

9 PM Current Affairs Weekly Compilation

For UPSC CSE mains examination



1st Week

July. 2024

Features :

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

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GS Paper 1

Subject: Indian Society

Topic- Role of Women and Women's Organization, Population and Associated Issues, Poverty and Developmental issues, Urbanization, their problems and their remedies.

Changes in India's population perspectives

Context: The article discusses India's demographic changes, contrasting past fears of overpopulation with current hopes for economic growth due to a young workforce. It also highlights the intense competition for education, brain drain to Western countries, and millennials' choice to prioritize careers over having children.

For detailed information on **Challenges of Demographic dividend in India** [read this article here](#)

Why are millennials not having children?

Many millennials prioritize their careers over having children. They believe children would distract them from their professional goals. This choice affects India's expected demographic dividend.

How did India approach population control in the past?

- 1. Government Initiatives:** The government organized "vasectomy camps" in 1971, targeting sterilizations as a form of population control.
- 2. Sterilization Statistics:** In 1971 alone, approximately 1.3 million men underwent sterilization, with a target of 3.1 million by the following year.
- 3. International Support and Pressure:** The World Bank provided \$66 million in aid for sterilization programs from 1972 to 1980. Additionally, U.S. President Lyndon B. Johnson linked food aid to India's adoption of sterilization policies in 1965.

How has the perspective on India's population changed?

- 1. 1970s Perspective:** Previously, India viewed its high population growth as an economic burden. Efforts focused on aggressive population control measures, such as sterilization.
- 2. Modern View:** Today, India sees its large, young population as a demographic dividend. A high proportion of working-age individuals (15-64 years old) is now considered a potential economic advantage, expected to drive growth.
- 3. Historical Context:** In 1971, efforts included 1.3 million sterilizations, reflecting the urgency of controlling population growth, compared to current policies emphasizing economic utilization of the population.

How is demographic impacting education and employment in India?

- 1. Intense Competition:** Over a million students compete for limited seats at IITs, medical colleges, and IIMs. For example, 1 million applicants for 10,000 IIT seats.
- 2. Brain Drain:** Many qualified Indians, like Satya Nadella and Sundar Pichai, seek opportunities abroad, contributing to \$125 billion in remittances.
- 3. High Costs:** Real estate prices in metro cities are high, pushing many to look for jobs overseas.

4. **Family-Run Businesses:** Limited top management roles in India's family-owned businesses drive professionals to seek better prospects abroad.

GS Paper 2

Subject: Indian Polity

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

Climate Legislation for India

Context- The recent judgment in M.K. Ranjitsinh and Ors. vs Union of India & Ors. by the Supreme Court of India has marked a positive development in India's climate change legal framework.

The Supreme Court has introduced the right to 'be free from the adverse effects of climate change' into the Constitution of India, deriving from both the right to life (Article 21) and the right to equality (Article 14). The judgment states that there is no 'umbrella legislation' in India that relates to climate change. Thus, it implicitly suggests the enactment of climate legislation.

Read More- [SC Ruling on right against Climate Change- Explained Pointwise](#)

What are the advantages of bringing climate legislation?

- 1) It can set the vision for engaging with climate change across sectors and regions.
- 2) It can establish essential institutions, empower them, and implement structured governance processes to anticipate and respond to climate change.

What are the issues with single climate legislation?

- 1) **Comprehensive Law**-Creating a single comprehensive law that addresses all these aspects isn't practical, especially given the current legal framework covering most of these issues.
- 2) **Anticipating the Unpredictable Challenges**- It's impossible to predict in advance all the ways society needs to prepare for climate change.
- 3) **Challenges of Adopting Foreign Models** - Many countries' climate laws, like those modeled after the United Kingdom, concentrate narrowly on controlling carbon emissions. **For ex-** they establish regular five-year national carbon budgets and mechanisms to achieve them. This approach isn't well-suited for India.

What should be the way forward?

- 1) **Promoting Sustainable Development Across Sectors**- India should consider adopting a law that encourages decisions fostering sustainable development across various sectors like urban planning, agriculture, water management, and energy.
- 2) **Supportive Regulatory Environment**-Climate legislation should also create a supportive regulatory environment for more sustainable cities, buildings, and transport networks. It should enable adaptation measures such as heat action plans sensitive to local context
- 3) **Resilient Agriculture and Social Equity**-Climate legislation should include ways to transition to crops

resilient to climate change. It should also safeguard crucial ecosystems like mangroves, which serve as barriers against severe weather. Further, it should promote social equity.

4) **Indian Federalism**- Climate legislation should function well within India's federal structure. Various domains like urban policies, agriculture, water management, and electricity, are under the jurisdiction of state or local governments. Thus, the state must be given due importance in climate change related policy making and funding.

5) **Multi-stakeholders Approach**- Businesses, civil society, and communities impacted by climate change must actively participate in decision-making processes. This will ensure that diverse viewpoints for climate resilience and transitioning to sustainable energy practices are accommodated.

Madras High Court decision on the angapradakshinam practice

Context: The article discusses a recent court decision in India that allows a controversial religious practice. It examines how the judiciary determines which religious practices are essential and protected under the law, often leading to inconsistent rulings that limit religious freedom based on constitutional principles.

For detailed information on **Freedom of religion and attire** [read this article here](#)

What are the judgments of the Madras High Court on the angapradakshinam practice?

- 2024 Ruling by Justice G.R. Swaminathan:** The Madras High Court allowed the angapradakshinam practice where individuals roll over banana leaves after meals have been consumed. This was seen as part of the devotees' freedom of religion under Article 25 and the right to privacy under Article 21.
- Overtaken 2015 Decision:** The 2024 decision reversed a 2015 ruling that banned the practice citing potential caste discrimination. The 2015 judgment had concerns that it predominantly involved Dalits and non-Brahmins, which was seen as discriminatory.
- Inclusion of All Castes:** Justice Swaminathan noted that not only Dalits but people from other castes also participated, which countered the allegation of caste-based discrimination.

What is the criticism of this case?

- Lack of Essentiality Test:** Critics argue that the court did not rigorously examine whether angapradakshinam is an essential religious practice, diverging from past cases where such scrutiny was pivotal.
- Potential Health Concerns:** The practice involves rolling over used banana leaves, raising questions about hygiene and health risks, which the court seemingly overlooked.
- Inconsistency in Judicial Reasoning:** The decision highlights inconsistencies in how Indian courts determine what constitutes an essential practice, often shifting between strict textual analysis and broader interpretations based on rationality, leading to unpredictable legal standards.

How have courts treated essential practices in the past?

- Sri Shirur Mutt (1954):** The Supreme Court stated that essential religious practices should be determined by religion itself. This set a precedent for examining religious texts to define essential practices.
- The Durgah Committee, Ajmer (1961):** The court differentiated between essential religious practices and superstitious beliefs, stating that only integral and essential practices are protected under freedom of religion.
- Gramsabha of Village Battis Shirala (2014):** The court ruled capturing and worshipping a live cobra during

Nag Panchami as not essential because it wasn't supported by broader religious texts.

4. Mohammed Fasi (1985): The Kerala High Court ruled that growing a beard was not essential to Islam as it was not mandated in the Quran, despite it being a practice based on Hadith.

5. Acharya Jagdishwarananda Avadhuta (2004): The Supreme Court denied that the tandava dance was an essential practice of the Ananda Margi faith because the faith existed before the practice was adopted.

6. M. Ismail Faruqui (1995): The court held that while prayer is essential, praying at a specific mosque is not unless the mosque itself holds particular religious significance.

Way forward -To ensure fairness, courts should avoid interpreting religious texts and focus on constitutional values. They should treat practices that align with fundamental rights and public health as essential. This approach will harmonize religious freedom with societal progress, as seen in the evolving jurisprudence from Sri Shirur Mutt (1954) to more recent rulings like M. Ismail Faruqui (1995).

Topic- Issues and Challenges Pertaining to the Federal Structure, Devolution of Powers and Finances up to Local Levels and Challenges Therein.

The Impact of Coalition Politics on Fiscal Federalism

Context- The return of coalition politics in India brings opportunities and challenges for fiscal federalism. While it can balance unitary trends, the rise in requests for special packages due to political bargaining endangers fair distribution of resources.

The Indian Constitution is sometimes viewed as quasi-federal. C.H. Alexandrowicz disagreed, stating in Constitutional Developments in India (1957) that it leans federal outside of emergencies. In **State of Rajasthan and Others v Union of India (1977)**, the Supreme Court described India's political system as amphibious, showing both unitary and federal traits depending on emergencies under Articles 352 and 356.

What is the impact of the return of Coalition Politics on Fiscal Federalism?

- 1) Demand for Special packages-** There is a renewed demand for state-specific discretionary grants, or 'special packages', from regional parties. It poses a risk of diverting national resources based on political bargaining rather than genuine needs.
- 2) Discretionary Grants-** Special packages under Article 282 are discretionary and often influenced by state-level political parties' bargaining power rather than genuine need. Discretionary grants have surpassed Finance Commission recommended grants by almost four times. This raises concerns about India's federal system's health.
- 3) Double Engine Sarkar-** The concept of a 'double engine sarkar', with one party controlling both Union and State governments, highlights how smaller coalition partners within states advocate for their own interests. Thus, it is important to ensure that allocations adhere to proper procedures and are not based on political interest only.
- 4) Concerns over fiscal distribution-** Some states have raised issues about declining shares in the divisible pool of Union taxes. The 16th Finance Commission is tasked with addressing these concerns.

Read More- [16th Finance Commission](#)

What should be the way forward?

1) **Strengthening Fiscal Federalism-** Fiscal boundaries, principles of tax assignment, and criteria for grants need to be transparent and equitable. In India's diverse linguistic, cultural, and economic context, some level of asymmetry in federal arrangements is permissible. However, it should be regulated by clear and stable constitutional provisions.

2) **Utilize constitutional mechanisms:**

- A) Prioritize Finance Commission recommendations for grant allocation.
- B) Limit the use of discretionary grants under Article 282. There is a need to Develop objective criteria for grant allocation.
- C) Address state-specific issues through constitutional provisions rather than ad-hoc packages.
- D) Ensure stability and transparency in addressing asymmetric needs.

Topic- Parliament and State Legislatures—Structure, Functioning, Conduct of Business, Powers & Privileges and Issues Arising out of these.

Expunction powers in Parliament

Context- The inaugural special session of the 18th Lok Sabha witnessed heated debates between the Opposition and the government on multiple issues. The session concluded amid controversies surrounding the deletion of remarks made by Opposition leaders. Article 105 of the Constitution grants MPs certain privileges and freedom of speech in Parliament, though it is bound by other constitutional provisions and parliamentary rules.

The practice of expunging remarks has been questioned recently in the digital age. This is because expunged content remains accessible due to live broadcasts of proceedings and widespread sharing of screenshots and videos on social media.

When are remarks expunged?

- 1) **Verbatim Recording and Removal of Unparliamentary Remarks** -Parliament records all speeches and proceedings verbatim. The Chairman (Upper House) and Speaker (Lower House) can order the removal of "defamatory, indecent, unparliamentary, or undignified" words.
- 2) **List of Unparliamentary Words**-The Lok Sabha Secretariat maintains a list of 'unparliamentary' words. In the Rajya Sabha, rules require immediate withdrawal of unparliamentary words without debate when deemed so by the Chair.
- 3) **Discretion of Speakers**-Speakers have discretion to expunge words detrimental to national interest, offensive to dignitaries, or likely to cause offense. For ex -Prime Minister Nehru objected when a member mentioned the President of Pakistan in a certain context, resulting in the removal of those remarks from the record.

Read More- [Speaker of Lok Sabha- Functioning and Challenges](#)

- 4) **Withdrawal of Irrelevant Remarks** -Members must withdraw irrelevant remarks upon the Chair's request, or face expunction.

5) **Unreferenced Document**-Quoting from an unreferenced document or speaking against the Chair's instruction can also lead to expunction.

What rules govern the statements made by MPs against other MPs or individuals outside Parliament?

1) **Procedure for Accusations in Lok Sabha** -Rule 353 of the Lok Sabha provides the procedure for MPs accusing another MP or an outsider. Allegations must be notified beforehand, prompting the concerned Minister to investigate and present facts in Parliament. However, if the allegation is not defamatory or incriminating, this rule does not apply.

