ForumIAS

9 PM Current Affairs Weekly Compilation

For UPSC CSE mains examination

UPSC
सत्यमेव जयते

3rd Week
June. 2024

Features :

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

INDEX

Created with love ❤ by ForumIAS- the knowledge network for civil services.
Visit academy.forumias.com for our mentor based courses.

Forum IAS

Created with love ❤ by ForumIAS- the knowledge network for civil services.
Visit academy.forumias.com for our mentor based courses.

Forum IAS

GS Paper 1

Topic- Salient features of Indian Society, Diversity of India.

Contradictory approach of the Madhya Pradesh High Court

Context: The article discusses a problematic order from the Madhya Pradesh High Court. This order misinterprets the law on inter-faith marriages, questioning the Special Marriage Act, 1954. The court denied police protection to an unmarried Hindu-Muslim couple, contrary to established legal principle. **Contradictory approach of the Madhya Pradesh High Court on inter-faith marriage**

For detailed information on **Impact of misinterpretation of the Special Marriage Act** read this article here

What is the Madhya Pradesh High Court order on an inter-faith marriage?

1. The Madhya Pradesh High Court questioned the validity of an inter-faith marriage between a Hindu girl and a Muslim boy under the Special Marriage Act, 1954. The court denied police protection to the unmarried couple.
2. The decision reversed gains in the right to choose a partner. It ignored the main objectives of the Special Marriage Act, which aims to provide a legal way for inter-faith marriages.
3. The decision neglected the couple's right to protection under Article 21 of the Constitution.

What contradicts the Madhya Pradesh High Court's approach?

1. High Courts usually protect the rights of petitioners in inter-faith and inter-caste marriages under Article 226 of the Constitution. Even unmarried couples often receive protection due to societal threats.
2. In Shafin Jahan vs. Asokan K.M. (2018), the Supreme Court emphasized that marriage is a personal choice protected by privacy. Social approval is not required for recognizing such decisions.
3. The Madras High Court granted police protection to a lesbian couple, recognizing the dangers they faced.
4. The Punjab and Haryana High Court protected a live-in couple, emphasizing their fundamental rights under Article 21, not the legality of their relationship.
5. The Madhya Pradesh High Court used a Supreme Court case on property succession, which was irrelevant to the issue of marriage validity or police protection.

How does the order affect the Special Marriage Act?

1. **Misinterprets Section 4**: The court wrongly applied Section 4, which only prohibits marriages within certain degrees of relationship.
2. **Uses Irrelevant Precedent**: The court referenced the Mohammed Salim vs. Shamsudeen case, which deals with property succession under Mohammedan Laws, not inter-faith marriage validity.

Why is this order significant in today's context?

1. **Vigilantism Threat:** The order is significant due to the current threat of vigilantism against inter-faith and inter-caste marriages.
2. **Ignoring Constitutional Morality:** The "love jihad" conspiracy and right-wing propaganda challenge constitutional morality.

Created with love ❤ by ForumIAS- the knowledge network for civil services.
Visit academy.forumias.com for our mentor based courses.

↗ForumIAS

3. **Pending Reforms:** There are ongoing petitions in the Supreme Court challenging certain provisions of the Special Marriage Act.

GS Paper 2

Subject: Indian Polity

Topic- Indian Constitution—Historical Underpinnings, Evolution, Features, Amendments, Significant Provisions and Basic Structure.

B.R. Ambedkar's View on Constitutional Morality

Context: The article criticizes disregarding the Indian Constitution despite his public displays of respect. It highlights instances where he bypassed established procedures and norms, leading to concerns about the concentration of power and undermining constitutional values.

For detailed information on **Safeguarding constitutional morality read this article here**

What recent government actions went against the constitution?

1. **Preemptive Decision-Making:** India's PM approved the seventeenth instalment of the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi, a ₹20,000 crore scheme, before the allocation of ministerial portfolios, which traditionally falls under the Ministry of Agriculture and the Department of Expenditure.
2. **Cabinet Actions Without Portfolios:** The first cabinet meeting led to the decision to assist three crore additional households under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana without assigned portfolios, raising questions about the procedural legitimacy of the decision.
3. **Extension of Tenures:** India's PM extended the tenures of the National Security Adviser and the Principal Secretary prematurely, using the old Appointments Committee of the Cabinet setup, despite not having reconstituted the Cabinet Committee after the new government formation.

What are the implications of these approaches for democracy and governance?

1. **Centralization of Power:** India's PM approach centralizes decision-making in the PMO, bypassing other ministries and diluting collective cabinet responsibility.
2. **Lack of Accountability:** The centralized governance model has reduced the effectiveness of parliamentary checks like questions and motions, limiting the daily and periodic assessment of government actions.
3. **Suppression of Opposition:** His public speeches often dismiss and belittle the opposition, weakening democratic debate and oversight.
4. **Ignoring Major Issues:** The government has been slow to address critical national problems such as unemployment, inflation, and regional conflicts like the situation in Manipur, suggesting a focus on optics over substantive governance.

What historical warnings did Ambedkar give that relate to Governance?

Created with love ❤ by ForumIAS- the knowledge network for civil services.
Visit academy.forumias.com for our mentor based courses.
ForumIAS

1. Ambedkar's Warning: B.R. Ambedkar cautioned that blind devotion in politics could lead to dictatorship.
2. Constitutional Morality: He emphasized that constitutional morality must be cultivated and respected by both the ruling and opposition parties.

3. Ambedkar's Quote: On November 4, 1948, Ambedkar stated that democracy in India is like a "top-dressing on an Indian soil which is essentially undemocratic."
4. Current Implications: Present actions of government show a disregard for collective responsibility and constitutional processes, leading to concerns about an emerging constitutional dictatorship.

Reservation Judgements: An overemphasis on merit

Context The Patna High Court annulled the Bihar govt's notification increasing reservation from 50% to 65% for backward classes, scheduled castes, and tribes in government jobs and educational institutions. This expansion was based on the much-discussed Caste Survey of 2023. The Indian Constitution promises social justice and allows the state to make special provisions for underprivileged groups. However, courts have often nullified expanded reservation policies for various groups (Jats, Gujjars, Marathas, Patidars, Muslims) using the "strict scrutiny" doctrine. The judiciary has prioritized "merit" and "efficiency in administration" in their decisions in the recent past.

Why did Patna High Court strike down 65% reservation?

1) The judgment firmly dismissed the idea of "proportionate representation" for Backward Classes, stating that this concept is not supported by Articles 15 and 16. Article 16 mentions "inadequacy of representation." The High Court cited the Supreme Court's ruling in Indra Sawhney (1992), where it stated that "adequate representation" should not be interpreted as "proportionate representation."
2) Bihar reservation amendment exceeds the 50% reservation limit. The Supreme Court introduced this limit in M R Balaji (1962), considering it discriminatory under the right to equality. This principle has been upheld in subsequent rulings like Devadasan (1964), N M Thomas (1976), and Indra Sawhney (1992).
3) The 50% reservation rule is defended on grounds of efficiency and merit. The Patna High Court also noted that "merit cannot be entirely sacrificed."
4) The proposed reservation was not proportionate given that Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and backward castes constitute 84.46% of Bihar's population. The Supreme Court acknowledged in Indra Sawhney that the proportion of backward classes to the total population is relevant.

5) Indra Sawhney implied that strict adherence to the 50% limit is not necessary in remote or less developed areas. The High Court rejected the idea that Bihar is outside the national mainstream, highlighting its significant role in national politics.
6) The court observed that there was no analysis of the Caste Survey and consultation with the experts before increasing reservation.

Read more- Issues associated with Calcutta High Court's judgement on reservation policies in India

What are the issues with this judgement as per the author?

1) **Inconsistencies in policy implementation**- Before extending reservation to the EWS category, no survey was conducted to assess their underrepresentation. However, the Janhit Abhiyan (2022) Supreme Court

Created with love ❤ by ForumIAS- the knowledge network for civil services.
Visit academy.forumias.com for our mentor based courses.
ForumIAS

decision represents a departure from the typical strict scrutiny approach in judicial rulings where it allowed breach of 50% limit.

2) **Neglect of Bihar's socio-economic context** - The government overlooked Bihar's significant challenges in court, such as its lowest per capita income (less than $800), highest fertility rate, and lowest college density in the country. These factors present strong arguments.

3) **Expert Consultation in Affirmative Action Policies**- The requirement for analyzing the Caste Survey and consulting with experts could impose additional constraints on the government's affirmative action policies in the future.

4) **Over emphasis on Merit and Efficiency-** There is no scientific or empirical evidence that supports the notion that SC/ST/OBC employees perform less efficiently than those recruited under the general category. Justice Chinnappa Reddy countered the efficiency argument in Vasanth Kumar (1985) case challenging the assumption that upper caste individuals appointed based on presumed merit naturally outperform those appointed through reservations.

Way forward-Justice Chandrachud in B K Pavitra II (2019) observed that we need to redefine our notions of merit in terms of a more inclusive and plural society. Merit cannot lead to exclusion. Merit must be measured in terms of social good.

Topic- Statutory, Regulatory and various Quasi-judicial Bodies.

Issues with Statutory Regulatory Authorities

Context-The article highlights the need to improving the governance of powerful regulators that currently wield significant influence over the Indian economy and citizens' lives.
There are over 20 Statutory Regulatory Authorities in India overseeing sectors ranging from finance and telecommunications to healthcare and transportation. Together, these bodies directly regulate more than 75% of India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). This highlights their important role in maintaining sectoral integrity and consumer protection.
Regulatory bodies' effectiveness isn't just about their leaders. Leadership influences strategy and morale, but institutional design with checks and balances is equally crucial.

What are the issues with Statutory Regulatory Authorities in India?

