9 PM Current Affairs Weekly Compilation

For UPSC CSE mains examination

4th Week
June. 2024

UPSC

सत्यमेव जयते

Features :

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

INDEX

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

ForumIAS

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

Forum IAS

GS Paper-1

Subject: Geography

Topic- Salient features of Physical Geography.

Preserving India's Geological Heritage

Context-India's landscapes span from the highest peaks to coastal plains, showcasing a diverse morphology shaped over billions of years. Various locations feature a range of rocks, minerals, and unique fossil collections, revealing scientific "origin" stories derived from geological interpretations rather than mythology. The article highlights that unlike the well-established protections for archaeological, historical monuments, and cultural heritage sites, India lacks specific laws or policies dedicated to conserving and preserving geo heritage sites and geo-relics for future generations.
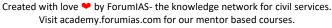
What is the significance of preserving Geo-heritage Sites?

1) Geo-heritage sites serve as educational spaces for geological literacy.
2) They help preserve representative examples of India's geological features and events.

3) These sites allow present and future generations to appreciate natural geological laboratories

4) They provide insights into the evolution of Indian terrain.

Read more- Biodiversity Heritage Sites in India

What are the difficulties in preserving geological sites in India?

1) **Limited Traction and Awareness**-Geo-conservation in India lags global efforts. Further, there is a widespread lack of awareness concerning important geological sites. For ex- the Dhala meteoritic impact crater in Shivpuri, Madhya Pradesh, believed to have formed between 1.5 to 2.5 billion years ago, and the Lonar crater in Maharashtra, recently re-dated to approximately 576,000 years old, highlight geological history that remains relatively unknown.
2) **Impact of Development and Mining** -Many fossil-bearing sites have been destroyed due to development and real estate growth. This is further compounded by extensive stone mining activities in India.
3) **Lack of Specific Legislation**- Countries such as Canada and China have designated national parks for their geo-heritage sites, guided by UNESCO's recommendations, and have enacted laws to protect and designate these areas. Despite being a signatory, India lacks specific legislation or policies for conserving its geo-heritage.

4) **Lack of Adequate Power**-The Geological Survey of India (GSI) has identified 34 geological sites but lacks the authority to enforce preservation measures. For ex-in Varkala, Thiruvananthapuram district, Kerala, overlooking the Arabian Sea, composed of ancient rocks identified by GSI as a geological heritage site was partially demolished by the district administration due to landslide risks.

5) **Half-hearted Measures by the Government**- The government withdrew the attempt to establish a National Commission for Heritage Sites, originally introduced in the Rajya Sabha, for unspecified reasons. Similarly, in 2022, the Ministry of Mines drafted a bill aimed at preserving and maintaining geo-heritage sites and geo-relics, but no further steps have been taken since then.

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

What should be the way forward?

1) India's turbulent geological history is documented in its rocks and landscapes and should be regarded as part of our non-cultural heritage.
2) There should be compilation of list of all potential geo-sites across India, beyond the 34 already identified by the Geological Survey of India (GSI).

3) There is a need to develop legislation for geo-conservation modeled after the Biological Diversity Act of 2002.

4)The government should create a 'National Geo-Conservation Authority' similar to the National Biodiversity Authority, ensuring independent oversight to avoid bureaucratic delays and safeguard the autonomy of researchers and private collectors engaged in academic endeavors

Subject: Indian Society

Topic- Population and Associated Issues, Poverty and Developmental issues, Urbanization, their problems and their remedies.

Issue of Postponement of the Census

Context- The last census conducted in India was in 2011, and since 2021, the decennial counting measure has been indefinitely postponed. India is among a minority of countries, specifically 44 out of 233 nations, that have not conducted their latest census. The government has cited the COVID-19 pandemic as the reason for postponing Census 2021.
However,143 countries managed to conduct their census rounds after March 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic. India is the only BRICS nation that has not conducted its census during or after the pandemic. Brazil, China, South Africa, and Russia have successfully conducted their census rounds despite the challenges of COVID-19. Where, only conflict-affected nations such as Ukraine, Yemen, Syria, Myanmar, and economically distressed countries like Afghanistan and Sri Lanka, along with several sub-Saharan African nations, have not conducted the Census.

What is the significance of Census data?

1) It plays an important role in identifying beneficiaries for various welfare schemes that range from specific initiatives like building schools for tribal children to large-scale programs like the Public Distribution System (PDS).

2) According to a 2011 publication from the Office of Registrar General and Census Commissioner, census provides primary data at the village, town, and ward levels which is important for implementing various welfare schemes effectively.

A detailed article on **Population Census: Significance and Challenges** can be read here.

What are the important surveys that need census data to determine their samples?
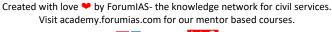
Created with love ❤ by ForumIAS- the knowledge network for civil services.
Visit academy.forumias.com for our mentor based courses.

ForumIAS

Table 2: Surveys that need census data to determine their samples and some schemes that require updated population figures

Name	Use of census
Consumption survey	The sampling frame for rural sector is the list of villages as per Census 2011
National Family Health Survey	The 2011 census served as the sampling frame for the selection of villages in rural areas
PLFS	List of 2011 population census villages constituted the rural sampling frame
Sample Registration System	The statistical report uses sample from Census 2011 frame
Household social consumption on education	The total number of sample first stage units (census villages in the rural sector and blocks in the urban sector) were allocated to the States and UTs in proportion to population as per Census 2011
Key Indicators of Social Consumption in India: Health	For the rural areas, the list of 2011 Census villages constituted the sampling frame
National Food Security Act	The Act covers nearly 2/3rd of the country's total population on the basis of estimates done using Census 2011 figures. 75% of rural and 50% of urban population is entitled to receive highly subsidised foodgrains
National Social Assistance Programme	Central assistance to States and UTs under NSAP is determined on the basis of BPL population of the respective States/UTs. Estimated number of beneficiaries are calculated using population figures as per **Census 2001** and the poverty ratio determined by the erstwhile Planning Commission in 2004-05
Delimitation of constituencies	The Social Studies Division provides the Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) Census figures to the Election Commission for delimitation of constituencies and reservation of seats for the SCs and STs

Source-The Hindu

What are the issues with postponement of Census in India?