2) **Exclusion of Ministerial Allegations**-The rule does not cover allegations against government Ministers because they are accountable to Parliament. MPs have the right to question Ministers and criticize their actions as part of their parliamentary duties.

What is the procedure to expunge the remarks?

1) **Authority to Expunge Remarks**- The Chairman and Speaker have the authority to order the removal of remarks under Rule 261 of the Rajya Sabha and Rules 380 and 381 of the Lok Sabha's Rules of Procedure.

2) **Recording and Expunging Remarks**-Expunged parts are marked with asterisks and noted as 'expunged as ordered by the Chair.' If the Chair decides that nothing said during a member's speech or interruption should be recorded, it is noted as 'not recorded.'

3) **Sharing with Media**-A comprehensive list of unacceptable words and phrases is shared with media at the end of each day's proceedings. Once expunged, these words or phrases are deleted from the official record.

Topic- Salient Features of the Representation of People's Act

Importance of Voter Anonymity

Context- Janata Dal (United) candidate Devesh Chandra Thakur faced controversy for allegedly breaching the MCC. He suggested that certain communities shouldn't expect help from him as they didn't support him in elections.

This statement was seen as undermining democratic principles and the constitutional spirit of citizen-representative relationships. The elected leaders should work for everyone without discrimination based on caste or community.

What are the mechanisms to ensure voter anonymity?

A) Rule 56 of the Conduct of Election Rules, 1961, emphasizes voter secrecy to prevent retribution or vote bargaining.

B) Ballot papers with identifiable marks that may reveal the identity of voters are rejected to maintain anonymity.

C) Ballot papers of different ballot boxes were mixed to avoid group targeting of voters based on the voting trends in a particular area.

What are the issues with the introduction of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs)?

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1) **Reveal Voting Behavior** -Mixing of ballot papers of different ballot boxes cannot be done. This has led to demands of introducing a totalizer to avoid identification of areas according to their voting behavior.

Read More- [Supreme Court VVPAT Judgement](#)

2) **Victimization of Voters**-Publishing results booth by booth, allowed political parties to potentially intimidate voters based on how specific areas voted.

What is the significance of totalizer for ensuring voter anonymity?

1) **Endorsed by ECI**-The Election Commission of India (ECI) proposed using a totaliser to mask booth-level voting patterns. This was suggested to prevent post-election harassment of voters and maintain voting secrecy.

2) **Filing of Petitions**- In both the Yogesh Gupta v. EC and Ashwini Kumar Upadhyay v. Union of India cases, petitions were submitted to the Supreme Court urging the Election Commission to use totalizer machine.

3) **Law Commission Recommendation**- The Law Commission of India in its 255th report, endorsed the EC's proposal to introduce totalizer in counting of votes.

Why is the government not willing to introduce totalizer machine in elections?

1) **Public Interest**-The government asserted that using a totalizer did not benefit the public interest significantly in its response to Yogesh Gupta case. It also raised concerns about the potential for data leakage from Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs).

2) **Lack of Consensus**- The Bahujan Samaj Party, Congress, and Nationalist Congress Party favored using the totalizer. The Communist Party of India (Marxist) suggested a gradual implementation, while the CPI did not express a view. The Bharatiya Janata Party opposed the proposal.

3) **Rejected by Ministers**- The group of ministers concluded that disclosing voting patterns by polling booths would positively impact development efforts.

Topic- Appointment to various Constitutional Posts, Powers, Functions and Responsibilities of various Constitutional Bodies.

16th Finance Commission

Context- The article emphasizes the need for increased financial support to urban local bodies, considering their significant contribution to the national economy.

The Finance Commission is established under Article 280 of the Indian Constitution. Since the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments, local bodies have become more important in the federal system. These amendments added sub-clauses 280 (3) (bb) and (c) that require the Finance Commission to suggest ways to increase state funds to support panchayats and municipalities.

What are the challenges faced by Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) in India regarding financial devolution?

1) **Financial Devolution to Cities**: Efforts by five commissions since the 11th Finance Commission have not adequately improved financial devolution to cities. The poor fiscal health of municipalities affects both city productivity and quality of life.

2) **Intergovernmental transfers (IGTs)** -Intergovernmental transfers (IGTs) to Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) in India are about 0.5% of GDP, significantly lower than those in other developing nations like South Africa (2.6%), Mexico (1.6%) etc. These transfers constitute approximately 40% of ULBs' overall revenue.

- 3) **State Finance Commissions:** State Finance Commissions have recommended only approximately 7% of States' own revenue in 2018-19.
- 4) **Parallel Agencies:** - The 13th Finance Commission noted that parallel agencies undermine local governments financially and operationally. Programs such as MPLADS and MLALADS disrupt the federal structure.
- 5) **Census Data:** Without the 2021 Census, using 2011 data is insufficient for informed fiscal planning.
- 6) **Lack of Adequate Investment-** A McKinsey Global Institute report warns that if India continues investing in urban infrastructure at current levels, there will be shortages in urban infrastructure, resulting in issues with water supply and untreated sewage.
The World Bank estimates that \$840 billion is needed for basic urban infrastructure in the next decade.

Read more- [Panchayat Raj Institution\(PRI\) in India](#)

What recommendation can be made by the 16th Finance Commission to overcome the financial challenges of cities?

1) **Revisit the 15th FC's guiding principles such as-**

- A) Enhancement of property tax collection in relation to state GST
- B) Maintenance of accounts
- C) Resource allocation for pollution mitigation
- D) Focus on primary health care, solid waste management, and drinking water

2) **Consider India's urbanization dynamics-**The 16th Finance Commission needs to recognize India's dynamic urbanization and ensure that intergovernmental transfers (IGTs) to urban areas are doubled at the minimum.

Subject: Governance

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

Impact of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita 2023 on Street vendors

Context: The article discusses India's new penal code, the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita 2023, and its impact on street vendors. Despite existing laws, street vending remains chaotic due to poor implementation and corruption. The article suggests easier licensing to balance order and commerce.

For detailed information on **Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita 2023** [read this article here](#)

What challenges do street vendors face with the introduction of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita 2023?

1. **New Legal Framework:** The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) 2023 introduces updated legal codes that replace outdated pre-1947 laws. A street vendor was one of the first individuals charged under Section 285 of the BNS for causing obstruction under a foot-over bridge at New Delhi Railway Station, illustrating immediate enforcement challenges.
2. **Challenges in Regulation:** Despite the Street Vendors Act of 2014, which aimed to regulate and organize

street vending, implementation has been poor. The act's goals to map vending zones and issue certificates have not effectively managed the chaos.

3. Corruption and Inconsistency: Arbitrary enforcement by local officials and police corruption have exacerbated difficulties for vendors. The act was intended to reduce bribery, but uneven law enforcement has led to continued problems.

4. Economic Impact: Restrictive interventions in street vending impact the livelihood of many vendors who rely on this informal economy.

For detailed information on **the Street Vendors Act 2014** [read this article here](#)

What should be done?

1. Simplify Licensing: Licenses for street vendors should be easier to obtain and not scarce. This approach would help in maintaining pathway accessibility without excessive control.

2. Improve Implementation of the Street Vendors Act: Enhance cooperation between local administrations to effectively implement the Street Vendors Act of 2014, ensuring that the goals of organized vending zones and licensing are achieved.

3. Reduce Corruption: Strengthen enforcement mechanisms to reduce bribery and ensure fair treatment of vendors by officials, which is crucial for the equitable application of the law.

Issues of regulating Generative AI (GAI)

Context: The article discusses the legal challenges of regulating Generative AI (GAI), focusing on liability for content, copyright issues, and privacy concerns. It suggests that existing laws struggle to address these issues effectively and proposes measures for better legal frameworks to manage AI's impact.

For detailed information on **Generative AI** [read this article here](#)

What are the issues of regulating Generative AI (GAI)

1. Liability for Content: Determining responsibility for content created by Generative AI is complex. For example, a US radio host sued OpenAI for defamation by ChatGPT.

2. Copyright Challenges: Existing laws like India's Copyright Act of 1957 don't address AI-generated works. The 161st Parliamentary Standing Committee Report highlighted this gap.

3. Privacy Concerns: Generative AI can't "unlearn" data, conflicting with rights in the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023, like "right to erasure."

What initiatives have been taken to address the issues of regulating Generative AI (GAI)

A. Legal Provisions:

1. Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023: Introduced "right to erasure" and "right to be forgotten," addressing privacy concerns but raising questions about its practical application to AI, which cannot unlearn data once trained.

2. Safe Harbour Protections: Section 79 of the IT Act, as reinforced by the Shreya Singhal judgment, protects intermediaries from liability for user-generated content, provided they adhere to set guidelines. The application to AI, however, remains unclear.

For more information on **Shreya Singhal judgment** [read this article here](#)

B. Judicial Initiatives;

1. K.S. Puttaswamy Judgment (2017): Established a strong foundation for privacy laws, leading to the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023, which addresses data privacy but does not fully resolve issues with AI data usage.

2. Judicial Interpretation: Courts, like in the case of *Christian Louboutin Sas vs Nakul Bajaj and Ors* (2018), have been pivotal in defining the scope of intermediary liability, impacting how Generative AI might be treated under current laws.

What should be done?

1. Sandbox Approach: A temporary immunity or sandbox approach is proposed for Generative AI platforms. This method allows platforms to operate with some legal exemptions while gathering data and experiencing real-world scenarios that can inform future regulations.

2. Data Rights and Responsibilities: The process of data acquisition for Generative AI training requires a complete overhaul. This involves ensuring legal compliance and proper compensation for the intellectual property used in training models, possibly through revenue-sharing or licensing agreements.

3. Licensing Challenges: Licensing data for Generative AI needs centralized platforms for data licensing. This would help simplify the process for developers and ensure the integrity and appropriate use of data, similar to solutions found in other industries like stock photography.

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

Place of Education in India's Federal Structure

Context- The NEET-UG exam has faced controversies involving grace marks, allegations of paper leaks, and other irregularities. The article discusses the debate surrounding the place of education in concurrent list. In the United States, educational standards are set by state and local governments, with federal oversight on financial aid and key issues. Canada delegates education entirely to its provinces, while Germany gives legislative power to its states (landers). South Africa has national departments overseeing education with provincial departments implementing policies locally.

What is the historical background?

1) **British Era-**The Government of India Act, 1935 introduced a federal structure in India. Legislative subjects were divided between federal legislature and provinces. Education was placed under the provincial list.

2) Post-Independence Era-

A) Initially, education remained on the 'State List'.

B) During the Emergency, the Swaran Singh Committee suggested shifting education to the 'Concurrent List'. This recommendation was enacted through the 42nd Constitutional Amendment in 1976 without thorough discussion.

C) The Janata Party government tried to undo this through the 44th Amendment in 1978, which did not pass in the Rajya Sabha.

What are the arguments for placing education in Concurrent List?

- A) Uniform education policy across the country.
- B) Potential for improved standards.
- C) Enhanced synergy between Centre and States.

Read More- [Issues with India's education system](#)

What are the arguments against placing education in Concurrent List?

- 1) **Recent Controversies**- NEET- Opposition to returning 'education' to the State list cites concerns about corruption and a lack of professionalism. However, recent issues with NEET and NTA have shown that centralization does not automatically resolve these problems.
- 2) **Expenditure on Education**- According to the Ministry of Education's 2022 report on budgeted expenditure, in the fiscal year 2020-21, education departments in India spent a total of ₹6.25 lakh crore. Of this amount, the Centre accounted for 15%, while states contributed 85%. This highlights the significant role of states in funding education.

What should be the way forward?

- 1) Most education funding comes from the states, suggesting a need for constructive dialogue about returning 'education' to the State list. This change would enable states to formulate tailored policies for curriculum, exams, and admissions, especially for professional courses like medicine and engineering.
- 2) Regulatory mechanisms for higher education can continue to be governed by central institutions like the National Medical Commission, University Grants Commission and All India Council for Technical Education.

Celebrating Play and Learning

Context-India recently joined the global observance of the International Day of Play on June 11, recognized by the United Nations, highlighting the important role of play in enabling children to thrive and reach their full potential. India has prioritized play and has been at the forefront of institutionalizing it.

Why is playing important for children's development?