1) **Consolidated Powers and Economic Impact-**In India, SRAs merge legislative, executive, and judicial powers, giving them significant authority over specific sectors. This authority enables them to oversee and regulate entities within their jurisdiction. This enormous power can affect private sector confidence, potentially slowing down innovation and holding back India's economic growth.

2) **Appointment Process**- Currently, most senior personnel in SRAs are former or current government officials. This is because the appointment process is largely controlled by the executive government, with limited involvement of external experts. The tenures of these appointees are inconsistent and uncertain.

3) **Delegating Law-Making Authority to Unelected Bodies**- In democracies, elected bodies accountable to the public hold the authority to make laws. When this authority is delegated to unelected bodies, rigorous safeguards are necessary. Many Indian laws do not outline clear procedures for regulators to exercise this authority, leading to a "democratic and legitimacy deficit".

Created with love ❤ by ForumIAS- the knowledge network for civil services.
Visit academy.forumias.com for our mentor based courses.
Forum IAS

4) **Lack of Accountability-** Most Indian Statutory Regulatory Authorities (SRAs) are mainly accountable through parliamentary oversight, which includes open discussions on their yearly performance and financial reports. However, these discussions have never taken place in the Indian Parliament for any SRA.

Read more- Issues with the drug regulatory system in India

What should be the way forward?

1) **Appointment Reforms-**There is a need to create a diverse group of subject matter experts that have predictable and fixed long tenures in regulatory bodies.
2) **Autonomy**- There is a need to align legislative provisions to empower all SRAs to regulate without needing government approval. This autonomy needs sufficient human resources and financial independence. However, these provisions must include checks-and-balances to prevent abuse of power.
3) **Clear Guidelines**- Legislative guidelines should outline how regulators are to perform their executive and judicial functions.
4) **Robust Accountability**- Accountability reforms should focus on three key areas-

A) establishing a well-structured board with clear functions and roles
B) introducing appeals processes at tribunals
C) conducting audits by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India.
D) Mandatory open discussions on their yearly performance and financial reports by Parliamentary Committees.
5) **Implementing recommendation of Financial Sector Legislative Reforms Commission** - The Commission proposed extensive governance reforms applicable to all SRAs across India. It is now important to revisit and update this report to align with current requirements and promptly implement its recommendations.

Subject: Governance

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

Issues with the NEP's Structure

Context-The article highlights the issue with the implementation of National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.

Read more- National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.

Why Was the NEP Updated?

1. **Outdated Policy**: The old policy from 1986 was not updated for 34 years, making it irrelevant for modern needs.
2. **Employability Issues**: Graduates lacked the skills needed for today's job market, with many industries and

Created with love ❤ by ForumIAS- the knowledge network for civil services.
Visit academy.forumias.com for our mentor based courses.
Forum IAS

jobs now existing that did not exist 20 years ago.
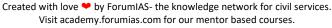**3. Technological Changes**: The rise of the internet and Industry 4.0 drastically changed job requirements.
4. Need for Modern Skills: The NEP focuses on soft skills, technical skills, research, problem-solving, and critical thinking.

How Does the NEP Support Students?

1. Flexible Learning Paths: The NEP allows students to pause their education for work and return later. This facilitates lifelong learning.
2. Recognition of Prior Learning: Students can earn credits for work experience related to their studies, contributing towards their degrees after proper assessment.
3. Practical Experiences: The curriculum includes internships, apprenticeships, projects, and community outreach. These provide real-world applications of theoretical knowledge.
4. Outcome-Based Learning: Each course has specific learning outcomes measured through assessments. This ensures targeted and effective education.
5. University Autonomy: Institutions like Delhi University allow students to choose majors and minors along with electives. This offers a multidisciplinary education.
6. Credit-Based Courses: The NEP includes generic electives and skill enhancement courses, which equip students with employability and entrepreneurial skills.

What are the issues in the implementation of NEP?

1) **Standardization and Mobility in Higher Education**-It implements a credit-based eight-semester format aimed at creating a standardized and mobile higher education system. This format theoretically allows students to transfer credits across institutions, emphasizing interoperability. However, it neglects the organic development of content.
2) **Truncation of Syllabus**-The syllabus has been reduced from five units per paper to three, and even prescribed chapters have been truncated. For ex- in a poem by Walt Whitman, "Passage to India," earlier the entire 255-line poem was taught, but now only 68 lines across four sections are prescribed, despite the philosophical nature of the poem.
3) **Dilution of Core Content-** The NEP's focus on a credit-based system dilutes core subjects. For ex- in Economics Honours at St. Xavier's University, Kolkata, only one out of eight courses directly relate to the honours subject. The rest cover various areas such as human behavior and media studies. This raises concerns about whether students gain enough specialized knowledge to succeed in their careers.
4) **Introduction of additional courses**- Adding more courses, like skill enhancement and value-added studies, increases administrative work but doesn't always improve educational results. This weakens higher education's original goal of fostering critical thinking and expertise in specific fields
5) **Logistical Challenge**- The NEP brings logistical challenges with frequent exams (7 to 8 per semester) and extensive internal assessments. This heavy focus on assessments, including attendance and continuous evaluation, burdens both students and educators with bureaucratic tasks.
6) **Mandatory Practical Exams in Arts Education**-Unnecessary demands, such as mandatory practical exams for non-core arts subjects, waste resources and teaching time. These issues highlight a gap between policy goals and real-world application.
7) Neglect of Educational Excellence-NEP focuses more on valuing bureaucracy over educational excellence. It suggests that by prioritizing standardization and superficial adaptability, the NEP diminishes universities' traditional function of fostering critical thinking.

Created with love ❤ by ForumIAS- the knowledge network for civil services.
Visit academy.forumias.com for our mentor based courses.
ForumIAS

For detailed information on **National Education Policy (NEP)** read Article 1, Article 2

Omitting several critical events from NCERT textbooks: Pros & Cons

Context: The article critically criticizes the NCERT for omitting references to significant historical events like the Gujarat riots and Babri Masjid demolition from textbooks. I

For detailed information on **Changes to the NCERT syllabus and associated issues** read this article here

What has been omitted from NCERT textbooks?

The NCERT textbooks have omitted several critical events and details, which include:

Gujarat Riots: These significant communal disturbances are not mentioned.
Babri Masjid Demolition: Referred to only as a "three-domed structure," without explicit details.
BJP's Rath Yatra: This influential political event is not included.
Role of Kar Sevaks: Their involvement in communal violence post-demolition is omitted.
Presidential Rule in BJP-Ruled States: The textbook no longer discusses the imposition of President's rule post December 6, 1992.

BJP's Regret Over Ayodhya: Earlier acknowledgments of regret by the BJP have been removed.

What are the issues with school textbooks?

1) **Historical Narratives in School Textbooks**: School textbooks in the past focused narrowly on India's achievements, overlooking its contributions to art, literature, philosophy, and science. This distorted the country's historical identity and perpetuated colonial mindsets.
2) I**mpact on Students**: Introducing complex historical conflicts prematurely in school curricula may lead to emotional distress and perpetuate negative perceptions. This may divide communities.
3) E**thical Considerations-** The biased historical accounts in outdated textbooks raised concerns about their potential to undermine unity and mutual respect among students.

What is the impact of these omissions?

1. Hinders Critical Thinking: Omitting significant events like the Gujarat riots and Babri Masjid demolition prevents students from developing critical thinking skills.
2. Sanitized History: Presenting a sanitized version of history avoids discussing faultlines and key events in India's journey, like the BJP's rath yatra and kar sevaks' role.
3. Loss of Comprehensive Education: Deleting sections on Scheduled Castes and Tribes' poverty, Gandhi's assassination, the Emergency, and protest movements leads to an incomplete understanding of historical and social contexts.

What should be the way forward?

1) **Need for Balanced Narratives**-Textbook revisions are important to provide a credible historical narrative that focuses on resolving conflicts and fostering mutual respect, helping students become responsible citizens

Created with love ❤ by ForumIAS- the knowledge network for civil services.
Visit academy.forumias.com for our mentor based courses.
ForumIAS

with a better grasp of India's heritage.

2) **Role of Universities** –It should offer an environment where mature discussions and critical analyses of historical controversies can take place.

3) **Pedagogical Goals**-School education should try to cultivate positive attitudes and critical thinking among students. This can prepare them for societal roles without early disillusionment.

4) **Promoting National Unity and Inclusivity through Revised Textbooks**- Revised textbooks should focus on national unity, inclusivity, and India's cultural contributions. It should move away from divisive narratives and integrating contemporary global issues relevant to students' lives.

5) **Continuous Improvement**: -Regularly updating textbooks, as mandated by the National Education Policy 2020, is important to meet changing educational demands and encourage empathy, curiosity, and critical thinking among students.

Significance of AI in Education Sector

Context-The article discusses the potential of AI to bridge the gap in access to quality education and personalized tutoring. It cites the "2 Sigma Problem" which highlights the effectiveness of one-on-one tutoring, but also the practical challenges of scalability.

The current higher education places too much importance on job placement and salary packages as the main objectives of higher education. This focus could restrict motivation for learning.

What role does AI play in enhancing the quality and access to education?

1) Recent advancements in AI like OpenAI's ChatGPT offer scalable, personalized, and cost-effective alternatives to traditional teaching methods

2) AI models can offer personalized tutoring, adjusting to each student's learning speed and preferences. It can also replicate the advantages of one-on-one teaching.

3) Integration of voice and vision capabilities in AI is making interactions more natural. It allows students to communicate with AI tutors like human instructors.

4) In India, many students don't have access to quality teachers. AI can help bridge this gap by offering consistent and high-quality educational support.

5) AI can democratize education, ensuring all students, regardless of where they live or their socio-economic background, can access the resources they need to succeed.

What are the issues with it?

1) There is no consensus on the impact of AI on education. Some view it as a threat to human capabilities, whereas others see it as enhancing them.

2) Advanced technology by itself is not enough; learner engagement and motivation driven by meaningful purposes such as addressing social issues and promoting public welfare are essential for effective learning.

