Controversy:** Judgments striking down quotas, like the Mandal Commission case (1990), can exacerbate social tensions and reinforce existing prejudices.

Shaping Policy Outcomes

- **Setting Parameters:** Judicial pronouncements shape policy outcomes by compelling governments to conform to constitutional parameters. The recent Patna High Court judgment highlighted the need for adherence to the 50% cap and rejected the notion of "proportionate representation," reinforcing the principle that reservation policies must be grounded in constitutional provisions rather than electoral compulsions.
- **Enforcing Implementation:** Courts can direct the government to implement reservation policies effectively, ensuring benefits reach intended beneficiaries.
- **Triggering Policy Shifts:** Judicial scrutiny often leads to the refinement and reinforcement of reservation policies. For instance, the Supreme Court's intervention in the Maratha reservation case (2021) invalidated state laws granting reservations beyond the 50% cap. Such decisions compel state governments to adhere to constitutional limits, ensuring policies are not excessively skewed towards particular groups. This reinforces a standardized approach to reservations across different states.

Conclusion

The judiciary's role in reservation policies, therefore, acts as a check against potential overreach by the state, ensuring that such policies align with constitutional provisions. At the same time, it sparks public discourse on the efficacy and fairness of reservations, pushing society towards a more nuanced understanding of merit and social justice. This dual influence reinforces the judiciary's pivotal role in shaping both the legal and socio-political landscapes of reservation in India.

Critically examine India's foreign policy towards Myanmar in light of the ongoing political crisis and human rights violations. (250 words)

Introduction: Contextual Introduction

Body: Examine Indian foreign policy towards Myanmar and suggest new ways to deal with it.

Conclusion: Way forward

India's foreign policy towards Myanmar has been shaped by a combination of historical ties, geopolitical considerations, and strategic interests. The two countries share deep cultural and economic connections, and the 1,643 km long border makes Myanmar's stability crucial for India's northeastern states.

India's Competing Concerns

- **Democracy and Human Rights:** As the world's largest democracy, India has publicly expressed concern about the coup and ongoing human rights violations.
- **Strategic Interests:** India shares a long border with Myanmar and views it as a crucial buffer against China's influence in the region. Additionally, India has invested heavily in infrastructure projects, particularly in the oil and gas sector within Myanmar, and relies on it for access to Southeast Asia.

India's Balancing Act:

- **Rhetorical Condemnation:** India has condemned the coup and called for a return to democracy. However, its statements haven't been as forceful as those from Western nations.
- **Maintaining Engagement:** India has continued some level of engagement with the military junta, providing humanitarian aid and keeping diplomatic channels open. This approach aims to maintain some influence and prevent Myanmar from leaning entirely towards China.

A New Policy Approach: Values and Interests

- **Promoting Democracy:** India should leverage its democratic credentials to support Myanmar's pro-democracy groups and the National Unity Government (NUG) in replacing the military-drafted 2008 constitution with a federal one.
- **Halting Weapon Sales:** India should immediately stop all weapon sales to the Myanmar military. Ceasing these sales would signal India's commitment to not supporting the military's brutal tactics against civilians.
- **Humanitarian Outreach:** India needs to open cross-border humanitarian corridors to assist civilians affected by the conflict in border regions like Sagaing, Chin, and northern Rakhine states. Reinstating the Free Movement Regime (FMR) and collaborating with local and international NGOs can ensure effective aid delivery.
- **Protecting Asylum Seekers:** India should stop detaining and deporting asylum seekers from Myanmar. Adhering to the principle of non-refoulement, which prevents sending refugees back to places where they face danger, and providing humane shelter would demonstrate India's commitment to humanitarian values.

Conclusion

India's foreign policy towards Myanmar amidst the ongoing political crisis and human rights violations requires a balanced approach that integrates strategic interests with democratic values and human security.