- 1) **Holistic Growth**-Play is essential for children's overall development—physical, emotional, social, cognitive, and cultural. It encourages curiosity, exploration, and experimentation in a safe and enjoyable environment.
- 2) **Interactive Play Activities**- Play involves talking, storytelling, using toys, singing, music, dancing, creating art, and playing both indoors and outdoors. These activities build strong connections among students, teachers, parents, and the community.
- 3) **Brain Studies**-Research on child development and brain studies show that play is essential for:
 - A) Brain development, especially stimulating the prefrontal cortex, which handles attention, problem-solving, and social behavior regulation
 - B) Neuroplasticity, the ability to form new neural connections crucial for learning and adapting throughout life
 - C) Intuitive knowledge, crucial for problem-solving and decision-making in complex and uncertain situations
- 4) **Role of Play in Parenting**- UNICEF highlights the vital role of play in parenting to build the foundation for children's growth and development from infancy onward.

What are the steps taken by the government to promote playing for holistic development of children?

1) **NEP and NCF-FS** -The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and the National Curriculum Framework for the Foundational Stage (NCF-FS) 2022 introduced a curriculum framework for children aged 3-8, focusing on learning through play for the first time.

Read more- [How does the NEP support students](#)

2) **Jaadui Pitara** -JNCERT's Jaadui Pitara represents NCF-FS's innovative approach to early education. It includes a variety of age-appropriate, locally relevant, and sensory-rich learning materials like toys, games, puzzles, etc.

3) **e-Jaadui Pitara** -The Ministry of Education launched the e-Jaadui Pitara to complement the physical box, making it accessible via computers, smartphones, television, and radio. Caregivers can engage with virtual assistants using AI chat and voice features to tell stories and encourage children in play-learning activities.

Ethical issues and violations in medical trials in India

Context: The article discusses ethical issues and violations in medical trials in India, focusing on informed consent, the effectiveness of ethics committees, and the protection of vulnerable trial participants. It highlights the challenges in upholding medical ethics and the need for stronger oversight and whistleblower protection.

What are the Allegations Against Covaxin's Clinical Trials?

- 1. Violation of Informed Consent Procedures:** The trials reportedly enrolled participants without adequately informing them about the risks involved, which is a crucial aspect of ethical medical practice.
- 2. Enrollment of Vulnerable Populations:** Vulnerable groups were allegedly targeted for the trials, raising concerns about exploitation.
- 3. Non-reporting of Adverse Events:** It was claimed that adverse reactions during the trial were not reported, which is essential for assessing vaccine safety.
- 4. Lack of Adequate Monitoring and Follow-up:** The trials lacked proper monitoring and follow-up of participants, compromising the integrity and results of the study.

How Do Ethics Committees Function in Clinical Trials?

- 1. Lack of Oversight:** Some clinical trials in India proceed without any ethics committee oversight, as highlighted by the 2022 publication by Gayatri Saberwal et al
- 2. Insufficient Committees:** The study found instances where the number of trial sites exceeded the number of functional ethics committees, indicating inadequate oversight capacity.
- 3. Functionality Issues:** The same study identified 30 problems related to the operation of ethics committees in India, which suggests significant shortcomings in their effectiveness.
- 4. Competence Concerns:** The effectiveness and competence of ethics committee members were also questioned, particularly during high-profile trials such as those for COVID-19 treatments.

What Role Do Whistleblowers Play?

- 1. Highlighting Ethical Concerns:** Whistleblowers such as Dr. Jacob Puliyel filed writ petitions in the Supreme Court to ensure transparency and accountability in clinical trials, as discussed in connection with the Covaxin trials.

2. **Facing Retribution:** Despite their crucial role, whistleblowers often face significant personal and professional risks. Individuals like Satyendra Dubey and Shanmugam Manjunath suffered severe consequences for their actions.

3. **Legal Weaknesses:** In India, the protection for whistleblowers is limited and was further weakened in 2015, reducing their ability to safely report wrongdoing.

What Are the Broader Implications for Drug Development?

1. **Ethical Shortcuts:** There are concerns with practices such as the "emergency use authorization in clinical trial mode" for Covaxin, which lacks explicit support in the regulatory framework under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act.

2. **Lack of Specialized Expertise:** The management of complex drug development processes often involves medical practitioners without specific expertise in clinical trials, which can lead to inadequate handling of specialized requirements.

3. **Ineffective Oversight by Ethics Committees:** Failures in ethics committee oversight are evident, such as approving more trial sites than there are functional committees, leading to compromised ethical standards in trials.

What should be done?

1. Enhance the legal framework to protect individuals who expose unethical practices, similar to stronger protections seen in other countries.

2. Ensure every clinical trial has effective oversight by a competent ethics committee, as gaps in this area lead to ethical violations.

3. Appoint specialists with expertise in clinical trials to manage drug development, avoiding the misuse of general medical knowledge for complex drug approvals.

Inclusion of Yoga in Olympic and Asian Games Sport

Context- The article discusses the demand to push for inclusion of yoga as a competitive sport in major international sporting events like the Olympics and Asian Games.

There are fears that it may be used as political propaganda by the ruling dispensation. However, it's important to understand that yoga transcends any ideology and has consistently served as India's soft power regardless of the ruling party.

What are the arguments to support the inclusion of Yoga in Olympic and Asian Games Sport?

1) **Yoga as a Sport:** - Yoga meets the Oxford Dictionary definition of sport, which defines it as "an activity involving physical exertion and skill, especially one regulated by set rules or customs in which an individual or team competes against another or others."

2) **Yoga's Spiritual Essence-**Competition doesn't necessarily devalue yoga's core principles.

3) **Global Popularity and Reach of Yoga-**According to Statista, yoga was practiced by 33.6 million people in the US in 2023, surpassing the popularity of flag football (20 million practitioners) and T20 cricket, and showing higher participation rates among women globally.

4) **Featured in Khelo India Youth Games-** The competition included three types of events: Artistic yoga, Rhythmic yoga, and Traditional yoga. This has demonstrated yoga's potential as a thrilling sport where flexible athletes can deliver impressive performances.

Read More- [Khelo India Programme](#)

5) **Recently Included Sports**-A parallel is drawn with other recently included sports, such as Xiangqi, traditionally played in Chinatowns globally and included in the Asian Games last year, and flag football, known as a recreational activity in US gym classes, added to the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics nine months ago, to support the argument for yoga's inclusion.

What should be the wayforward?

1) **Learning from Flag Football's Journey:** -It took 20 years for the sport to achieve Olympic status, a process that included codifying rules, organizing international championships, and promoting it globally. India should follow the same process.

2) **Utilizing Olympic Rules**-The International Olympic Committee lets host nations include popular regional sports. The USA and China have promoted sports important to their culture when hosting major events. India should similarly push for yoga's inclusion in the Olympics and Asian Games.

State of Computer Literacy in India

Context: The article discusses the importance of computer literacy in India, noting that it is essential for accessing many services and improving life quality. It highlights the low levels of computer skills, especially in rural and economically disadvantaged areas, and stresses the need for better education and training programs to reduce the digital divide.

For detailed information on **Digital Public Infrastructure** [read this article here](#)

What is the Importance of Computer Literacy?

1. **Access to Services:** Computer literacy enables individuals to utilize essential digital services such as online banking, healthcare management, and government services, improving their quality of life.
2. **Educational Benefits:** During the COVID-19 pandemic, computer and internet access were crucial for online education and ordering daily necessities.
3. **Employment Opportunities:** According to studies, adults with computer skills have higher employment rates (72.7%) compared to those without (52.5%). This suggests that computer literacy enhances employability and productivity.
4. **Economic Impact:** Regions with higher computer literacy, like Kerala, show better socio-economic development compared to states with lower literacy rates, demonstrating a correlation between computer skills, employment probability, and earnings.

What Challenges Does India Face in Improving Computer Literacy?

1. **Infrastructure Shortfalls:** Many educational institutions in India lack the necessary facilities and qualified instructors to deliver effective computer education, limiting student access to essential digital skills.
2. **Generational Divide:** Older individuals often show less interest in learning new technologies, contributing to lower computer literacy rates among these age groups.
3. **Economic and Geographical Gaps:** States with economic challenges have markedly lower computer literacy rates, which hinders equitable access to digital opportunities and deepens social inequalities.

How Can India Improve Computer Literacy?

- 1. Enhance School Programs:** Schools should ensure all students graduate with computer literacy skills, addressing current gaps in access and instruction.
- 2. Invest in Infrastructure:** The government should allocate resources for better computer facilities and training of qualified personnel in schools and colleges.
- 3. Target Adult Education:** Implement targeted programs for the older population, involving local governing bodies and NGOs, to improve computer literacy outside the formal education system.
- 4. Focus on Disadvantaged States:** Special initiatives in economically disadvantaged states like Assam and Bihar can help bridge the digital divide and promote inclusive growth.

Subject: International Relations

Topic - - India and its neighbourhood- relations.

New projects and agreements between Nepal and India

Context: The article discusses the unique relationship between Nepal and India. It highlights their open border, shared culture, and economic ties. The countries are focusing on reducing trade deficits, enhancing digital financial connectivity, and improving infrastructure to boost trade and people-to-people ties.

For detailed information on **India-Nepal Relationship** [read this article here](#)

What is the nature of the relationship between Nepal and India?

- 1. Open Borders and Cultural Ties:** Nepal and India share an open border and deep-rooted cultural ties, enabling free movement and close people-to-people relationships.
- 2. Economic Interdependence:**

India is Nepal's largest trading partner and the biggest source of tourists.

It is the sole supplier of petroleum products to Nepal.

India accounts for a significant share of Nepal's inward remittances and handles the majority of its third-country trade.

During disasters, India is the first responder, providing rescue, relief, and financial packages (e.g., \$75 million for earthquake-hit areas).

- 3. Trade and Deficit Focus:**

Nepal's trade deficit with India stands at nearly 18% of its GDP.

High transaction costs and inadequate infrastructure make Nepal a high-cost economy.

Both countries are focusing on initiatives like cross-border digital financial connectivity and infrastructure improvements to reduce this trade deficit.

What new projects and agreements have been initiated between Nepal and India?

- 1. Electricity Cooperation:**

Exported around 650 MW of electricity to India in 2023, earning over Rs 10 billion.

Signed a long-term agreement to export 10,000 MW of electricity to India over 10 years.

2. Hydroelectricity Projects:

Increased investment in hydroelectricity production and cross-border transmission lines. Nepal plans to export 40 MW of electricity to Bangladesh in 2025 under a tripartite agreement.

3. Digital Financial Connectivity:

Indians can make mobile payments in Nepal; Nepalis will soon follow.
Simplified process for Nepalis to open bank accounts in India and obtain Aadhaar cards.

4. Petroleum Pipelines:

Constructing new pipelines between Siliguri-Jhapa and Amlekhgunj-Chitwan.
Existing Motihari-Amlekhgunj pipeline saves Nepal Rs 1 billion annually.

5. Transportation Infrastructure:

Building two new integrated check posts (ICPs) in Bhairahaba and Dodhara-Chandani.
Upgrading border roads and operational cross-border freight rail.
Completed feasibility study for the Raxaul-Kathmandu railway; considering Ayodhya-Janakpur rail service.

How will Nepal's relationship be helpful for India?

Electricity Imports: India will import 10,000 MW of clean energy from Nepal over 10 years, reducing reliance on coal and gas.

Pollution Reduction: Importing clean energy from Nepal will help India reduce pollution.

Economic Boost: Enhanced digital financial connectivity will facilitate hassle-free payments for Indian tourists and traders in Nepal.

Transportation Efficiency:

New petroleum pipelines will streamline fuel supply and reduce transportation costs.
Upgraded border roads and integrated check posts will ease trade and travel between the countries.

Regional Energy Cooperation: Nepal's participation in regional grids will promote renewable energy development in BIMSTEC and SAARC regions, benefiting India.

Trade Relationship Between India and China

Context: The article discusses India's increasing manufacturing capabilities in sectors like solar cells and electronics, heavily relying on imported Chinese components. It also covers the complex trade and political relationship between India and China, highlighting both economic dependence and strategic challenges.

For detailed information on **India-China Relations** read [Article 1](#), [Article 2](#)

What is the Current Status of India's Manufacturing Sector?