3) It cautions against an overemphasis on job placement and salary packages as the primary goal of higher education, which may limit motivation for learning.

What should be the way forward?

1) **Integration of AI in Education**-Policymakers, educators, and philanthropists should prioritize AI adoption in education and invest in AI infrastructure, teacher training, and curriculum development.

2) **Empowering Educators as Facilitators: -** Educators should transition to facilitator roles, utilizing AI for personalized support and emphasizing higher-order thinking skills and creativity. This integration can improve

learning outcomes, preparing students for future careers by nurturing critical thinking and innovation. 3) **Embracing AI as a Complementary Educational Tool** -Educators should see AI models not as threats, but as tools that complement their teaching methods. By incorporating AI into classrooms, teachers can concentrate on the intricate and profound elements of education that demand human insight and awareness.

Read more- Major concerns of AI use in India

Revision of Competitive Examination

Context-The article criticizes the current system of competitive entrance examinations for higher education as an "elimination exercise" rather than a genuine selection process. It proposes an alternative examination system.

What are the issues with the current entrance examination system?

1) These exams cannot assess important life capacities like creativity, deep conceptual understanding, and social capacities. This undermines the value of these abilities.
2) The high-stakes nature of these exams causes mental, social, and economic problems for aspiring students and their families.
3) The concept of "merit" being truly represented by these exams, as they evaluate a limited range of abilities and can produce varying rankings, may be questioned.

What is the proposed alternative selection method?

1) This alternative selection method is based on qualifying criteria assessed through improved board examinations or similar assessments.
2) Students who meet the basic qualifying criteria (e.g., 70% in four subjects) would be eligible for admission to higher education institutions.
3) If the number of eligible students exceeds available seats, randomized selection would be employed.

Read more- Exam Paper Leaks- Concerns and Way Forward

What are the advantages of the proposed method?

1) This approach would lessen the pressure on students and families since they only have to meet the minimum requirements. This will minimize competitive stress and related pressures.
2) By evaluating a broader range of abilities, the issue of limited educational goals emphasized by current exams can be minimized. This will promote a more diverse society and enhance collective competence.
3) Colleges would be evaluated based on the overall quality of education they provide, focusing on students' broader capacities rather than selecting based solely on narrow, exam-focused skills.

The proposed method doesn't immediately solve the problem of limited seats in top higher education institutions. However, it suggests that students who don't get admitted would understand it's due to chance, not their worth. The real solution is to enhance capacity in high-quality institutions to accommodate all students.

Created with love ❤ by ForumIAS- the knowledge network for civil services.
Visit academy.forumias.com for our mentor based courses.

ForumIAS

Ongoing issues with the NEET exam

Context: The article discusses the ongoing issues with the NEET exam in India, including cheating scandals, a lack of transparency, and its negative impact on rural and poorer students. It suggests that the root problem is poor school education quality and calls for a policy overhaul to address these issues.

For detailed information on **NEET Controversy** read this article here

What are the problems with NEET?

1. Paper Leaks: NEET exams have been marred by repeated paper leaks over the years, undermining the exam's credibility.

2. Incorrect Results: Mismanagement in result declaration has led to incorrect outcomes, causing distress among aspirants.

3. Unusual Scoring Patterns: This year, 67 students scored perfect marks, a significant increase from the usual two or three, raising suspicions of irregularities.

4. Grace Marks Issues: Over 1,560 students received grace marks for unclear reasons, adding to the transparency issues.

5. Loss of Trust: These issues have significantly eroded trust in the National Testing Agency (NTA), responsible for conducting NEET.

Why was NEET introduced?

1. Standardizing Entry-Level Competence: It aimed to ensure that all medical college entrants had a solid understanding of basic sciences like Chemistry, Physics, and Biology.

2. Reducing Multiple Exams: Prior to NEET, students faced around 46 different entrance exams, which was cumbersome and stressful.

3. Eliminating Capitation Fees: NEET intended to remove the high fees charged by private medical colleges for admissions, which were often not based on merit but on the ability to pay.

How has NEET affected the education system?

1. NEET has led to a significant bias in the education system, **favoring students from CBSE** backgrounds because the NEET syllabus is more aligned with the CBSE curriculum, disadvantaging students from state boards.

2. Due to this imbalance, students from state boards are often compelled to undertake extra coaching to compete effectively, **contributing to the growth of a coaching industry** valued at Rs 58,000 crore, expanding at a rate of 15% annually.

3. Specifically, in Tamil Nadu, the introduction of NEET has **adversely affected rural and Tamil(state)-medium students.**

What has been Tamil Nadu's response to NEET?

1. Tamil Nadu has always opposed NEET, favoring its policy of linking medical college admissions to high school performance.

2. In 2021, Tamil Nadu formed the Expert Committee led by Justice A K Rajan to assess the impact of NEET.

Created with love ❤ by ForumIAS- the knowledge network for civil services.
Visit academy.forumias.com for our mentor based courses.
⤢Forum IAS

3. The Rajan Committee found that admissions of Tamil-medium students dropped from an average of 15% to between 1.6% and 3.2% from 2017 to 2021.
4. Admissions of rural students to government medical colleges decreased from 62% to 50%.
5. Tamil Nadu's public health system relies on rural students who are willing to work in primary health centers, unlike urban students who often seek careers in corporate hospitals or abroad.
6. The state government passed a law to scrap NEET, but it was blocked by the Governor.

What should be done?

1. Revamp NEET with input from all stakeholders.
2. Consider decentralizing exams to states or universities.
3. Possibly reintroduce a six-year MBBS degree with a pre-medical year.
4.Establish regional boards or centralize only qualifying exams for practicing outside the state.

Subject: Social Justice

Topic- Welfare Schemes for Vulnerable Sections of the population by the Centre and States.

Elderly Population in India

Context -By mid-century, India's elderly population is expected to reach 319 million, growing annually at about 3%. This group will mostly consist of women, with a sex ratio of 1,065 females per thousand males. Additionally, 54% of elderly women are projected to be widows.

In India, the four major vulnerabilities faced by the elderly population are restrictions in activities of daily living, multi-morbidity, poverty, and the absence of any income. According to the Longitudinal Ageing Survey of India (LASI, 2017-18), approximately 20% of the elderly face each of these challenges, with significant differences between states. These findings can help focus welfare efforts on addressing these issues among the elderly population.

How is the rising elderly population in India being viewed in relation to familial transitions?

1) The increase in elderly people isn't happening by itself; it's part of broader changes in families, including smaller households. There is a need to consider how elderly individuals live together in households, especially when there are multiple elderly people living together.
2) In households with elderly, issues such as dependence, caregiving, social security, and financial protection are more important compared to households without elderly. This shows that elderly vulnerabilities rises from household circumstances rather than just their individual characteristics.

What are the issues faced by the elderly population in India?

1) A concerning aspect is that 25% of the elderly report poor health, higher than the 20% among those aged 45 and above. Chronic diseases affect 75% of the elderly, and 40% of those aged 45 and above have disabilities. Diabetes and cancer are prevalent among India's elderly, posing significant threats.
2) Mental health is becoming a growing concern, with 20% of people aged over 45 reporting issues, mostly linked to depression.

Created with love ❤ by ForumIAS- the knowledge network for civil services.
Visit academy.forumias.com for our mentor based courses.
Forum IAS

3) Food insecurity is an issue, affecting 6% of individuals aged over 45 who consume reduced portions or skip meals, while 5.3% go without food despite feeling hungry.

4) Awareness about welfare provisions is quite low, as only 12% of people know about the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007, and just 28% are aware of the various benefits available to the elderly. Similarly, schemes such as IGNOAPS, IGNWPS, and Annapurna are also poorly recognized.

5) India's elderly generally have low life expectations, and their vulnerabilities lead to various forms of abuse from family, community, and society. Abuse is reported by 5% of the elderly, particularly affecting women in rural areas are most neglected.

A detailed article on Care for elderly population in India can be read here.

What should be the way forward?

1) it's important to encourage preparations for life that ensure not only financial independence but also healthy, active, and productive years, especially with longer lifespans.

2) There is a pressing need to empower this vulnerable group socially. There is a need to establish new types of institutions to change how society views the elderly, valuing them as assets rather than burdens.

3) Given ongoing changes such as youth mobility, digitalization in services, and social exclusion, it's important to prioritize enabling an active life for future elderly individuals. The elderly should qualify for the acronym Equip Life with Dreams Energy Renewal Longing and Yearn.

Subject: International Relations

Topic- Effect of Policies and Politics of Developed and Developing Countries on India's interests, Indian Diaspora.

Limitations of the existing Laws on Mercenaries

Context: The article discusses the recruitment of Indian citizens by the Russian Army to fight in Ukraine, often under false pretenses of good pay and citizenship. It highlights the deaths of two such recruits and the Indian government's efforts to manage and prevent such situations.

How Did the Indian Government Respond to such recruitment?

1. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) acknowledged the deaths and recruitment of Indian nationals by the Russian Army and has been actively engaging with Russian authorities to address the issue.

2. The Indian Embassy in Moscow raised concerns with the Russian Ambassador in New Delhi seeking intervention for the release of Indian nationals.

3. In response to the crisis, the MEA issued a press note advising Indians to exercise caution when seeking employment opportunities in Russia.

4. The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) filed a First Information Report (FIR) against 15 individuals and four companies involved in trafficking Indians to Russia under false employment promises.

Who Are Mercenaries?

Created with love ❤ by ForumIAS- the knowledge network for civil services.
Visit academy.forumias.com for our mentor based courses.

ForumIAS

1. Mercenaries are individuals recruited from third-party states to fight in conflicts, mainly for personal gain rather than patriotism or loyalty to a cause. They differ from conventional combatants, who are members of the armed forces of a party to the conflict.