- 1. Solar Cell Production:** India's solar-cell manufacturing capacity is set to increase from 6 gigawatts to 30 gigawatts within a year, positioning the country as a potential exporter of solar products.
- 2. Electronics Manufacturing:** The capacity for manufacturing electronics, especially mobile phones, now meets 97% of domestic demand. India earned \$15 billion from handset exports last year, with projections to reach \$50 billion in electronic exports in the next two years.

What is the Trade Relationship Between India and China?

- 1. Volume of Trade:** Over the past four years, trade between India and China has been recorded at \$88 billion, \$126 billion, \$136 billion, and \$119 billion, showing significant economic exchange.
- 2. Import Reliance:** Imports from China have grown by 31% in the past year, with a noted increase in the share of electronic devices and components from China. India relies on Chinese imports for critical components like solar cells, glass, frames, and electronics parts such as printed circuit boards and semiconductors.
- 3. Trade Deficit:** Despite strategic tensions, the trade deficit continues, largely due to the essential nature of Chinese imports that support India's manufacturing and economic ambitions.
- 3. Strategic Compartmentalization:** Despite tensions like the Galwan incident, economic engagements continue separately from border issues, highlighting a strategy to prioritize economic ties despite political or military disputes.

What Are the Key Certainties in India-China Relations?

- 1. No Gain from Military Conflict:** China has nothing to benefit from a full-scale military confrontation with India, indicating a mutual understanding to avoid such escalations.
- 2. Persistent Gap:** The significant economic and power disparity between India and China is expected to continue for at least another decade.
- 3. Balanced Border Deterrence:** India's strong border defenses match the scale of China's military build-up, maintaining a status quo at the border.
- 4. Domestic Challenges in China:** China faces internal macroeconomic and demographic issues, along with complex border disputes with other neighbors, which demand substantial attention from its policymakers.
- 5. Shared Global Interests:** Representing 40% of the world's population, India and China share more common global interests than often recognized, stemming from their statuses as ancient civilizations and neighbors.
- 6. Dialogue Importance:** The need for distinctions in dialogue between states, governments, people, and societies is crucial. There is significant potential to enhance people-to-people connections, fostering better mutual understanding despite ongoing border hostilities.

What Should Be India's Strategy?

- 1. Enhance Political Dialogue:** Engage China through more robust political dialogue to better understand and manage bilateral issues, as suggested by experts like former foreign secretary Vijay Gokhale.
- 2. Explore Export Opportunities:** Exploit the Chinese \$6 trillion consumer market more effectively. Even a 1% market share offers a significant economic opportunity, given the size of China's economy.
- 3. Strategic Use of Chinese Capital:** Adopt a nuanced approach to Chinese capital inflows. Avoid general restrictions that might hamper economic opportunities, especially in sectors where such investments do not pose national security threats, like the automobile industry.
- 4. Increase People-to-People Links:** Despite border hostilities, there is a need to enhance people-to-people relations, which can help improve mutual understanding and smooth over political tensions.

Should India Review Its Policy Towards Myanmar

Context: The article discusses the need for India to reassess its policy towards Myanmar due to the ongoing conflict and humanitarian crisis there. It highlights the strategic and humanitarian reasons for India to engage with ethnic armed organizations in Myanmar to help stabilize the region and assist affected civilians.

For detailed information on **India-Myanmar Relations** [read this article here](#)

What is the Current Situation in Myanmar?

1. Myanmar is experiencing serious conflicts between ethnic armed organizations (EAOs) and the military junta.
2. Ethnic armed organizations (EAOs) and the People's Defence Force are coordinating against Myanmar's military junta, holding around 45% of the country's territory.

Why Should India Review Its Policy Towards Myanmar?

1. **Refugee Crisis:** The conflict in Myanmar is causing a refugee influx into India, directly impacting its northeastern states. This necessitates a policy review to manage humanitarian and security challenges.
2. **Geopolitical Shifts:** China's support for both the EAOs and Myanmar's military junta presents a strategic challenge. China's involvement in key trading routes on the Myanmar borders affects India's interests, suggesting a need for a balanced and responsive foreign policy.
3. **Change in Myanmar's Dynamics:** The coordination among Myanmar's ethnic armed groups holding significant territory indicates a shift in power dynamics. This new reality underlines the importance of India reassessing its approach to effectively address the changing political landscape and support regional stability.

What are the Challenges of Changing India's Policy?

1. **Balancing Regional Interests:** India needs to manage its relationship with Myanmar's government while addressing the influence of China. Ensuring stability and maintaining a balance of power in the region is challenging.
2. **Direct Involvement Risks:** Providing aid or intervening in non-government-controlled areas may be unwelcome by Myanmar's official government. It may pose a diplomatic risk to India's efforts to assist affected populations and stabilize the region.

How Can India Respond to the Humanitarian Crisis?

1. **Provide Humanitarian Assistance:** India can offer aid in border areas, supplying essentials like water, sanitary napkins, and medical supplies. This can help those injured and needing surgery due to the conflict.
2. **Engage in Dialogue:** India should discuss with Myanmar's government the importance of humanitarian support. This can be framed as mutual interest to improve India's humanitarian image and aid Myanmar's people.
3. **Support for Stability:** India can consult with regional neighbors like Thailand and Bangladesh, as well as experts, to ensure a coordinated effort towards stability and support for affected communities in Myanmar.

What Impact Could the Situation in Myanmar Have on the Region?

1. **Regional Instability:** The fragmentation in Myanmar could lead to broader regional instability, impacting neighboring countries like India, Thailand, and Bangladesh.
2. **Creation of a Separate State:** Discussions about forming a Christian or Kuki state within parts of Myanmar

and Northeast India highlight potential geopolitical shifts that could affect regional integrity.

3.Increased Refuge Operations: As conflicts persist, the number of refugees fleeing Myanmar will likely increase, placing further strain on the resources and security of bordering nations.

Topic- Effect of Policies and Politics of Developed and Developing Countries on India's interests

India-UK Relations under Labour Party

Context-Conservative Party is facing a likely defeat in Britain's upcoming elections. The article explains about the potential impact of regime change on India-UK relations.

What are the contributions of conservative party in strengthening India-UK ties?

- 1) **Shift from Colonial Era Issues-**They have improved relations with India by moving away from colonial-era concerns like Pakistan and Kashmir, instead focusing on broader Indo-Pacific cooperation.
- 2) **Comprehensive Bilateral Transformation-** They have also laid out plans to transform bilateral relations comprehensively, covering areas such as green initiatives, defense, new technologies, and maritime security.
- 3) **Migration and Mobility Agreement** -They have implemented the Migration and Mobility Agreement to address illegal immigration and ease Indian talent flow into the UK.

However, anti-India activities in Britain still go unpunished. The British establishment has long resisted forming a new relationship.

Read More- [EFTA-India Relations](#)

What is the historical context of India-UK relations under Labour Party?

- 1) **Diplomatic Tragedies** -Queen Elizabeth II's trip to India in 1997 was meant to show post-colonial reconciliation but ended up causing diplomatic problems. During a stopover in Pakistan, British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook proposed mediation on the Kashmir issue, which was dismissed by Indian Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral.
- 2) **Strong Indian Response-**The then Prime Minister of India criticized Britain as a "third-rate power" with unrealistic views of its global influence.
- 3) **Controversial Remarks at Jallianwala Bagh Incident-**The Queen's visit to Jallianwala Bagh caused controversy when Prince Philip hinted that the number of deaths might have been overstated. This sparked anger and criticism in India.
- 4) **Ethical Foreign Policy-**Cook's push for an "ethical foreign policy," along with supporting identity politics and appeasing anti-India groups, strained relations between India and UK.

What is the current position of the Labour Party regarding India?

- 1) They have taken steps to address anti-India sentiments within the party. However, UK-based Khalistan groups will continue to lobby the new government to push an anti-India agenda
- 2) They have shown the intent to build on foundations laid by Conservatives.
- 3) They support "progressive realism," which focuses on being practical and realistic about how things really are in the world, rather than how they want them to be.

What should be the way forward for India?

1) **Enhancing UK-India Cooperation on Diaspora and Security**- Delhi should keep working to decrease anti-India activities in the UK and collaborate more closely with the British government to handle issues related to the growing South Asian diaspora effectively.

2) **Britain's Strategic Significance for India** -Delhi should not underestimate the relative importance of Britain for India. India's exports to Britain are nearly six times the exports to Russia. Britain is among the front-ranking middle powers. Its financial clout, technological depth, and global reach make Britain a force multiplier for a rising India.

Cooperation between India and France on sustainability

Context: The article discusses the enhanced cooperation between India and France on sustainability. It highlights joint projects like metro systems and wildlife protection, emphasizing the French Development Agency's significant role in India's climate and development initiatives, benefiting both people and the planet.

For detailed information on **India and France relations** [read this article here](#)

What is the Indo-French Horizon 2047 Roadmap?

1. **Partnership for the Planet:** Elevated as one of the three pillars by President Emmanuel Macron and Prime Minister Narendra Modi on July 14, 2023.

2. **Focus Areas:** Climate change, biodiversity, health, and environment.

3. Mutual Goals:

Socioeconomic development and environmental protection.

Bridging North-South divides.

Finding sustainable solutions for green transitions.

4. **Joint Initiatives:** Includes the International Solar Alliance.

5. These projects are supported by the French Development Agency (AFD).

What role does the French Development Agency (AFD) play?

1. **Operational Arm:** AFD operates as the action-driven arm of France's international partnership strategy.

2. **Project Engagement:** Engaged in over 4,200 projects across more than 150 countries.

3. **Financial Commitment:** In the last year, AFD approved more than 1,000 new projects worth €13.5 billion.

4. Focus in India:

a) **Since 2008, AFD has committed over €4 billion to nearly 100 projects.**

b) **Energy and Urban Development:** Includes funding for the Pune and Nagpur metro rails, enhancing urban mobility and reducing emissions.

c) **Biodiversity and Resilience:** Projects like increasing Rajasthan's forest cover to improve wildlife habitats and disaster risk management in Himachal Pradesh.

d) **Climate Initiatives:** In 2023, AFD approved €400 million for projects like urban water management in 20 cities and solid waste management in 18 cities, under India's circular economy program (CITIIS).

e) **Focus on Equality:** 83% of AFD's portfolio supports climate action, with 63% addressing gender equality, demonstrating a commitment to balanced, inclusive development.

How Does the Indo-French Partnership Support the Private Sector?

1. **Proparco's Role:** The private sector arm of AFD supports impactful private projects.
2. **Investment in Agriculture:** Proparco invested €11.2 million in Sahyadri, aiding 15,000 farmers to reduce losses and improve yields.
3. **Healthcare Investment:** In 2023, Proparco approved a €33 million equity investment in Quadria, focusing on affordable healthcare in underserved regions.
4. **Sustainable Projects:** Investments target sustainable and inclusive development, contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
5. **Economic Impact:** These projects highlight the private sector's role in fostering economic growth and social equity through strategic investments.

What are the future directions of this partnership?

1. **Expansion to Indo-Pacific:** The partnership includes an Indo-Pacific dimension, already evident in initiatives like the Indo-Pacific Parks Partnership, which involves multiple partners for biodiversity protection.
2. **Green Technology Fund:** A new joint fund is planned to help scale up green technologies being developed in the region, enhancing sustainability efforts.
3. **Year of Innovation:** The Indo-French Year of Innovation in 2026 is set to highlight innovative solutions that integrate social inclusion and sustainability.
4. **Continuous Collaboration:** The partnership is committed to ongoing projects that support sustainable development and environmental conservation, ensuring long-term benefits for both nations.

Topic- Bilateral, Regional and Global Groupings and Agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

Need to amend the Indus Waters Treat

Context: The article discusses the need to amend the 1960 Indus Waters Treaty between India and Pakistan. It highlights India's call for changes, Pakistan's arbitration efforts, the impact of climate change, the importance of environmental flows, and the necessity for better data-sharing.

For detailed information on **Indus Waters Treaty** read this article [here](#)

Why Is India Seeking Amendments to the Indus Waters Treaty?

1. **Dispute Resolution:** India is dissatisfied with the current dispute resolution process, pointing to Pakistan's reluctance to engage effectively, which has led to unresolved issues.
2. **Climate Change Impact:** The Indus basin, ranked as the world's second most over-stressed aquifer by NASA in 2015, is significantly affected by climate change. About 31% of the river's flow comes from glaciers and snow melts, which are becoming increasingly volatile.

3. **Hydroelectric Projects:** Disputes such as those over the Kishenganga and Ratle hydroelectric projects have intensified, with Pakistan seeking arbitration at The Hague, bypassing treaty-compliant proceedings.

What Issues Has Pakistan Raised?

1. **Dispute over Hydroelectric Projects:** Pakistan objects to India's Kishenganga and Ratle hydroelectric projects and bypassed treaty-compliant Neutral Expert proceedings to seek arbitration at The Hague.
2. **Lower Riparian Concerns:** As a lower riparian state, Pakistan fears infrastructure developments will reduce downstream flows.
3. **Accusations of "Water Terrorism":** Pakistan accused India of "water terrorism" for the Shahpurkandi barrage project, despite the project's compliance with the IWT.
4. **Environmental Flow Issues:** Pakistan insists on maintaining environmental flows, supported by the 2013 Permanent Court of Arbitration ruling on India's obligation to release flows downstream of the Kishenganga project.

What should be done?

1. **Integrate Ecological Perspectives:** Incorporate Environmental Flows (EF) to sustain ecosystems, as suggested by the Brisbane Declaration and the 2013 Permanent Court of Arbitration ruling on Kishenganga.
2. **Enhance Data-Sharing:** Establish a World Bank-supervised, legally binding data-sharing framework to monitor water quality and flow changes, ensuring accountability.
3. **Adopt International Legal Standards:** Align treaty provisions with the 1997 UN Watercourse Convention and the 2004 Berlin Rules on Water Resources for sustainable water use.
4. **Recognize Climate Change Impacts:** Develop strategies to manage climate change effects, considering NASA's ranking of the Indus basin as the world's second most over-stressed aquifer.

GS Paper 3

Subject: Indian Economy

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

Risks according to the 29th RBI Financial Stability Report

Context: The latest 29th RBI Financial Stability Report shows that India's financial system is strong and stable. Non-performing assets are low, but risks like shadow banking and climate change need monitoring. The report highlights global monetary trends, lower demand, and the impact of climate risks on the economy.

What does the RBI's Financial Stability Report reveal about India's financial system?

1. The RBI's Financial Stability Report highlights a strong and stable financial system in India.
2. A key indicator, the gross ratio of non-performing assets, is at a multi-year low of 2.8%, suggesting improved bank health.
3. The report anticipates a continued decrease in non-performing assets, underscoring a positive outlook for the banking sector.

What are the potential risks according to RBI's financial stability report?

- 1.Shadow Banking Sector:** The Financial Stability Report highlights the potential risks from non-banking financial companies (NBFCs). Despite stricter regulations post the IL&FS collapse, the heavy borrowing by NBFCs from banks poses a systemic risk.
- 2.Maturity Transformation:** The activities of NBFCs involve maturity transformation, where they fund long-term loans with short-term borrowings. This can lead to instability if there are sudden shifts in market conditions.
- 3.Climate and Cyber Risks:** Both climate change and cyber threats are identified as significant macro-financial risks in the report. The increasing incidence and potential impact of climate-related events and cyber-attacks require urgent attention and preparation from financial regulators and institutions.
- 4.Consumer Demand and Economic Growth:** Lower consumption and demand are also noted as increasing risks, impacting overall economic growth and potentially leading to broader financial instability. Concerns about stagnant wages and employment contribute to these risks.

Issues in Indian Labor Market

Context- The article discusses India's labor market complexity, noting how labor shortages and high unemployment coexist. It points out that search frictions contribute to this paradox and suggests that digital public infrastructure may help address these challenges.

What are the reasons behind India's labor market complexity?

- 1) Skills Gap-** Employers often find it difficult to hire suitable workers because of the skills gap—many graduates do not possess the specific skills that companies need. For ex- Larsen & Toubro chairman reports a shortage of 45,000 workers and engineers. This contrasts with national concerns about lack of quality jobs for the young population.
- 2) Search Frictions-**It is a situation in markets where buyers and sellers don't automatically find each other. Search involves costs and risks, especially in unorganized labor markets like India's. As per nobel laureate,these inefficiencies lead to both job vacancies and unemployment coexisting in labor markets.
- 3) Low-Wage Worker Behavior-** David Autor's research indicates that low-wage workers frequently accept the first job they find because they lack information or are hesitant to take risks. This results in a reduced ability to negotiate better terms.

Read More- [Labour Reforms](#)

What should be the way forward?

- A) Social Networks in Job Search:** -In informal job markets, social networks (village or caste groups) help reduce search costs. For ex- One person finds urban employment, then brings others from their community.
- 2) Leveraging Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) -**
 - A)** The expansion of digital public infrastructure (DPI) in India lowers transaction costs using platforms such as the United Payments Interface and the Open Network for Digital Commerce.
 - B)** Digital platforms that connect employers and workers, possibly integrated with welfare programs, can raise wages and productivity.

Need for De-dollarization

Context- The article critically examines India's dollar-denominated economic targets and advocates for a shift towards rupee-based goals. China and India are reducing their dependence on dollar reserves: China's US Treasury holdings now comprise less than 25% of its \$3.2 trillion reserves, while India has also increased its gold reserves by purchasing 24 tonnes from January to April 2024, up from 16 tonnes in 2023.

What are the reasons behind wider acceptance of dollars in the global economy?

- 1) **Safe Haven-** The US dollar remains the preferred safe haven currency and is widely used for international transactions.
- 2) **Euro's Role and Limitations -**The euro has not filled this role due to the Eurozone's rapid expansion without sufficient fiscal controls.
- 3) **Aggressive Behavior-**The Chinese yuan faces trust issues because of China's perceived aggressive behavior.
- 4) **Impact of Ukraine War-**Due to the Ukraine war, Europe has become too reliant on the US for security to pursue monetary independence. The dollar dominates because other countries struggle to unite on alternative approaches

What are the reasons behind the rising trend of De-dollarization?

1) Weakening of the US Dollar-

- A) After the 2008 financial crisis, many countries, including the US, printed large amounts of money to stabilize their economies. This continued during the Covid-19 pandemic to support economic recovery and prevent further downturns.
 - B) Following the Ukraine war, the US and its allies-imposed sanctions on Russia, which included freezing or seizing Russian dollar reserves held in international accounts.
- 2) **Lack Gold Backing-:** The USA has delinked the dollar from gold way back in 1971. Any solution that lacks gold backing will not benefit the US dollar in the long run.

3) Future Scenarios-

- A) Potential creation of a gold-backed reserve currency by a group of nations may diminish the dominance of the dollar in the near future.
 - B) In 2021, the US Fed reported that 45% of US cash dollars are held overseas, mostly in \$100 notes, by governments, individuals, and criminal groups. Predicting their future moves, like possibly shifting to cryptocurrency, real estate, or gold, poses significant challenges to the dollar's dominance.
- 4) **Worsening US Economic Situation-** US national debt rose sharply from 7.8% of GDP in 1971 to 120% in 2023. In recent years, the US has been accumulating \$2 trillion in additional debt annually.

Read More- [De-dollarisation of trade: Opportunities and challenges](#)

What should be the way forward for India?

- 1) India should gradually reduce its dependence on the dollar in its economy.
- 2) India should set its national economic goals based on real rupee terms rather than dollar values. This approach aligns with India's capability to manage and control its own macroeconomic policies effectively.

Impacts of Heatwaves on India's Core Industrial Sectors

Context: The article discusses how India's core industrial sectors slowed down in May due to a severe heatwave. Despite this, coal and electricity sectors grew. The article also mentions a rebound in factory activity in June as indicated by the HSBC India Manufacturing PMI.

For detailed information on **Core Industries** [read this article here](#)

How Did the Heatwave Affect India's Core Industrial Sectors?

- 1. Power Demand Increase:** Due to the heat, there was a higher usage of cooling systems, leading to increased demand for electricity. Power generation expanded by 12.8%.
- 2. Coal Production Boost:** Coal production, necessary for power plants, grew by 10.2% to meet the rising electricity demand.
- 3. Decrease in Other Sectors:** Production in sectors like crude oil, fertilizers, and cement declined due to reduced activity. For example, fertilizer production contracted for the fifth consecutive month, highlighting ongoing challenges in agriculture.
- 4. Construction Slowdown:** The extreme heat led to decreased construction activities, which lowered the demand for cement and steel.

What Challenges Does the Manufacturing Sector Face?

- 1. Heatwave Impact:** The severe heatwave in May significantly lowered factory output to a three-month low, illustrating vulnerability to extreme weather conditions.
- 2. Rising Costs:** Increases in staff expenses, material costs, and transportation led to higher manufacturing costs. This has forced companies to raise their selling prices, the largest increase observed in over two years.
- 3. Inflationary Pressures:** The higher costs are contributing to inflation within the sector, complicating pricing strategies and potentially reducing competitiveness.
- 4. Decreased Confidence:** Future output confidence dipped to a three-month low, indicating worries about ongoing economic conditions despite a rebound in June's PMI (India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index), which stood at 58.3, up from 57.5 in May.

Changes Expected from Upcoming Budget

Context- The article highlights the importance of the upcoming Budget to usher in transformative changes focusing on employment and rural distress relief. It should offer sustainable jobs and dignity through employment, rather than mere welfare provisions.

What are the issues plaguing Indian economy?

- 1) Optimal Land Use-**Land in India is currently underutilized, allocated to unproductive farms and sprawling urban areas instead of compact and efficient urban centers.
- 2) Capital Market Development** -India's capital market is not able to develop fully because it has to finance a large fiscal deficit of 8-9% of GDP. This ties up resources that could otherwise fuel private sector growth.
- 3) Faulty Disinvestment Approach-**The current disinvestment system, which involves setting targets, has proven ineffective. Directly transferring state assets to selected corporations, resembling Russian oligarch-style privatization, is not the appropriate approach.

4) **Sustainability Concerns** -Business lobbies are pushing for additional production-linked incentive schemes, seeking more subsidies. However, these schemes are not sustainable for promoting private sector-led growth that generates more jobs.

Read More- [An analysis of PLI \(production-linked incentive\) scheme](#)

What should be the way forward?

1) **Factor-market Reforms**-There is a need to promote factor-market reforms such as land, labor, capital, and digital public infrastructure, especially focusing on enhancing our digital public infrastructure.

2) **Fiscal Consolidation**-The goods and services tax (GST) has finally stabilised and is generating more revenue. Thus, fiscal consolidation should be pursued more aggressively.

3) **Reforms in Disinvestment-**

A) Transparent processes, competitive bidding, and earmarking funds for worker compensation are important for successful strategic disinvestment.

B) Open market sales (share sales) can be structured to broaden ownership and increase public involvement in disinvestment.

C) Providing employees with shares through Employee Stock Option Plans (ESOPs) when companies move to private management helps reduce opposition to sales and enables them to share in the growth after privatization.

4) **Optimizing Government Spending** -Reducing business costs, such as cutting rail freight subsidies, covering more discom losses to lower electricity prices for producers, and bringing petrol and diesel under GST at 28% would better optimize government spending.

5) **Boost to Tourism**-India must develop a five-year plan focusing on women's safety, cleanliness, and transforming "Incredible India" into a "Credible, Safe India" to attract more tourists and boost employment, leveraging diverse attractions like heritage sites, religious destinations, etc.

6) **Strategic Focus on Industrial Growth and Human Development**- India should pursue an industrial policy aimed at enhancing exports and employment, while also prioritizing improvements in education and health.

India's Balance of Payments (BoP)

Context: The article discusses India's Balance of Payments, which records financial transactions with other countries. It notes a recent surplus in the current account for the first time in 11 quarters but explains that a current account deficit isn't necessarily bad for a developing economy like India.

For detailed information on **Balance of payment** [read this article here](#)

What is the Balance of Payments?

1. The Balance of Payments (BoP) is a comprehensive record of a country's financial transactions with the outside world. It details the money that flows into and out of the country, categorized as either positive (inflows) or negative (outflows).

2. The BoP includes two main accounts: the Current Account and the Capital Account.

3. **Current Account:** It includes the trade of goods (which was in deficit due to higher imports than exports) and the trade of services and other invisibles (which recorded a surplus). These invisibles include services like IT, banking, insurance, and remittances from Indians abroad, which helped offset the deficit from the

goods trade.

4. Capital Account: This account captures investment-related transactions such as Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and Foreign Institutional Investments (FII), reflecting a strong inflow of foreign investments.