2. Under international humanitarian law, particularly **Article 47 of Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions**, a mercenary must meet **six criteria**: recruited to fight in the conflict, taking direct part in hostilities, motivated by significant financial gain, not nationals or residents of the conflict states, not members of the involved armed forces, and not sent on official military duty by their home country.

3. The **Organization of African Unity Convention** (1977) expanded this to include civil wars.

4. In 1989, the **UN General Assembly** broadened it further to cover acts undermining governments and state integrity.

5. Despite these definitions, **mercenaries do not qualify for prisoner-of-war status if captured** but must be treated humanely under international humanitarian law.

What are the limitations of the existing Laws on Mercenaries?

1. Ambiguity in Definition: The Geneva Conventions' definition excludes foreign military personnel integrated into another state's armed forces, like the Gurkhas.

2. Domestic Law Gaps: Most countries do not criminalize mercenary activities.

3. Lack of Accountability: No mechanisms to hold foreign advisors and trainers accountable.

4. PMSC Loopholes: Private Military and Security Companies (PMSCs) operate under loosely defined legal frameworks, relying on domestic laws. For example, the Wagner Group in Russia has not been formally acknowledged by the Kremlin, complicating accountability.

5. Non-signatory States: Countries like **India and Russia have not signed the Montreux Doctrine for regulating PMSCs.**

What should be done?

1. Develop Robust Policy Framework: Implement policies to address distress migration and human trafficking. Focus on both long-term and immediate measures.

2. Long-Term Measures: Target economic factors driving people to leave India. Create more domestic job opportunities and improve economic conditions.

3. Immediate Measures: Educate the public about risks of overseas job offers and implement strong pre-travel vetting for Indians going to Russia or other conflict zones.

4. Pre-Travel Approval: Require pre-travel approval from the MEA to identify and prevent trafficking cases.

5. Learn from Examples: Nepal banned its citizens from working in Russia or Ukraine due to similar issues. India can consider similar measures.

Migrant Workers in GCC States

Context: The article discusses the death of 49 migrant workers in a fire in Kuwait, caused by poor living conditions and employer negligence. It criticizes Kuwait's weak enforcement of worker protections and the Kafala system, which limits migrants' rights and keeps them vulnerable.

Why Are Migrant Workers Vulnerable in GCC States?

Created with love ❤ by ForumIAS- the knowledge network for civil services.
Visit academy.forumias.com for our mentor based courses.

ForumIAS

1. Dependence on Employers: The Kafala system ties workers' visas to employers, making workers dependent and vulnerable. Employers provide housing, food, and transportation, keeping workers in a state of perpetual dependency.

For detailed information on **Kafala system** read this article here

Note: The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) brings together six Arab countries – Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.

2. Low Wages: Migrant workers earn very low wages, often below the cost of decent living (KD200), leading to financial insecurity.
3. Poor Living Conditions: Workers live in crowded, unsafe, and unhygienic accommodations, increasing their risk during emergencies, as seen in the Mangaf fire that killed 49 workers.
4. Limited Rights: Workers cannot organize or unionize to demand better conditions, as GCC states do not allow labor organizing.
5. Family Separation: Low-income workers cannot bring their families due to high minimum salary requirements (KD800) to sponsor family members.

Way forward-Although Kuwaiti officials promised to improve safety standards and enforce stricter penalties, real change is unlikely without systemic reforms that empower workers and improve their rights and living conditions.

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

Significance of G7 summits

Context: The article discusses criticism of Prime Minister Modi's visit to the G7 summit. It highlights the political context in both India and the West, noting Modi's strong position compared to struggling Western leaders. It emphasizes India's growing economic and geopolitical importance.

What is the significance of global summits for leaders?

Global summits are opportunities for national leaders to show their global influence to their people at home. At the G7 summit, after diplomats prepared the major work, leaders simply needed to present well and interact with each other.

What is the Political Status of G7 Leaders?

In the US, President Joe Biden faces a tough challenge from Donald Trump.
In Canada, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau is unpopular and may struggle in the next elections.
In the UK, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak is likely leading his party to an election loss.
In France and Germany, leaders are challenged by rising right-wing politics.
In Japan, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida deals with low approval rates and corruption scandals.

Italy's Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, however, is gaining influence in Europe.

Why is India important to the G7 now?

Created with love ❤ by ForumIAS- the knowledge network for civil services.
Visit academy.forumias.com for our mentor based courses.
⬈ Forum IAS

1. Geopolitical tensions with China: Rising tensions make India a key player.
2. Reducing dependence on China: The West seeks to diversify its economic ties.
3. Reconnecting with the Global South: India is crucial for the US and Europe to reconnect with developing countries.

What should India focus on?

India should reflect on how to leverage its growing importance to achieve greater prosperity for its people. The political and policy establishment in India needs to consider strategies for forming a new strategic compact with the West.

GS Paper 3

Subject: Indian Economy

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

Indias Expenditure Path

Context-The article discusses the fiscal policy challenges facing the new government in India. It highlights the importance of stabilizing the public debt-to-GDP ratio for achieving rapid economic growth with macroeconomic stability.
The pandemic led to a massive increase in public debt across major economies, including India, where the ratio shot up by over 13 percentage points in 2020-21 to 88.4%. Although it has gradually declined to 82.2% in 2023-24, it is still higher than the ideal level for India.

What factors contributed to the recent decrease in India's public debt ratio?

It was driven by favorable dynamics such as higher nominal GDP growth compared to government borrowing costs and a reduction in the primary fiscal deficit. This is because economic conditions have improved post-pandemic.

What is the importance of monitoring fiscal deficit for Indian economy?

The fiscal deficit is closely monitored because it impacts various economic factors, including aggregate demand and interest rates. It plays an important role in influencing conditions for businesses, home buyers, job seekers, bond traders, and other economic agents.

What are the challenges that India face in its fiscal policy?

1) **India's Urgent Spending Priorities**- India faces pressures to increase military spending amidst geopolitical tensions, invest in a green transition to mitigate climate impacts, and enhance spending on public goods and services.
2) **Electoral Pressure for Increased Spending**- It is important to understand that the 2024 election results could pressure the government to increase spending to please the electorate. This is because there are not enough quality jobs.
3) **Fiscal Federalism**- Fiscal policy, including the concept of fiscal federalism, has transformed into a

Created with love ❤ by ForumIAS- the knowledge network for civil services.
Visit academy.forumias.com for our mentor based courses.
🗹ForumIAS

competitive bargaining process involving diverse interest groups, ministries, and levels of government.
4) **Minimal Tax Liabilities** - More people are filing income tax returns, and more firms are covered by GST, showing that the tax base is expanding. However, many individuals still report no tax liabilities.

Read more- Five Years of GST: Achievements, Challenges and Way Ahead

What should be the way forward?

1) **Tax Reforms**- Tax reforms are necessary to boost the tax-to-GDP ratio, which has stayed relatively stable in India despite economic shifts. The recommendation includes keeping direct tax rates low, steady, and predictable, while simplifying the GST structure and aiming for a higher average rate.
2) **Fiscal Consolidation**-There is a need to create fiscal space by reducing unnecessary spending and increasing revenue.
 3) **Capitalizing on Economic Advancement** - India's expected transition from a lower-middle-income to an upper-middle-income country by the World Bank's definition by the end of this decade highlights an opportunity. Upper-middle-income economies generally collect more tax revenue per unit of economic output compared to lower-middle-income countries. This transition presents India with a chance to increase its tax-to-GDP ratio as incomes rise.

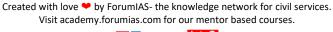## Importance of Foreign Trade for India's Economy

Context- India's foreign trade, amounting to $1.63 trillion in the fiscal year 2023-24, accounted for 41% of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP), highlights its important role in the country's economy and employment generation. The article discusses both challenges and recommendations aimed at enhancing India's exports.

What are the issues with Indias export?

1) **Decline in labor-intensive exports**- Exports from labor-intensive sectors such as garments, textiles, leather products, footwear, diamonds, and gold jewelry were lower in 2023 than in 2015. Bangladesh and Vietnam have surpassed India in these sectors by adopting strategies such as using imported fabric for garment manufacturing.

2) **Lack of diversification in service exports**- Seventy-five percent of India's service export earnings come from two sectors: software & IT and business services. In contrast, India holds a smaller global share (1.9%) in other service sectors such as transport, travel, maintenance and repair, insurance, financial services, and intellectual property use.
3) **Overdependence on imports from China-**China accounts for around 30% of India's imports in industrial products like telecom equipment, electronics, chemicals, and pharmaceuticals. This has resulted in a large trade deficit with China, exceeding $387 billion cumulatively over six years from 2019 to 2024.
4) **Impact of inverted duty structure and FTAs-** Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) have created an inverted duty structure where import duties on finished goods are lower than those on raw materials.This hampers local manufacturing efforts.

Read more- India's New Foreign Trade Policy (FTP) and its significance – Explained, pointwise

5) **Quality concerns and export rejections-** Indian exports, especially food and agricultural products, encounter rejections from markets such as the EU and US. This is due to issues like surpassing maximum

Created with love ❤ by ForumIAS- the knowledge network for civil services.
Visit academy.forumias.com for our mentor based courses.

⤤ Forum IAS

residue limits (MRLs) for pesticides and other quality-related problems.

6) **European climate regulations**- ChatGPTRegulations such as the EU's deforestation rules, carbon border adjustment measures (CBAM), foreign subsidies regulation, and German Supply Chain Due Diligence Act may harm India's exports to the EU and create uncertainty.

What should be the way forward?

1) **Reviving Labour-intensive Exports-**These sectors such as garments, textiles, leather products, footwear generate more jobs per unit of investment compared to others. It is important to conduct a genuine assessment of the sector rather than relying on consultants' reports that offer optimistic projections far into the future.

2) **Diversifying Service Exports**- India needs to enhance its share in other services like transport, travel, maintenance and repair, insurance, financial services, and intellectual property to achieve a stable service export performance.