How Do Foreign Exchange Reserves Fit In?

1. Foreign exchange reserves play a crucial role in India's Balance of Payments (BoP).
2. When there is a surplus in the BoP, indicating more dollars coming into the country than going out, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) intervenes.
3. The RBI absorbs these excess dollars to increase its foreign exchange reserves.
4. This action helps stabilize the rupee's value. If the RBI did not boost the reserves, the rupee would appreciate, making Indian exports more expensive and less competitive internationally.
5. Maintaining these reserves is essential for managing the exchange rate and supporting overall economic stability.

Why Shouldn't We Always Aim for a Surplus?

1. Aiming for a current account surplus is not always beneficial for an economy, especially for developing ones like India.
2. A surplus might indicate underutilized economic capacity, as seen during the COVID-19 lockdowns in FY 2020-21, which halted much economic activity, leading to an undesirable surplus.
3. Typically, a current account deficit of 1.5%-2% of GDP is considered healthy for India. It suggests robust domestic demand and necessary imports of capital goods to expand production capabilities.
4. Such a deficit supports long-term economic growth by facilitating investments in productive assets, which are crucial for boosting export capabilities in the future.

India needs skill development to transformation

Context: The article discusses India's young population, which is both an opportunity and a challenge for its economy. It emphasizes the need for skill development to transform this demographic potential into economic growth. It highlights issues like falling labor participation and gaps in skilled labor across various regions.

For detailed information on **India Employment Report 2024** [read this article here](#)

What are the issues with skill development in India?

- 1. Insufficient Formal Training:** A considerable portion of the workforce aged 15 to 59 lacks formal vocational or technical training, with the proportion having dropped from 91.9% in 2017-18 to 72.6% in 2022-23, indicating a major gap in formal skill development.
- 2. Skill Intensity Disparity:** Rural areas have much lower skill intensity compared to urban areas, which host more skill-intensive industries like IT and financial services. This disparity highlights a need for balanced growth and skill development in rural sectors.
- 3. Reliance on Low-Skilled Labor:** Despite growth in the semi-skilled workforce, there is still a significant reliance on low-skilled labor, evident from the 24.8% increase in low-skilled workers between 2017-18 and 2022-23, driven by industries such as construction and manufacturing.

How is the Government Addressing These Gaps?

- 1. Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY):** This program significantly boosted the semi-skilled workforce with a 59.5% growth rate from 2017-18 to 2022-23. It focuses on providing skill training and certification.
- 2. Skill India Mission:** Aims to expand the workforce's skills, particularly at skill level 2, which has seen substantial growth.
- 3. Skill Census Proposal by Andhra Pradesh:** Led by Chandrababu Naidu, this initiative aims to assess skill levels across regions and sectors to target skill development efforts more accurately, promoting competitive federalism among states.

Way forward -Investing in human capital and using data-driven strategies can turn India's demographic advantage into economic growth. A skilled workforce will drive innovation, productivity, and national competitiveness, helping India become a developed economy by 2047.

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

Challenges of India's Shift to Green Energy

Context: The article discusses the challenges India faces as it moves away from fossil fuels to greener energy sources. It highlights the impact on government revenues from fossil fuels, the need for new revenue sources, and how to manage the economic and employment effects of this transition.

For more information on **Energy Transition** [read this article here](#)

What Are the Challenges of India's Shift to Green Energy?

- 1. Revenue Loss:** Transitioning away from fossil fuels will significantly reduce government revenue, which currently constitutes over 3% of India's GDP.
- 2. State Financial Autonomy:** Different states have varied dependencies on revenue sources. For instance, Odisha earns significantly through coal royalties, whereas Maharashtra relies on tax revenues. The introduction of GST over VAT threatens this autonomy, particularly concerning petroleum products.
- 3. Electric Vehicle Subsidies:** While fossil fuel vehicles generate substantial revenue, electric vehicles (EVs) require hefty subsidies. Balancing these subsidies with the need to maintain government revenue is a complex challenge.
- 4. Employment Impact:** The reduction in coal use will lead to job losses, not just directly in mining but also indirectly through associated services and industries, affecting numerous livelihoods.
- 5. Stranded Assets:** Transitioning from thermal power to renewable energy will lead to stranded assets, where investments in thermal power become redundant, further complicating the financial challenges of the green transition.

How Can India Address These Challenges?

- 1. Rationalizing GST:** Adjusting the Goods and Services Tax (GST) is a potential strategy, but it requires significant negotiations between the central government and the states to find a balance that does not compromise state revenue autonomy.
- 2. Implementing Carbon and Road Use Taxes:** Introducing carbon taxes could accelerate the transition from fossil fuels and alleviate immediate revenue issues. Additionally, road use taxes offer a straightforward

method that might align better with the goal of maintaining state autonomy.

3. Reducing Non-Productive Expenditure: While challenging, cutting down on non-essential government spending could free up funds for more critical areas impacted by the transition.

4. Enhancing PSE Roles in Renewable Energy: Encouraging Public Sector Enterprises (PSEs) that are currently involved in fossil fuels to participate in the renewable energy sector could align their interests with the transition goals, helping to mitigate revenue losses.

Critical Minerals in the 21st Century

Context-The article highlights the geo-economic and geo-strategic significance of Critical Minerals In the 21st century. Critical minerals and rare earths are crucial for industries like electronics, renewable energy, electric vehicles, defense, aerospace, and medical devices. The International Renewable Energy Agency projects that renewables will make up 91% of the energy mix by 2050, driving demand for minerals such as silicon, silver, lithium, neodymium, and dysprosium.

The rising global demand has made minerals critical strategic assets and geopolitical tools. They are mainly found in a few nations, with China being dominant, holding significant reserves of dysprosium (50%), neodymium (50%), and graphite (65%).

What are the geostrategic implications of China's dominance in supply of Critical Minerals?

- 1) Strategic Agreements** -China has bolstered its position through strategic agreements in Africa, Latin America, Central Asia, and Australia, facilitated by initiatives such as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). For ex- BRI investment in mineral exploration and processing across Ghana, Guinea, Niger, Sierra Leone, and Mali secured exclusive access to bauxite and lithium.
- 2) Global Processing Monopoly-** China dominates global mineral processing with substantial shares: 80% for graphite, 100% for dysprosium etc. This industrial advantage, driven by economies of scale, has lowered processing costs and erected barriers to entry. This has reinforced China's grip on mineral supply chains.
- 3) Weaponization of Critical Minerals-** China's monopoly on critical minerals has raised concerns about their use as geopolitical tools. For example, in 2010, China restricted rare earth exports to Japan during a territorial dispute. In 2023, following US semiconductor technology restrictions, China imposed controls on germanium and gallium exports

What is the significance of Critical Minerals for India?

- 1) Net-zero Emissions-** India's ambitions for net-zero emissions by 2070 and its expansion in semiconductor, defense, nuclear, and space industries highlight the importance of minerals like lithium, nickel, copper etc.
- 2) Supply Chain Resilience-** India relies heavily on imports for these minerals, highlighting the need for secure supply chains due to potential geopolitical pressures and vulnerabilities in critical sectors. For ex- 100% import dependence for cobalt, nickel, and lithium etc.
- 3) Global Lithium Refining Leadership** -India, like in oil refining, has the potential to lead globally in lithium refining and resolve global challenges in critical minerals.

Read more- [Lithium Reserves in India – Challenges and Way forward](#)

What are the challenges in exploration of Critical Minerals?

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- 1) **Raw Material Export**-India has 210 million tonnes of graphite and 665 million tonnes of ilmenite and rutile reserves. However, their production is minimal, with most exported as raw material.
- 2) **Focus on Bulk Materials**-Many critical minerals remain undiscovered because of the focus on bulk minerals, neglecting deeper-seated critical minerals.
- 3) **Lack of Investment** -Exploration was limited to government entities, which hindered investment and the adoption of advanced prospecting technologies.
- 4) **Lack of Mineral Processing Capabilities** -India does not have a robust mineral processing capabilities to meet its specific end-use requirements and handle low-concentration ores. Current capacities fall below international productivity norms and are inadequate.

What are some recent initiatives undertaken by the government to enhance production of Critical Minerals?

- 1) The government has identified 30 critical minerals and taken over their prospecting to streamline state efforts.
- 2) The Geological Survey of India has initiated over 250 projects to explore deep-seated critical minerals.
- 3) Amendments to the Mines and Minerals Act in 2023 and the Offshore Areas Minerals Act now permits private sector entry through auctions. In 2019, India allowed 100% foreign direct investment.
- 4) Certain minerals previously classified as atomic have been reclassified, facilitating private-sector mining.
- 5) Offshore blocks are scheduled for auction, creating new opportunities.
- 6) India has launched startup challenges to develop advanced processing technologies. There are initiatives to stockpile key minerals for sectors like renewable energy, automotive, space, defence, and semiconductors.
- 7) India is collaborating with other countries; Khanij Bidesh India is assisting Argentina in lithium exploration and discussing lithium and cobalt blocks in Australia.
- 8) India joined the Mineral Security Partnership, a US initiative involving 13 countries and the EU.

What should be the way forward?

- 1) **Investment in Beneficiation and Processing Facilities** -India should invest in beneficiation and processing facilities in Africa to promote local economies and sustainable relationships.
- 2) **Public-Private Partnership**-The government should involve both the private sector and public-sector undertakings to accelerate international initiatives.
- 3) **Enhance Mineral Processing Capabilities** -India needs to enhance its mineral processing capabilities to meet specific end-use requirements and handle low-concentration ores, as current capacities are insufficient and below international norms.
- 4) **Path to Global Leadership**- India can emulate Indonesia's success in nickel to become a global leader in critical minerals, utilizing access to both domestic and international raw materials.
- 5) **Aligning Mineral Incentives**-The production-linked incentive scheme for minerals should align with global aspirations, creating employment opportunities.
- 6) **Addressing the Gap**- Policy initiatives have been implemented, but there is an urgent need for investments and technological advancement

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.

India's Skimmed Milk Powder Surplus

Context- Indian dairy farmers are grappling with challenges in disposing of unproductive cattle due to stringent anti-slaughter laws enacted by several states. Adding to the woes, a new challenge has emerged with an excess of skimmed milk powder (SMP) in the market.

What is Skimmed Milk Powder?

Description-It is a dairy product derived from cow or buffalo milk. It is produced by evaporating most of the water content from milk to remove fat and water-soluble protein.

Usage-Indian dairies produce approximately 5.5-6 lakh tonnes (lt) of SMP annually. About 4 lt is typically used during lean seasons for recombination, while 1.5-2 lt is consumed in various food and industrial products like ice cream, biscuits, and baby formula.

What are the reasons behind surplus production of Skimmed Milk Powder?

- 1) **Milk Acquisition-** Dairies encounter a surplus issue when they acquire more milk than usual. This leads to excess production of SMP and butter/ghee.
- 2) **Supply Dynamics-**In 2023-24, there was ample milk supply all year as compared to last year. Dairies in Maharashtra achieved record prices for cow butter and SMP which encouraged increased milk production through better feeding and adding new animals.
- 3) **Surplus Accumulation:** Due to continuous milk availability, dairies required only about 2.5 lakh tonnes of SMP for reconstitution from April to June, the peak lean months. As a result, dairies began the new season with an increased stock of SMP, approximately 3-3.25 lakh tonnes.

Read More- [Challenges Facing Dairy Sector in India](#)

What is the implication of this surplus production?

- 1) **Drop in Prices-:** Cow skimmed milk powder (SMP) prices have dropped to Rs 200-210 per kg. Yellow butter is priced at Rs 335-340 per kg, which equates to ghee being sold at Rs 408-415 per kg because of its higher fat content.
- 2) **Revenue Calculation:** Dairies are struggling to cover costs, with revenues from processing cow milk into SMP and fat/ghee hovering around Rs 3,224-3,333 per 100 litres, leaving little margin after deducting expenses.

What should be the way forward?

- 1) Export Subsidy-** The Centre should give a subsidy on SMP exports, which will boost domestic prices and enable dairies to pay more to farmers.
- 2) Buffer Stock Proposal-** There is a need to create a 50,000-100,000 ton buffer stock of SMP. This initiative will stabilize SMP prices, support dairy farmers, and prevent future milk inflation.
- 3) Market Development-** The dairy industry must focus on developing markets for SMP components like proteins (casein and whey), carbohydrate (lactose), and minerals (calcium, potassium, phosphorus). This is important due to increasing demand for milk fat in India and challenges associated with surplus SMP from cow milk production.