3) **Reducing Dependence on China-** The US, EU, and Australia are implementing measures to decrease imports from China. India must conduct a strategic review, diversify its sources of imports, and strengthen its domestic production capabilities in response.
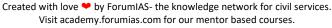
4) **Addressing Issues with Free Trade Agreements**-

A) The rise in FTAs has made things more complex by enabling zero-duty imports on many industrial products.This encourages imports over local purchases. The government should ensure that FTAs do not worsen the inverted duty structure.

B) The government should publish data on the performance of India's 14 comprehensive FTAs and six preferential trade agreements to assess their effectiveness and aid ongoing trade negotiations.

5) **Countering European Climate Regulations** - India should develop a strategy to respond to EU regulations and possibly reduce imports from the EU in an equal measure.

6) **Improving Quality Systems**-To address concerns raised by Hong Kong, Singapore, and the United States regarding the quality of spices from leading Indian brands, India should align its quality standards with international norms, expand farm-to-fork blockchain tracing for major exports, issue quality control orders in consultation with industry, and establish mutual recognition agreements with key export partners.

7) **Ease of Doing Business**- Improving the government-business interface to focus more on businesses, setting up a user-friendly online National Trade Network for compliance, investing in modern ports, efficient logistics, and digital systems can make doing business easier and increase exports.

8) **Other Export Promotion Measures**-The government should promote export of high-value goods to current markets, assist small businesses in expanding globally, enhance their access to finance, encourage e-commerce exports, and reduce non-tariff barriers in critical markets.

Impacts of the USA decoupling its economy

Context: The article discusses the new tariffs imposed by President Biden on Chinese imports, emphasizing their political rather than economic motivations. It highlights the potential long-term global economic impacts, including increased protectionism, delayed green transitions, and challenges for various economies dependent on China.

For detailed information on **protectionism** read Article 1, Article 2, Article 3

Created with love ❤ by ForumIAS- the knowledge network for civil services.
Visit academy.forumias.com for our mentor based courses.

ForumIAS

Why is the USA decoupling its economy?

1. Political motivations: The tariffs reflect political goals, like supporting domestic unions and industries, rather than economic benefits, indicating a shift towards protectionism.

2. Economic independence: By increasing tariffs, the USA aims to grow independent, particularly in sectors like healthcare, where China has been a primary equipment supplier, nearly $640 million worth in 2023.

2. Geopolitical rivalry: The decoupling also stems from geopolitical tensions and the belief that economic interdependence is not mutually beneficial, which could lead to China weaponizing economic dependencies.

What are the impacts of the USA decoupling its economy?

1. Increase in Consumer Costs: The tariffs on Chinese goods, like medical devices, lead to higher prices for U.S. consumers. For example, China supplies $640 million in medical equipment to the U.S.

2. Impact on Green Transition: New import restrictions on Chinese clean energy products could slow down global green transition goals.

3. Global Economic Risks: Protectionist measures could exacerbate economic slowdowns. For instance, China's slowing growth impacts countries like Australia and Brazil, potentially lowering iron-ore prices due to reduced Chinese demand.

3. Challenge to Global Trade Norms: The U.S. distancing from the World Trade Organization (WTO) norms threatens the global trade system, paralyzing dispute resolution mechanisms by blocking appointments to the WTO Appellate Body.

How will the USA decoupling of its economy impact India?

1. Impact on India's Manufacturing: The U.S. decoupling from China could benefit India as companies look for alternative manufacturing locations. However, India's manufacturing sector is still developing and faces competition from Southeast Asian nations.

2. Consumer Market Opportunities: With its large consumer base, India might attract businesses shifting away from China, though gaining a significant global market share will take time.

3. Economic Challenges: Despite potential benefits, India's economic ties with China are deep. India imports significant amounts of goods from China, making decoupling a complex process that could disrupt existing trade and economic relations.

7 Years of GST

Context- The article discusses the performance of GST since its inception. GST has proven to be a game-changer for India's digital economy. It has moved the country closer to the vision of "one nation, one tax." This tech-driven tax system, supported by automation adopted by both government and businesses, has shown significant benefits.

What have been the achievements of GST in the last 7 years?

1) **Digital Infrastructure-**The effectiveness of GST relied on a strong compliance framework, made possible by the GST Network (GSTN), which simplified the processes of registration, tax payments, and filing returns for taxpayers.

2) **Enhanced Compliance**- GSTN has made compliance easier for businesses and tax authorities, equipping

Created with love ❤ by ForumIAS- the knowledge network for civil services.
Visit academy.forumias.com for our mentor based courses.

⏎ Forum IAS

them with data analytics to detect and prevent tax evasion. Automation of tasks such as e-waybills, e-invoicing, and monthly returns has transformed tax compliance, setting an example for other countries to adopt similar practices.

3) **Benefits for MSMEs** -

A) MSMEs have greatly benefited from the simplified GST system. Measures like quarterly returns and relaxed GSTR-9C requirements have encouraged MSMEs to register under GST, leading to an increase in the taxpayer base.

B) GST has facilitated improved access to credit for MSMEs, which has accelerated their growth.

4) **Unified Market and Competitiveness-**

A) GST has introduced a unified system, established a common market, and eliminated tax cascading. This has enhanced the competitiveness of Indian businesses in both domestic and global markets.
B) GST has removed entry taxes and checkpoints at state borders. This has ensured smooth movement of goods, faster transit times, and reduced logistics costs for businesses.

What are the challenges in its implementation?

1) There are concerns related to some sectors that deal with an inverted duty structure.
2) Petroleum products have not been kept under the GST regime.
3) The GST law is still evolving, leading to disputes on various issues due to unfamiliarity and divergent positions
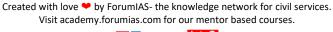
What should be the way forward?

1) **Establishing a National Advance Ruling Authority-**A National Advance Ruling Authority could ensure uniform interpretation of the law across the country, reducing uncertainty for businesses and minimizing disputes.
2) **Dispute Resolution**- A functional Goods and Services Tax Appellate Tribunal (GSTAT) could reduce the burden on High Courts. This can lead to faster and more efficient dispute resolution for businesses.

Read more- Five Years of GST: Achievements, Challenges and Way Ahead

3) **Clarifying GST Complexities** -Reintroducing FAQs tailored to specific sectors could offer clear guidance on the intricate details and complexities of GST.

4) **Integration of Petroleum Products into GST** -Including petroleum products in the GST system could ensure smooth input tax credit (ITC) flow across the supply chain. This will benefit both businesses and the overall economy.
5) **Rate Rationalization and Simplification-** Rate rationalization, simplification of the multi-tier rate system, and an amnesty scheme for regularizing initial period transactions could further improve the GST system.

The changing role of the Global South in the global economy

Context: This article discusses the changing role of the Global South in the global economy. It highlights the need for better financial support, digital infrastructure, and climate financing to boost growth. It also suggests reforms in the global financial system to address these challenges.

Created with love ❤ by ForumIAS- the knowledge network for civil services.
Visit academy.forumias.com for our mentor based courses.

Forum IAS

For detailed information on **India and Global South** read this article here

What is the Current Economic Outlook?

1. The current global economic growth forecast by the World Bank and IMF is steady at around 3 percent.
2. This growth rate is the lowest in decades.
3. The forecasts indicate that nearly three-fourths of global growth in the next two to three decades will originate from middle- and low-income countries, particularly from Asia.

How Have Recent Global Events Affected Growth?

1. Globalization and Social Safety Nets: As globalization deepened, social safety nets did not keep pace, impacting social cohesion and support for multilateral systems.
2. Pandemic Impact: COVID-19 disrupted markets, trade, and supply chains, stalling global growth. This was a major setback from the usual expansion beneficial to global growth.
3. Geopolitical Tensions: The war in Ukraine and rising strategic competitions have led to policy-driven fragmentation, worsening global cooperation and economic stability.

What Challenges Does the Global South Face?

1. High Capital Costs and Short Tenures: The Global South struggles because it attracts capital at prohibitive rates and for short durations, making sustainable financing a key barrier to growth.
2. Inadequate Financial Systems: The current international financial architecture is described as ill-suited to support the growth potential of the Global South, emphasizing the need for change.
3. Vulnerability to Global Headwinds: The Global South is most affected by various global challenges such as climate change, cost of living crises, and unmet Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which impact its economic stability more severely than more developed regions.
4. Technological Disparities: Countries lacking digital public infrastructure (DPI) struggled during the pandemic, while those with effective DPI could provide emergency services, highlighting the need for digital transformation to support growth and resilience.

What should be done?

To support global growth, three key actions are needed.

First, improve climate financing by leveraging public and multilateral resources and focusing on capital markets. For example, only 1% of publicly listed companies are responsible for 40% of greenhouse gas emissions.
Second, enhance liquidity provisions for Global South. Strengthening the IMF can help provide significant liquidity beyond current levels, addressing the lack of US dollar swap lines for countries like India and Indonesia.
Third, develop a global digital public infrastructure. Effective DPIs can support emergency responses, health, education, and commerce, as shown during the pandemic.
These measures will address current challenges and promote sustainable growth in the Global South and beyond.

Created with love ❤ by ForumIAS- the knowledge network for civil services.
Visit academy.forumias.com for our mentor based courses.
📐 Forum IAS

India's Rank on the Global Gender Gap Index 2024

Context: The article discusses India's ranking on the Global Gender Gap Index, highlighting improvements and persistent gender gaps in health, education, economic participation, and political empowerment. It stresses the need to mainstream gender equality into economic policies for better outcomes.

For detailed information on **Global Gender Gap Index 2024** read Article 1, Article 2

What Does the Global Gender Gap Index Measure?

1. The Global Gender Gap Index was introduced in 2006.
2. It measures gender gaps in four areas: economic participation, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment.
3. The index ranges from 0 to 1, with 1 indicating complete parity.

What is India's Rank on the Global Gender Gap Index 2024?

1. In 2024, India is ranked 129th out of 146 countries on the Global Gender Gap Index. This position places India 18th from the bottom. In 2021, India was 17th from the bottom out of 156 countries.
2. India's "Health and Survival Score" is 0.951, meaning 95.1% of the gender gap is closed.
3. In educational attainment, 96.4% of the gap is closed. Despite these scores, India ranks 112th in education and 142nd in health among 146 countries.
4. India scores 39.8% in economic participation, ranking 142nd among 146 countries.
5. India has closed 25.1% of the gender gap in political participation, ranking 65th globally. This rank has worsened from 51 in 2021.
6. South Asia ranks 7th out of eight regions globally. India ranks 5th within South Asia, with Bangladesh leading the region at 99th globally.

What Are the Economic Costs of Gender Inequality?

1. Gender-based discrimination could cost the global economy up to $12 trillion, according to the OECD.
2. Reducing gender discrimination can increase GDP growth.
3.Gender equality should be part of economic policy making, not an afterthought. Equality in the economic sphere requires society to treat women as independent and capable adults. Women should be free to make choices and included as equals in decision-making at all levels.

Reasons for the rural-urban inflation gap

Context: The article discusses the issue of high inflation rates in rural India compared to urban areas. It explains that the differences in energy usage and access to LPG gas, as well as economic shifts like rural-urban migration and changes in industrial output, contribute to this inflation gap. The article also mentions how these inflation trends affect the Reserve Bank of India's monetary policies.

For detailed information on **Inflation In India** read this article here

What are the reasons for the rural-urban inflation gap?

Created with love ❤ by ForumIAS- the knowledge network for civil services.
Visit academy.forumias.com for our mentor based courses.

Forum IAS

1. Diverse Energy Sources: Rural areas use a variety of unregulated, locally available fuels such as coal, coke, charcoal, firewood, and dung cakes, unlike urban areas that primarily rely on electricity and LPG. This has resulted in rural 'fuel and light' inflation averaging 7.5 percentage points above urban inflation over the last three months.

2. Limited Access to LPG: As of 2020-21, less than half of all rural households had access to LPG, compared to over 90% in urban areas. Despite government efforts to increase LPG use through price cuts, high global energy prices in 2022 reduced LPG consumption, forcing rural households to revert to cheaper, traditional fuels.

3. Impact of Migration Trends: The pandemic triggered a significant urban-to-rural migration, which has not fully reversed. This has increased demand in rural areas, straining local supply chains and pushing up prices on items like vegetables and cereals.

4. Economic Shifts: **Economic Shifts**: Slow recovery in sectors like textiles, garments, tobacco, and leather, which typically account for about 15% of manufacturing and employ one-third of India's industrial workforce, has affected rural areas significantly as these sectors have not yet reached pre-pandemic output levels. This slow recovery, combined with high migration rates from rural to urban areas, affects wage levels and spending patterns, influencing inflation rates.

Topic- Changes in Industrial Policy and their Effects on Industrial Growth.

Hybrid vs Electric Vehicles

Context- The article provides an overview of the debate surrounding electric and hybrid vehicles in India. The International Energy Agency notes that India's road transport sector contributes about 12% of the country's CO2 emissions. Which makes it the third-largest greenhouse gas emitter after energy and agriculture.
Since 2015, the government has been working on reducing carbon emissions through initiatives such as FAME (Faster Adoption and Manufacture of Hybrid and Electric Vehicles).
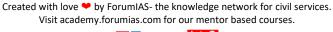It started with incentives for electric and hybrid vehicles, but the policy has gradually shifted away from supporting hybrids and now emphasizes electric vehicles (EVs).

What are the arguments in favor of adoption of hybrid vehicles?

1) Little attention is paid to hybrid trucks, even though freight trucks, which make up only 5% of vehicles, contribute 34% of emissions. Hybrids in passenger cars offer 25-30% better fuel efficiency compared to internal combustion engines (ICE), despite being less common in the market.
2) Hybrids have smaller battery packs and slightly higher total ownership costs because of tax differences, although they are currently taxed more than ICE vehicles.
3) Hybrids tend to have the least environmental impact among the ICE and Electric vehicle options.

What are the arguments against the adoption of Electric Vehicle?

1)In India, more than 75% of electricity is generated from coal, which causes emissions when charging EVs. When assessing policies for ICE, hybrids, and EVs, it's important to carefully consider their impact on reducing emissions.
2) Examining lifecycle emissions (LCA), kilometer usage, production, mining, recycling, and total cost of

Created with love ❤ by ForumIAS- the knowledge network for civil services.
Visit academy.forumias.com for our mentor based courses.
ForumIAS

ownership (TCO) reveals that electric vehicles often emit more than both ICE vehicles and hybrids in many instances. In India, the focus mainly remains on emissions and costs during the usage phase, with less attention given to factors like battery replacement costs.

3) Sourcing raw materials such as cobalt, nickel, and lithium for battery electric vehicles poses challenges.

Read more- Adoption of EVs: Challenges and Solutions

What should be the way forward?

1) There is a need to adopt a balanced approach in the context of the shift towards cleaner grids and promoting the electrification of transport.

2) Enhancements in efficiency of electric vehicles (EVs) should be recognized, and policies should be adopted that accommodate technological advancements and shifts in industry sectors.

3) FAME 3 policies should treat hybrids equally for subsidies to support a range of technological solutions aimed at achieving zero-emission objectives.

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

Vadhavan Port Project

Context- The Vadhavan port project, recently approved by the Union Cabinet, marks a significant development for India's maritime infrastructure. Located in Dahanu, Maharashtra, it will be the country's first major port since JNPA, commissioned in 1989, and will address longstanding challenges faced by Indian ports due to geographical limitations.

In India, no new major government-run ports have been established in over 50 years, although the private sector port at Mundra was commissioned 25 years ago. Presently, there are initiatives to upgrade Deendayal and Paradip ports into mega ports, with plans also set for a mega port at Galathea Bay in the Nicobar Islands.
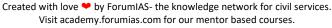
What are the challenges posed by Indian Coastline?

1) Large oil tankers and container ships cannot approach India's coastline due to its sprawling beaches, forcing them to unload their cargo primarily at Colombo. Occasionally, they conduct mid-sea transfers of goods closer to Indian ports.

2) Currently, most of India's major ports offer depths ranging from 14 to 14.5 meters do not have adequate depth to accommodate large vessels effectively. Capesize ships, which are ultra-large carriers typically carrying around 170,000 deadweight tonnes (DWT), require a minimum water depth of at least 18 meters to safely navigate and dock at ports.

Read more- Port Infrastructure: Issues and Challenges

What is the significance of Vadhavan Port Project?

1) Economic Significance: - Mega port status: A mega port is a huge maritime facility that manages large amounts of cargo and can handle very large ships like Capesize vessels. These ports handle at least 300 million

Created with love ❤ by ForumIAS- the knowledge network for civil services.
Visit academy.forumias.com for our mentor based courses.

ForumIAS

metric tonnes of cargo per year and are crucial hubs for global trade and shipping. It is going to be the first Indian port to begin as a true mega port (300+ MMTPA capacity). Its economic advantages are-

a) Lower freight costs per unit with larger volumes.
b) Ability to handle a wider range of goods than smaller ports, which are typically focused on dry or bulk cargo like JNPA and Mundra.
c) Capacity to host diverse suppliers, industrial complexes, and logistics firms, promoting economies of agglomeration.
d) Competition among operators, leading to reduced handling charges.
e) Feeding smaller ports in a hub-and-spoke model, where the mega port manages global maritime traffic and distributes cargo to smaller ports.

2) **Trade implications:**
A) Potential to handle projected sea-based EXIM trade of $1.6-2 trillion by 2030.
B) Could reduce dependence on foreign ports for transshipment.

3) **Strategic importance**: It is crucial node for IMEEC (India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor) and INSTC (International North-South Transport Corridor).

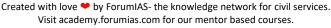**What are some challenges and considerations?**

Infrastructure requirements:

A) Extensive gantries, yard management capabilities, storage facilities.
B) Inland connectivity network.
C) Labor and capital for construction.

2) **Environmental concern-** An earlier proposal in 1998 was turned down because of environmental concerns. The current project needed to conduct 18 studies on environmental impact assessments.

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; Technology Missions; Economics of Animal-Rearing.

Changing Demand for Cereals in India

Context- The article points out that in India, demand for cereals for direct household consumption is decreasing, while there's a growing demand for processed foods, animal feed, and fuel. Even though official data indicates that cereal production is higher than total consumption, there are unexplained factors that need clarification.

Created with love ❤ by ForumIAS- the knowledge network for civil services.
Visit academy.forumias.com for our mentor based courses.
📈ForumIAS

How has India's cereal production and consumption changed in the last two decades?

1) India's cereal production has increased significantly, rising from 196.4 million tonnes (mt) in 1999-2000 to 303.6 mt in 2022-23.

2) As per the National Sample Survey Office's latest HCES report, the amount of cereals consumed per person has decreased steadily. In rural areas, it dropped from 12.72 kg to 9.61 kg per month, and in urban areas, from 10.42 kg to 8.05 kg per month between 1999-2000 and 2022-23.

3) **Shift in cereal usage**: Increasing use in processed form (bread, biscuits, cakes, noodles, etc.Growing application in animal feed, starch production, and ethanol fuel.

4) **Coarse grains consumption: -** Production of "other cereals" such as maize, barley, and millets amounted to 57.3 million tonnes. Direct household consumption of these grains was less than 5 million tonnes. These cereals were mainly consumed indirectly through animal products.