Idea of creating a government-controlled buffer stock of essential food

Context: The article discusses the idea of creating a government-controlled buffer stock of essential food items like pulses, oilseeds, and vegetables. This would help stabilize food prices by reducing extreme fluctuations caused by supply shocks from events like climate change or pandemics.

For detailed information on **Benefits of government buffer stocks in stabilizing food prices** [read this article here](#)

Why Should the Government Consider a Buffer Stock for Food?

- 1. Stabilize Prices:** Buffer stocks of essential foods like pulses, oilseeds, and vegetables help control price volatility, crucial for both consumers and producers. This stability aids in economic planning and reduces the impact of inflation spikes.
- 2. Manage Supply Shocks:** Climate-induced disruptions, such as irregular rainfall and heatwaves, have adversely affected crop yields. For example, poor harvests of rabi pulses and vegetables have led to price spikes.
- 3. Support Farmers:** Creating buffer stocks allows for the purchase of surplus during good harvests, protecting farmers from drastic price drops. For instance, fluctuations in milk prices from Rs 37-38 to Rs 26-27 per liter have shown how volatile the market can be without such mechanisms.
- 4. Reduce Policy Burden:** With buffer stocks, there is less need for restrictive measures like export bans or trader stock limits, promoting a freer market environment conducive to growth.

How Do Food Prices Affect Inflation and RBI's Decisions?

- 1. Impact on Inflation Rates:** Elevated food prices directly affect overall inflation. For instance, despite core inflation being low at 3.1%, retail food inflation remained high at 8.7%.
- 2. RBI's Monetary Policy Dilemma:** High food inflation complicates the Reserve Bank of India's decisions regarding interest rates. The volatility in food prices makes it challenging to decide whether to cut, raise, or maintain rates.
- 3. Influence on Economic Stability:** Stable food prices are essential for economic predictability, influencing consumer spending and business investments. Volatility in essential items like food disrupts this stability.

What are the Benefits of a Buffer Stock Policy?

- 1. Reduces Price Volatility:** Buffer stocks help stabilize prices of essential food items, mitigating extreme fluctuations caused by supply shocks due to climate change or other disruptions.
- 2. Eliminates Restrictive Measures:** Buffer stocks reduce the need for anti-farmer policies like export bans

or imposing stock limits on traders, promoting a freer market.

3. Economic Efficiency: Selling stored food during shortages prevents inflation spikes and supports economic stability.

Subject: Science & Technology

Topic- Achievements of Indians in Science & Technology; Indigenization of Technology and Developing New Technology.

IEEE 2061-2024 Standard

Context: The article discusses how mobile devices rely on cellular networks for connectivity. It explains the differences between access networks and core networks. It highlights challenges in rural connectivity and introduces the IEEE 2061-2024 standard for affordable rural broadband access.

What is the current status of cellular networks in India?

- 1. Urban vs Rural Tele-Density:** Urban areas in India show a tele-density of 127%, meaning most urban residents have more than one mobile connection. In contrast, rural tele-density stands at only 58%, indicating less than one connection per two people in rural areas.
- 2. Challenges in Rural Connectivity:** Rural regions face significant challenges due to lower income levels, sparse populations, and geographical remoteness, making network infrastructure costly and complex to deploy.

What Are Access and Core Networks?

- 1. Access Network (AN):** The AN includes base stations that provide wireless connectivity to mobile devices within a limited geographical area. These are commonly seen as towers with antennas.
- 2. Coverage:** Network operators install base stations across regions to ensure coverage. Each base station serves a specific area.
- 3. Core Network (CN):** The CN connects these base stations to other networks, such as the Internet. It operates centrally and is linked to base stations via optical fiber links called backhaul.
- 4. Data Flow:** Data from a user's device passes through both the AN and CN to reach its destination. Even nearby users must route data through the CN.
- 5. Mobility Support:** The CN is crucial for supporting user mobility, ensuring seamless connectivity as users move.

What Is the IEEE 2061-2024 Standard?

- 1. Definition:** The IEEE 2061-2024 standard, developed by IIT Bombay, focuses on providing affordable broadband access in rural areas.
- 2. How It Works:** It uses a heterogeneous network structure combining large coverage area base stations (macro-BS) with smaller area Wi-Fi networks. This allows for broad yet high-speed connectivity.
- 3. Integrated AN Control:** This feature enables seamless switching for devices between different network types (Wi-Fi to macro-BS), preventing service disruptions.

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4. Advantages:

- a) Cost-Effective:** Employs a multi-hop wireless middle-mile network, reducing the need for expensive fiber installations. The middle-mile network serves as a connection between the access network (local connections to users) and the core network (centralized connections to the internet).
- b) Flexibility:** Supports various technologies, like satellites and long-range Wi-Fi.
- c) Direct Connectivity:** Allows direct internet access from the AN, bypassing the central CN for local connections, which enhances network efficiency in rural settings.
- d) Potential Impact:** If widely adopted, this standard could significantly improve internet access in underserved rural areas, bridging the digital divide.

Issues with Anusandhan National Research Foundation

Context- The establishment of the Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF) presents an opportunity to revolutionize India's research landscape. However, its success depends on addressing the current challenges in governance structure, funding mechanisms, and bureaucratic processes. In 2023, both Houses of Parliament passed the ANRF Bill, a major achievement for India's research sector. The scientific community welcomed it, anticipating reduced bureaucracy in academia and more research funding.

What are the objectives of ANRF?

- 1) Seeding, growing, and facilitating research in India, especially in universities and colleges.
- 2) Prioritizing the development of outstanding research cells in State Universities, as explicitly mentioned in the 2019 National Research Foundation (NRF) project report.

What are the issues with governance of Anusandhan National Research Foundation?

- 1) **Composition of Governing Bodies** -The governing structure includes a 15-member board and a 16-member council. This is dominated by senior government officials and established research institutions.
- 2) **Lack of Diverse Representation:**
 - A) No members from Central or State universities or colleges, despite over 95% of Indian students attending these institutions
 - B) Inadequate industry representation, with only one member (an Indian American businessman from Silicon Valley)
 - C) Limited gender diversity, with only one-woman representative (the Secretary of DSIR)

What should be the way forward?

- 1) **Diverse Representation**-The board and council should include representatives who understand the challenges faced at the university level. It should be made more diverse by adding more Indian industry leaders, entrepreneurs, and academics from both Central and State universities.
- 2) **Single Committee**-A single committee for strategy formulation and implementation should be created.
- 3) **Funding and Research Development**- India's underfunded research and development sector aims to generate over 70% of its funding from non-government and industry sources through ANRF. R&D budget should be enhanced to 4% of GDP to boost research output and global competitiveness.

Read more- [India's R&D Funding Status](#)

3) Reforms in Operational Requirements for ANRF-

- A) Adequate staffing
 - B) Implementation of a robust grant management system
 - C) Establishment of an internal standard peer-review system with reviewer incentives
 - D) Timely disbursement of research grants and student fellowships (less than six months turnaround)
 - E) Reduction of bureaucratic hurdles at funding and grantee institutions
 - F) Flexible spending without strict adherence to government's general financial rules (GFR)
 - G) Permission for purchases outside the Government e-marketplace (GeM) portal.
 - H) ANRF needs a total overhaul to avoid becoming another typical government department and to better connect research with teaching in universities.
- 4) **Future CEO**-The future CEO of the ANRF should possess experience in both industry and academia. He should be able to secure funding for the ANRF and understand the global innovation ecosystem.

Subject: Environment

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

How India's new government should scale up climate action

Context: The article discusses how India's new government should scale up climate action, affecting all sectors. It highlights India's progress in climate leadership and outlines a plan for the next five years to enhance global leadership, sectoral emission reduction, and state-level climate action.

For detailed information on **Climate Change** [read this article here](#)

How is India shaping narratives and institutions for global climate action?

- 1. Establishing Global Institutions:** India founded the International Solar Alliance, the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure, and the Global Biofuels Alliance, influencing global cooperation on renewable energy and infrastructure resilience.
- 2. Setting Ambitious Goals:** India announced a net-zero target by 2070, signaling a commitment to significant emission reductions rather than just reducing emission intensity.
- 3. Leading by Example:** During its G-20 presidency, India spearheaded the Green Development Pact, promoting sustainable economic pathways globally.
- 4. Innovative Policies:** India has initiated a domestic emissions carbon trading scheme, anticipated to function for 30-40 years, illustrating a long-term strategy for reducing greenhouse gases through market mechanisms.

What should be India's plan to demonstrate that economic development can be sustainable?

- 1. Host Major Climate Summits:** India should aim to host significant international climate events, like the United Nations Conference of Parties in 2028. This would build on its successful G-20 presidency and position India as a climate leader.
- 2. Set Sectoral Emission Targets:** Beyond the power sector, India should establish clear emission reduction goals for other sectors. For example, it should target zero-carbon two- and four-wheelers, promoting clean

energy jobs and rural mobility.

3. Promote State-Level Climate Action: India should support states in developing their net-zero plans. Collaboration with bodies like the Council on Energy, Environment, and Water (CEEW) is crucial, as seen with Tamil Nadu and Bihar's plans.

4. Enhance Centre-State Coordination: Creating a Centre-State coordination group and incentivizing state-level actions through the Sixteenth Finance Commission can ensure better alignment without compromising state autonomy.

5. Strengthen Scientific Integration: India should integrate scientific modeling in policymaking and establish a unified data measurement, reporting, and verification system at the state level. This would improve the effectiveness of climate actions.

Subject: Internal Security

Topic- Security Challenges and their Management in Border Areas

Changes in India's National Security Council

Context: The article discusses recent changes in India's National Security Council, including the addition of a new Additional National Security Advisor (ANSA) and changes in how top security officials report to each other and the Prime Minister. It questions the roles and responsibilities of these positions and the impact of these changes.

For detailed information on **National Security Strategy of India** [read this article here](#)

What Changes Have Been Made to India's National Security Council?

- 1. New Appointments and Structure:** The National Security Council now includes an Additional National Security Advisor (ANSA) along with three deputy NSAs, expanding the leadership structure.
- 2. Change in NSA's Role:** The role of the National Security Advisor (NSA) has shifted to be more advisory rather than operational. The NSA now focuses on working with advisory bodies like the National Security Advisory Board and the Strategic Policy Group.
- 3. Reporting Relationships Altered:** The NSA, Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), and other key military and civil leaders are required to report both to the NSA and their respective ministers, complicating the chain of command and potentially leading to bureaucratic delays.
- 4. Introduction of Additional Bureaucratic Layer:** The ANSA now acts as a gatekeeper in communications between six mid-level unit heads (three deputy NSAs and three service officers) and the NSA, adding a new layer of bureaucracy.

What Are the Broader Implications?

- 1. Uncertainty in Role Definitions:** The lack of clear definitions for the roles and responsibilities of the NSA and other security officials could lead to inefficiencies in managing national security.
- 2. Potential for Turf Wars:** The restructuring might cause conflicts between different government departments, as seen in potential meetings convened by the NSA with the Cabinet Secretary and other top bureaucrats, potentially upsetting established hierarchies.
- 3. Speculation on Leadership Succession:** The restructuring has prompted speculation about the future of

the current NSA, Ajit Doval, and whether the new ANSA, Rajinder Khanna, will replace him. This uncertainty could impact strategic continuity and stability.

4. Influence on Security Briefings: With the new bureaucratic layer introduced by the ANSA acting as a gatekeeper in communication, there's uncertainty about whether the NSA or ANSA will handle the PM's daily security briefings, which affects the direct flow of information to the Prime Minister.

5. Hierarchical Discrepancies: Elevating the NSA to a cabinet rank while assigning the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) the rank of a secretary reduces the CDS's influence in key security discussions, especially since the CDS is not a permanent member of the cabinet committee on security.

6. Impact on Defence Strategy: By not having the CDS report directly to the Prime Minister, there may be delays and inefficiencies in addressing urgent defense modernization needs and strategic planning in response to regional security challenges.

Implication of Chinese stealth fighters for India

Context- A recent satellite image showed China's J20 Mighty Dragon stealth fighters and J10 Vigorous Dragon fighters at Tibet's Shigatse air base. This has led to discussions and comparisons with India's 4.5 generation Rafale fighters.