TABLE 1

INDIA'S ESTIMATED HOUSEHOLD CEREAL CONSUMPTION VERSUS PRODUCTION

Monthly per capita cereal consumption (in kg)

	1999-2K	2004-05	2009-10	2011-12	2022-23
Rural	12.72	12.12	11.35	11.23	9.61
Urban	10.42	9.94	9.39	9.32	8.05
Weighted Average#	11.78	11.33	10.54	10.44	8.97
Population##	1050.01	1145.64	1232.08	1266.1	1422.03
Annual Consumption*	148.43	155.76	155.83	158.62	153.07
Annual Production*	196.38	185.23	203.45	242.2	303.63

#Weights based on number of sample households in consumption expenditure surveys; ##In million; *In million tonnes.

Gap between production and consumption: -The difference widened from 48 mt in 1999-2000 to nearly 151 mt in 2022-23.

Read more- Challenges Facing Indian Agriculture

Where is the surplus production of cereals going?

1) **Cereal exports:**

A) Record exports of 32.3 mt in 2021-22 (21.2 mt rice, 7.2 mt wheat, 3.9 mt other grains).
B) Exports totaled 30.7 mt in 2022-23 (22.3 mt rice, 4.7 mt wheat, 3.6 mt other grains).

2) **Industrial usage:**

Created with love ❤ by ForumIAS- the knowledge network for civil services.
Visit academy.forumias.com for our mentor based courses.

Forum IAS

A) Estimated 38 mt used in processed food forms (bread, biscuits, noodles, etc.).
B) Approximately 50-55 mt used for feed, starch making, and fermentation.

3) **Food Processing and Industrial Applications**

A) **Maize utilization:** 90% or more of the 38.1 mt produced are used in poultry, livestock, and aqua feed or for wet-milling and starch production.
B) **Ethanol production**: -Increasing use of cereals in multi-feed distilleries for ethanol production. The government program aims for 20% ethanol blending in petrol.

4) **Public Distribution System and Food Security**

A) Government procurement: 56.9 mt of rice and 26.2 mt of wheat procured in 2022-23. Procurement exceeds the annual cereal requirement of 59-60 mt for the public distribution system (PDS).
B) **National Food Security Act**: 813.5 million persons receive 5 kg of wheat or rice per month through PDS.PDS entitlement covers more than half of the monthly per capita cereal consumption.

What are the issues with surplus production?

1) Impact of this surplus on government stocks-Despite surplus production, government agencies like the Food Corporation of India are accumulating large stocks by procuring more than the total annual requirement for public distribution under the National Food Security Act.
2) Conflicting indicators: There is high cereal inflation (8.69% year-on-year in May) despite export restrictions. Further, the government warehouse stocks have depleted (16-year low for wheat on June 1). All this raise questions about the accuracy of official production estimates.

Subject: Environment

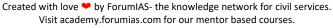## Topic- Conservation, Environmental Pollution and Degradation, Environmental Impact Assessment.

Issues with Growing Tourism in Antarctic

Source-This post on **Issues with Growing Tourism in Antarctic** has been created based on the article "**The last continent must remain a pristine wilderness** "published in "**The Hindu**" on 17 June 2024.

Context- The 46th Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM-46), held in Kochi, Kerala, recently discussed Antarctic tourism and sought to bring in a regulatory framework but fell short of a definitive solution. However, ATCM-46 made progress by starting a new working group to develop a flexible and thorough plan for overseeing tourism and other activities in the next year.
At ATCM 44 in 2022, India voiced concerns about how tourism affects Antarctic research, conservation, and the environment. India stressed the need for monitoring these impacts and took strong action by passing its own Antarctic Law in 2022, even without global agreement.

Read more- Antarctic Bill, 2022 passed in LS

Created with love ❤ by ForumIAS- the knowledge network for civil services.
Visit academy.forumias.com for our mentor based courses.
ForumIAS

What is the current state of tourism in Antartica?

1) Antarctic tourism has witnessed a dramatic surge in tourist numbers, from a few thousand in the early 1990s to over 1,00,000 in the 2022-23 season, with an estimated 1,18,089 tourists in 2023-2024.

2) The United States and China account for more than 40% of tourists to the Antarctic. This growth is attributed to increased global interest in adventure travel and a desire to experience Antarctica's unique landscapes and wildlife.

3) Benefits-Antarctic tourism offers educational and economic benefits but also raises significant environmental concerns.

What are the issues with growing tourism in Antarctica?

1) **Environmental Concerns-**

A) Increased human presence disrupts wildlife, damages fragile ecosystems, and risks introducing invasive species.

B) Ship traffic pollutes pristine waters, and tourism adds to the global carbon footprint.

C) Climate change exacerbates these issues by opening new areas for tourism while increasing ecosystem vulnerability.

2) **Governance Challenges-**

A) 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 but lacks specific tourism regulations.

B) The International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators (IAATO) manages day-to-day operations through self-regulation, but many stakeholders find these guidelines insufficient to address mounting environmental pressures.

C) ATCM-46, the main global forum for Antarctic issues, recognized the need for strict tourism rules but couldn't get all countries to agree. The rule needing unanimous approval often delays decisions, letting countries' own interests block progress.

3) **Current Geopolitical Scenario-** The limitations of the consensus rule and the current geopolitical climate further complicate international cooperation on Antarctic governance.
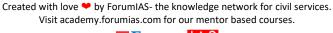
What should be the way forward?

1) There is a need to ensure a sustainable future for Antarctic tourism that involves improving environmental protection, setting up strong monitoring programs, and promoting international cooperation.

2) Recent initiatives at ATCM-46 provide a ray of hope. By emphasizing decisions based on scientific evidence and involving all stakeholders, Antarctica as an untouched wilderness can be preserved.

Concerns related to the infrastructure project planned for Great Nicobar.

Context: The article discusses the Congress party's concerns over a Rs 72,000-crore infrastructure project on Great Nicobar Island. They warn it threatens indigenous peoples and the environment, urging a review. The project aims for strategic development, facing opposition from conservationists and locals.

For detailed information on **NITI Aayog's Great Nicobar Development plan** read this article here

Created with love ❤ by ForumIAS- the knowledge network for civil services.
Visit academy.forumias.com for our mentor based courses.

⊿Forum IAS

What is the Project About?

1. The project involves a comprehensive Rs 72,000-crore infrastructure upgrade on Great Nicobar Island.
2. It is, implemented by the Andaman and Nicobar Islands Integrated Development Corporation (ANIIDCO), includes: An International Container Transshipment Terminal (ICTT); A greenfield international airport; A township; A gas and solar power plant
3. The project covers 16,610 hectares and aims to leverage the island's strategic location near the Malacca Strait.

Why is the Congress Party Concerned?

1. Threat to Indigenous Tribes: The project endangers the Shompen and Nicobarese tribes, who live on the island.
2. Ecological Impact: Nearly a million trees could be felled, potentially devastating the island's ecosystem, including coral reefs, the Nicobar Megapode bird, and leatherback turtles.
3. Seismic Risks: The area is seismically active, having subsided by about 15 feet during the 2004 tsunami.
4. Lack of Consultation: The Tribal Council was not adequately consulted, leading them to revoke a no-objection certificate for 160 sq km of forest land.
5. Legal Concerns: The National Green Tribunal ordered a high-power committee to review the project's clearances, but there has been no update on the committee's report.
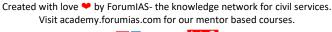
Why is the Project Important to India?

1. Strategic Location: Great Nicobar Island is close to the Malacca Strait, the main waterway connecting the Indian Ocean to the Pacific. This strategic position can enhance India's role in the regional and global maritime economy.
2. Economic Boost: The project includes an International Container Transshipment Terminal (ICTT), which can make Great Nicobar a significant player in cargo transshipment. The ICTT is expected to boost economic activities in the region.
3. Security Concerns: The Bay of Bengal and Indian Ocean region are vital for India's strategic and security interests, especially with the Chinese naval expansion. The project will strengthen India's maritime security and deterrence capabilities.
4. Military Upgrade: India is upgrading its military infrastructure in the Andaman & Nicobar Islands, including airfields, jetties, and surveillance facilities. This will support the deployment of additional military forces and enhance surveillance.
5. Tourism and Development: The proposed "greenfield city" aims to tap into the island's tourism potential, alongside its maritime economy, promoting regional development and economic growth.

Subject: Internal Security

Present Refugee Situation in India

Source: The post present refugee situation in India has been created, based on the article "**Blueprints beyond borders, for solace and shelter**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 20th June 2024

Created with love ❤ by ForumIAS- the knowledge network for civil services.
Visit academy.forumias.com for our mentor based courses.
ForumIAS

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- Internal security

Context: The article discusses the global refugee crisis and India's historical role in granting asylum. It criticizes India's lack of a formal refugee law, advocates for new legislation, and highlights the need for better treatment and legal protections for refugees in India.

For detailed information on **Refugee Problem in India** read Article 1, Article 2

What is the current global refugee situation?

1. The UN Refugee Convention or its 1967 Protocol outlines the rights of refugees. (India is not a signatory to it)

2. Over 43.4 million refugees worldwide.
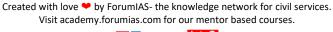
How has India historically treated refugees?

1. Ancient History: India has a long tradition of granting asylum dating back millennia. For example, Jews found refuge in India centuries before Christ after fleeing persecution and the destruction of their temple in Jerusalem by the Babylonians and later the Romans.

2. Medieval to Modern History: Zoroastrians, fleeing Islamic persecution in Persia, also sought and found safety in India.

3. Partition of India: During the 1947 partition, India experienced one of the largest refugee crises in history, with 13 to 15 million people crossing borders, highlighting the scale of displacement and the humanitarian response needed.

4. 20th Century Onward: India supported East Bengalis in their struggle for nationhood, which led to the creation of Bangladesh in 1971. Additionally, India has provided refuge to Tibetans, Sri Lankan Tamils, Nepalis, Afghans, and Rohingyas.

What efforts have been made to improve refugee rights in India?