The IAF's core fleet of fourth-generation fighters like Su30s, MiG29s, and Mirage 2000s, plus two squadrons of 4.5 generation Rafale fighters, gives it an advantage that China is striving to neutralize. The article stresses the importance of India maintaining its air power advantage to strengthen its military capability and deterrence.

What are the challenges with India's air defense capabilities?

- 1) **Slow Response-**The IAF's combat air power is declining, but the government's response to address this critical issue has been slow.
- 2) **Insufficient Air Power** -India has a large hostile borders and extensive sovereign airspace. Hence, two squadrons of 4.5 generation Rafales are inadequate to meet both current and future security requirements.
- 3) **AMCA vs China's Sixth-Gen Fighters** -India's delayed fifth-generation fighter, the Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA), won't be operational for another decade. By this time, China would have developed its sixth-generation fighters.
- 4) **Obsolescence Risk** -Upgraded MiG29, Mirage 2000, and Jaguar fleets will become obsolete before the AMCA is ready. This will further deplete India's high-end platform inventory.
- 5) **Delayed Induction of Tejas and AMCA** -By the time Tejas Mk 1A, Mk 2, and AMCA are fully operational, China could irreversibly alter the air power and military balance in the region in its favor.

Read More- [Indigenisation of Defence Sector](#)

What are its Strategic Implications for India?

- 1) **China's Growing Airborne Capabilities-** The deployment includes various types of aircraft and a KJ 500 early warning aircraft. This demonstrates China's growing ability to carry out extensive and intricate missions across significant distances.
- 3) **Buffer Zones-**Creation of buffer zones in disputed areas could set a precedent for aerial buffer zones. This could strategically restrict Indian Air Force (IAF) presence and operations in the region.
- 4) **No Fly Zone-**Forward airstrips and sovereign air spaces over disputed areas may become "no-fly zones" for Indian aircraft. This can impact intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance, and logistics operations.

What should be the way forward?

1) There is an urgent need to fulfill the Multi-Role Fighter Aircraft (MRFA) requirement to strengthen the inventory of 4.5-generation fighters.

2) India should consider bilateral partnership with France for additional jointly produced Rafales in India. This will ensure-

A) It ensures steady and stable induction from a reliable partner.

B) The partnership ensures greater platform commonality and future upgrades for platforms and weapons.

C) It includes technology transfer access for future 4.5 generation-plus variants and engine development for the Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA).

D) This partnership helps balance the inventory and reduces dependence on Russia.

E) It prevents reliance on a volatile US military industry and promotes indigenous defense production.

Key areas for enhancing India's internal security

Context: The article discusses the need for a comprehensive plan to enhance India's internal security over the next five years. It highlights nine key areas requiring attention, including national security doctrine, internal security ministry, and issues in regions like Jammu and Kashmir and the Northeast, among others.

For detailed information on **Need for a National Security Doctrine for India** [read this article here](#)

What are the key areas for enhancing India's internal security?

To enhance India's internal security, the following key areas need attention:

1. **National Security Doctrine (NSD):** Establishing an NSD to systematically define and address security challenges is crucial. Previous attempts to finalize drafts have not been successful.

2. **Internal Security Ministry:** A separate ministry for internal security is proposed to handle urgent matters efficiently, improving response times and focus.

3. **Jammu and Kashmir:** Despite a 66% reduction in terror incidents since the abrogation of Article 370, security challenges persist. Steps to reorganize the security setup and restore statehood are needed.

4. **Northeast Region:** Issues like ethnic conflicts and demands for separate flags and constitutions by rebel groups continue. The government should enforce agreements and manage conflicts effectively.

5. **Naxalite Problem:** There has been a 73% decline in violence from a peak in 2010. Initiating peace talks and addressing grievances could further reduce conflict.

6. **Intelligence Bureau and CBI:** The Intelligence Bureau and the CBI need restructuring to ensure they function without bias and with adequate legal and infrastructural support. There is a need to give the IB a statutory basis and to strengthen the CBI's legal mandate and resources.

7. **State Police:** Transform the state police from a "Ruler's Police" to a "People's Police," emphasizing community engagement and modern policing standards, similar to the reforms introduced by Robert Peel in Britain. It is essential for gaining public trust and effectiveness.

8. **Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs):** The CAPFs face issues such as unplanned expansion and inadequate training. A high-powered commission is needed to address these long-term problems and improve the functioning of these forces.

9. **Technology in Policing:** Implementing advanced technological solutions can enhance policing capabilities and address new challenges effectively.

Way forward -A nation's global strength is directly linked to its internal unity and its capacity to resolve internal conflicts, thereby preventing any breeding ground for terrorism or extremism. The country's internal security situation would significantly improve if proactive and visionary measures are implemented as outlined above.

India's Response to the Kargil War

Context: The article discusses the Kargil War between India and Pakistan in 1999. It examines the tactical, strategic, and diplomatic aspects of the conflict, highlighting India's military and diplomatic responses, Pakistan's initial tactics, and the international reactions. The piece also reviews the post-war improvements in India's defense management highlighted by the Kargil Review Committee.

For detailed information on **National Security Strategy of India** [read this article here](#)

What Was the Kargil Conflict?

1. The Kargil War occurred between India and Pakistan in 1999, specifically from May to July, spanning 74 days.
2. It was fought in the Kargil sector of the Line of Control (LoC), the established border area in Kashmir.
3. This conflict resulted in significant casualties, with over 500 soldiers killed from each side.
4. The war was marked by Pakistan's attempt to cut off Indian military supply lines by seizing control of strategic points along the Srinagar-Kargil-Leh road. This was intended to demonstrate Pakistan's nuclear deterrent capability and force India to accept a new status quo without escalating to full-scale war.
5. The conflict underscored the volatile geopolitical tensions and the nuclear capabilities of both nations.

How Did India Respond?

1. India first proved Pakistan's violation of the 1972 Shimla Agreement using intercepted calls between Pakistani generals.
2. India used a "graduated response" strategy, starting with artillery bombardment to weaken enemy positions.
3. The Indian Air Force bombed forward Pakistani positions and the logistic node of Muntho Dalo, cutting off supplies. Attack helicopters and glide bombs were used to support ground troops.
4. India's military showcased effective tri-service operations without a formal tri-service doctrine.

What Was the International Reaction?

U.S. President Bill Clinton pressured Pakistan's Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. Clinton urged Sharif to withdraw troops north of the LoC. By the end of July 1999, the previous status was restored.

What Were the Post-War Changes in India?

Establishment of the Kargil Review Committee (KRC): India established the KRC to analyze its defense needs and shortcomings, marking the first serious assessment since independence.

Findings and Improvements: The KRC identified significant gaps in India's security management, originally designed by Lord Ismay and recommended by Lord Mountbatten.

Creation of 14 Corps: Based on the KRC's recommendations, India formed the 14 Corps specifically to manage the defense of Ladakh, separating it from the responsibilities of 15 Corps, which previously handled

both Kashmir and Ladakh. This change aimed to enhance command efficiency in these strategic regions.

Subject: Disaster Management

Topic- Disaster and disaster management

Issues with Government Response to Forest fire

Context: The article discusses the devastating forest fires in Uttarakhand's Binsar forest. It highlights the problems caused by uncoordinated government efforts, inadequate resources, and poor infrastructure. It also suggests that involving and incentivizing local villagers could improve forest fire management.

For detailed information on **Forest fire in India** read [Article1](#), [Article2](#)

Why Are Forest Fires Increasing?

- 1. Increase in Frequency and Severity:** In the first half of this year, Uttarakhand reported 1,309 forest fires, a significant increase from 241 in the same period last year.
- 2. Climatic Factors:** The temperature exceeded 30 degrees Celsius for the first time in the Binsar Forest region of Uttarakhand. This increase in temperature intensified the risk of forest fires, as chir pine leaves, which are highly flammable, contribute significantly to the spread of fires.
- 3. Human Factors:** Carelessness with cigarette butts and mismanaged controlled burns exacerbate the situation. Additionally, there are reports of deliberate arson by villagers frustrated with restricted economic opportunities due to sanctuary policies.

What Are the Issues with Government Response to Forest fire?

- 1. Lack of Coordination:** Different government agencies struggled to work together effectively.
- 2. Inadequate Resources:** Firefighters lacked proper equipment, like fire-resistant clothing and oxygen masks. Most were untrained volunteers.
- 3. Poor Infrastructure:** Bad roads prevented fire engines and ambulances from reaching the fire.
- 4. Local Involvement:** Villagers, who used to help fight fires, are now less motivated due to lack of incentives.

How Can Future Fires Be Managed Better?

- 1. Improved Coordination:** Better leadership is needed to manage different agencies.
- 2. Better Resources:** The government should provide modern equipment and training for firefighters.
- 3. Infrastructure Improvement:** Roads should be maintained to allow access during emergencies.
- 4. Involving Villagers:** Incentives for villagers to help fight fires should be reintroduced, using their local expertise.

Issues with safety inspections in industrial areas in India

Context: The article highlights Maharashtra's ineffective safety inspections in industrial areas, leading to repeated accidents, including notable incidents in 2016, 2018, 2020, and 2023. It advocates for reforms aligned

with international safety standards. A significant explosion in Dombivli in May 2024 caused multiple fatalities and injuries, underscoring the urgency for change.

What are the issues with safety inspections in industrial areas in India?

- 1. Low Inspection Rates:** Across India, only 14.65% of registered factories and 26.02% of hazardous factories were inspected in 2021. This low nationwide rate reflects systemic issues in industrial safety oversight. This issue is widespread, with Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, and Gujarat showing even lower rates than the all-India average.
- 2. Inspector Shortages:** The shortage of inspectors exacerbates the problem. For instance, Maharashtra had only 48 out of 122 sanctioned inspectors appointed in 2021, resulting in each inspector being responsible for inspecting 818 factories annually.
- 3. Corruption and Bribery:** There are reports of informal agreements between inspectors and factory owners, leading to compromised safety inspections. The president of the Maharashtra Industry Development Association admitted that inspections were often done on an "understanding" basis.
- 4. Ineffective Enforcement:** The prosecution rates are low, with Maharashtra at about 14% in 2021, reducing the deterrent effect of inspections. This contributes to repeated safety violations and accidents.

What should be done?

- 1. Implement ILO Standards:** Follow International Labour Organization standards for inspections, including unannounced visits and sufficient staffing. This will enhance safety compliance.
- 2. Penalize Non-Compliance:** Impose penalties on both companies and state officials for safety lapses. This will ensure accountability and prevent negligence.
- 3. Tackle Corruption:** Address corruption by ensuring inspections are genuine and free from bribery. Reports of "understanding" between inspectors and factory owners must be eliminated for effective safety measures.

Why is Assam Prone to Flooding

Context: The article discusses how Assam, despite repeated floods and significant damage, has failed to effectively manage its flood situation. It highlights the geographical challenges, outdated flood control methods, and lack of modern infrastructure to predict and mitigate flooding. The text criticizes both state and central governments for inadequate response and planning.

For detailed information on **Floods in India** [read this article here](#)

Why is Assam Prone to Flooding?

1. Assam has over 120 rivers, many originating from extreme rainfall areas in Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, China, and Bhutan.
2. The Brahmaputra River, one of the largest in the world, flows through Assam, contributing significantly to flooding.
3. The state's geography includes bowl-shaped lowlands like Guwahati, which are prone to waterlogging.
4. Historical flood control structures, built in the 1960s and 1970s, are outdated and not effective in current conditions.
5. Embankments and other flood control measures have not been adequately maintained or updated.

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6. The lack of modern weather stations and flood warning systems hampers effective disaster management.
7. Continuous construction projects have damaged natural water channels and marshes, worsening flood risks.

What should be done?

1. Implement the proposed flood mitigation projects announced by Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, which aim to secure the region from floods.
2. Modernize the flood warning systems by installing advanced weather stations and sirens, as suggested by a parliamentary panel in 2021.
3. Integrate indigenous knowledge to construct flood-resistant housing and infrastructure.
4. Conduct regular dredging of rivers to manage sediment and improve flow.
5. Arrest soil erosion along riverbanks to stabilize landscapes and reduce sediment load in rivers.
6. Enhance collaboration between state and central governments to ensure resources and efforts are adequately directed toward sustainable flood management solutions.