1. Legislative Efforts: A Private Member's Bill was introduced in the Lok Sabha in February 2022, proposing the establishment of **a comprehensive Refugee and Asylum law**. This bill aims to recognize asylum seekers officially and grant them specific rights, addressing India's lack of a formal asylum framework. However, as of now, India has no domestic asylum law.

2. Judicial Contributions: The Supreme Court of India has reinforced the constitutional rights of refugees, irrespective of nationality. A landmark ruling in 1996 in the case of **National Human Rights Commission vs State Of Arunachal Pradesh & Anr.** ensured that the Chakma refugees, who had entered Arunachal Pradesh in 1995, could not be forcibly evicted until their asylum applications were properly processed. This judgment underlined the importance of legal procedures in the treatment of refugees.

What challenges do refugees face in India?

1. Lack of Legal Framework: India lacks a comprehensive asylum law, leaving refugees without clear protections. Existing laws like the Foreigners Act (1946), the Registration of Foreigners Act (1939), the

Created with love ❤ by ForumIAS- the knowledge network for civil services.
Visit academy.forumias.com for our mentor based courses.

ForumIAS

Passports Act (1967), the Extradition Act (1962), the Citizenship Act (1955, including the controversial 2019 amendment), and the Foreigners Order (1948) treat all foreign individuals as "aliens."

2. Judicial Inconsistencies: Refugees are subject to varying judicial decisions. While the Supreme Court in 1996 upheld that everyone in India, including refugees, has rights under Articles 14, 20, and 21 of the Constitution, decisions vary. This is evident in the differing approaches in the Rohingya cases.

3. Discrimination: Rohingyas are classified as "illegal migrants" and face religious and racial discrimination. For example, in 2017, the Ministry of Home Affairs issued a circular that led to their detention.

4. Deportation and Detention: Refugees, like the over 700 detained Rohingyas as of August 2023, often face deportation and live in poor conditions in detention centers.

What should be done?

1. India needs a **comprehensive law to ensure refugee rights**, building on the proposed Asylum Bill of 2022.
2. **Adhere to the principle of non-refoulement**, avoiding actions like the deportation of over 700 Rohingyas detained in poor conditions.
3. Follow the Supreme Court's 1996 ruling that grants constitutional rights to all residents, including refugees.
4. India should set an example in refugee management, reflecting its historical commitment to humanitarian values.

Topic- Various Security Forces and Agencies and their Mandate.

Importance of written National Security Strategy (NSS)

Context: The article discusses the Chief of Defence Staff's comment on India's National Security Strategy (NSS). He noted that while policy, processes, and practices exist, a written policy is missing. This raises questions about the prolonged drafting process and the need for an official NSS to ensure clarity, accountability, and effective defense planning.
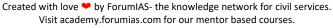
For detailed information on **National Security Strategy of India** read this article here

Why Is There a Debate on the NSS?

1. Missing Written Policy: The Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) mentioned that India lacks a written NSS, questioning the necessity of having one.

2. Prolonged Drafting Process: For the past two decades, multiple drafts of the NSS have been circulated without finalization.

3. Unclear Progress: The Defence Planning Committee, set up in 2018, was tasked with formulating the NSS, but its progress remains unknown.

4. Current Directive Inadequate: India relies on the RM's Operational Directive, which is seen as insufficient.

How Do Other Countries Handle Their NSS?

China: China publishes periodic white papers on its National Security Strategy (NSS), despite being generally opaque in its policies.

Created with love ❤ by ForumIAS- the knowledge network for civil services.
Visit academy.forumias.com for our mentor based courses.

ForumIAS

Pakistan: Pakistan has released its first National Security Policy for 2022-26.

Israel: Israel does not have a written NSS document but manages its security strategy effectively.

India's Context: Unlike these countries, India currently relies on the RM's Operational Directive, which is seen as cryptic and inadequate. The lack of a written NSS in India raises concerns about operational clarity, decision-making, and the need for a coherent national security framework.

Why is a Written NSS Important?

1. Clear Strategy: A written NSS would foster a "whole of nation" approach, ensuring synergy in harnessing comprehensive national power (CNP).

2. Milestone Setting: It helps set clear milestones for capability-building, modernization, infrastructure development, and the Atma Nirbhar mission.

3. Accountability: The present system of reviews by the Parliamentary Standing Committee and Auditor General is sub-optimal. A written NSS would allow for better reviews and audits using net-assessment and statistical tools.

4. Operational Clarity: The NSS would provide clear-cut ends, ways, and means, fostering initiative, innovation, and improvisation at the operational level.

5. Leadership and Command: A clearly spelled-out NSS would foster initiative, innovation, and improvisation at the cutting-edge level, essential for the operationalization of theatre commands and transformation.

What should be done?

1. Adopt a Written Policy: India should have a written NSS to foster a whole-nation approach and ensure strategic clarity.

2. Improve Defense Planning: Stabilize the new Integrated Capability Plan and Defence Capability Acquisition Plan to provide clear milestones for modernization and infrastructure development, as the current transition state is concerning.

3. Enhance Decision Making: Implement the NSS to reduce over-centralization and foster a decentralized Directive Style of Command, encouraging initiative and innovation at the operational level.
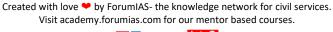
Subject: Disaster Management

Topic- Disaster and Disaster Management.

Learning from Ahmedabad Heat Action Plan

Context- The article talks about recent severe heatwaves across India, where temperatures in some cities reached nearly 50°C. It underscores the growing danger of climate change and stresses the importance of taking proactive steps to safeguard people from extreme heat.

What are the lessons that can be learnt from Ahmedabad's Heat Action Plan?

1) **Monitoring All-Cause Mortality-** In the 2010 heatwave in Ahmedabad, the overall number of deaths exceeded expectations, despite fewer reported cases of heat stroke. This highlighted the need to monitor all

Created with love ❤ by ForumIAS- the knowledge network for civil services.
Visit academy.forumias.com for our mentor based courses.
ForumIAS

causes of mortality, not just heat stroke cases, for a more accurate assessment of heatwave impacts.

2) **Simple and Well-Implemented Measures**- Ahmedabad's Heat Action Plan includes simple measures like early warning systems, interagency coordination, public awareness campaigns, and readiness of medical services. The important aspect is to ensure these measures are effectively implemented and accessible to the entire community, especially vulnerable groups.

3) **Dedicated Nodal Officer-** They have appointed a dedicated nodal officer for heat action planning with a long-term role, enabling effective leadership, learning, and coordination. This officer receives meteorological warnings, shares alerts, and supervises the implementation of departmental measures based on alert levels (yellow, orange, and red).

4) **Involvement of Facilitating Agencies**- They have involved local public health institutions, international knowledge partners, NGOs, and community-based organizations. These agencies brought expertise, helped with media outreach, and assisted municipal authorities in taking ownership and coordinating efforts.

5) **Continuous Improvement and Evaluation**- The Ahmedabad Heat Action Plan is continuously reviewed and enhanced based on evaluations after each season. These evaluations analyze mortality and temperature data, compare it with previous periods, and identify areas for improvement. This iterative process has resulted in the addition of new elements and improvements in planning and implementation over time.

Read more-Heat Action Plan

What should be the way forward?

1) There is no universal heat action plan that fits every location. Thus, each city and district must customize the framework according to their specific requirements, environment, and available resources. 2) Tailored plans implemented diligently can safeguard people from extreme temperatures and enhance resilience against climate change. Thus, there is a need to prioritize the development of such resilience measures in response to this year's heatwave.

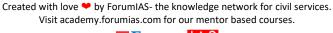## Causes of forest fires in Himachal Pradesh

Context: The article discusses the severe forest fires in Himachal Pradesh, their causes, and the historical changes in Himalayan forestry practices. It suggests involving local communities in forest management and implementing various strategies to prevent fires and manage forests better.

For detailed information on **forest fire** read Article 1, Article 2

What is the current situation of forest fires in Himachal Pradesh?

1. Extent of Damage: Himachal Pradesh is experiencing severe forest fires, with 1,684 instances reported since April 15. These fires have affected 17,471 hectares of forest land.
2. Impact on Wildlife and Environment: The fires have caused significant harm to wildlife and are contributing to the release of pollutants like black carbon, which accelerates glacier melting in the Himalayas.
3. Historical Data: From 2001 to 2023, Himachal Pradesh lost 957 hectares of tree cover specifically due to fires, emphasizing the recurring nature of this issue.

What are the major causes of forest fires in Himachal Pradesh?

Created with love ❤ by ForumIAS- the knowledge network for civil services.
Visit academy.forumias.com for our mentor based courses.

ForumIAS

1. Dry Conditions: Fires in the Himalayas often occur during the pre-monsoon summer period when moisture levels are low due to depleted snowmelt water.
2. Human Activities: Common causes include unattended campfires and discarded cigarettes.
3. Historical Forestry Practices: The shift from Banj oak to Chir pine, driven by commercial interests, has increased fire vulnerability. For example, from 1910 to 1920, the number of trees tapped for resin rose dramatically.
4. Faulty Forestry Practices: Treating forests purely for their utilitarian value without community involvement has exacerbated fire risks.

What should be done about forest fires in Himachal Pradesh?

1. Involve Local Communities: Ensure people living around forests participate in management to quickly respond to fires.
2. Reduce Chir Pine Trees: Replace Chir pine, which covers 17.8% of forest area, with mixed forestry to reduce fire risk.
3. Implement Water Conservation: Build check dams and revive water springs to improve moisture conditions.
4. Improve Forestry Practices: Move away from commercial forestry practices that prioritize timber over ecological balance.
5. Seek Financial Support: Advocate for disaster mitigation funds from the 16th Finance Commission to support these initiatives.

Created with love ❤ by ForumIAS- the knowledge network for civil services.
Visit academy.forumias.com for our mentor based courses.
Forum IAS