1) Many welfare schemes rely on census data to determine beneficiaries and allocate resources. For ex-schemes like the National Family Security Act, which provides subsidized food grains, are still using data from the 2011 census. This outdated data may lead to exclusion of eligible beneficiaries and misallocation of resources. 2) The delay impacts programs like Eklavya Model Residential School, designed for quality education of Scheduled Tribe (ST) children. Using 2011 census data for planning may lead to schools being set up where they are no longer needed or missing out on areas where they are now required due to changes in demographics since 2011.

GS Paper 2

Subject: Indian Polity

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

The issue of ceiling on job reservation

Context- The Patna High Court invalidated Bihar's decision to increase reservation quotas for various communities. The judgment was based on the strict application of the 50% ceiling on total reservations, as established by previous judicial precedents.
The court cited the Indra Sawhney (1992) case, which clarified that adequate representation does not mean proportionate representation.

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

The Bihar government amended its quota law to increase reservations. The decision was supported by a Caste Survey and was intended to achieve "proportionate equality."

Why did the High Court reject the state government's argument?

Read more- Reservation Judgements: An overemphasis on merit

What are the issues with the Patna High Court's decision?

1) The court rejected the state's argument about special circumstances justifying the quota increase. However, the court's interpretation of "extraordinary situations" was too narrow, focusing only on geographical remoteness.
2) It raises the question about whether a state with poor human and social development indicators should be prevented from enhancing its social justice initiatives.

What should be the way forward?

1) **Socio-economic Development-** Revising the lists of Backward Classes (BC) or Extremely Backward Communities (EBC) based on progress made over decades could be justified. However, completely preventing efforts to increase representation for historically deprived groups may not be fair.
2) **Revision of Ceiling Limit-** The 50% cap on reservations may be an arbitrary restriction. This implies the necessity for a more refined approach in balancing social justice with legal constraints.

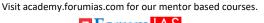**The court's decision on "Annadhanam" and "Angapradakshanam"**

Context: The article discusses a court ruling allowing a religious practice of rolling on leftover plantain leaves for spiritual benefits. It explores the legal conflict between religious customs and human rights, emphasizing the need for rationality and human dignity in such practices.

What was the court's decision on "Annadhanam" and "Angapradakshanam"?

1. The Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court permitted the continuation of "annadhanam" (free food offering) and "angapradakshanam" (ritual rolling on plantain leaves) at Nerur Sathguru Sadasiva Brahmendral's resting place.
2. The court ruled that these practices are fundamental religious rights under the Constitution, specifically citing Articles 14, 19, 21, and 25.
3. Justice Swaminathan overturned a previous 2015 Division Bench decision that had halted the practice, criticizing it for not involving all necessary parties, such as devotees and trustees.

How did Justice Swaminathan's ruling differ?

1. Inclusion of Necessary Parties: Justice Swaminathan argued that the 2015 Division Bench's order was flawed because it did not include or hear the necessary parties, such as the devotees and trustees of the Adhistanam.
2. Fundamental Rights: He invoked Article 25(1) of the Constitution, which guarantees the right to freely profess, practice, and propagate religion. He argued that the right to privacy includes "spiritual orientation" similar to how it includes gender and sexual orientation.
3. Promotion of Communal Harmony: Swaminathan highlighted that the practice at Nerur involved all devotees, regardless of caste, which promotes communal harmony and social integration.
4. Citing Religious Texts: He referenced the Mahabharata to support the belief that spiritual benefits are conferred by rolling on leftover food, thereby justifying the practice.
5. Contrast with Karnataka Case: Swaminathan negated the Supreme Court order by noting that the

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

Forum IAS

Karnataka case involved only Brahmins' leftovers, which were rolled over by persons of other communities. In contrast, at Nerur, all devotees participated regardless of community. He observed that the practice points to communal amity and social integration.

What are the broader implications?

1. Conflict Between Rights: The case highlights the tension between religious freedoms under Article 25(1) and human dignity and equality under Articles 14 and 21.
2. Cultural Relativism vs. Universalism: Justice Swaminathan's ruling favors cultural practices over universal human rights standards, as seen with communal participation in angapradakshanam.
3. Judicial Precedents: The decision contrasts with a Supreme Court stay on a similar practice in Karnataka, stressing the need for consistent judicial approaches.
4. Health and Morality Concerns: Rolling on leftover plantain leaves raises public health issues, as previously noted in the Karnataka case.
5. Scientific Temper: The judgment raises questions about the state's role in promoting rationality and scientific inquiry over traditional practices that may be superstitious or harmful.

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

Challenges for the Leader of the Opposition in India

Context: The article discusses the significant role of the Leader of the Opposition (LoP) in India's Lok Sabha, especially after the 2024 general elections which resulted in a large opposition. It explains the conditions required for recognizing the LoP and highlights the challenges and importance of this position in a balanced and effective parliamentary system.
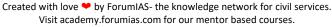
For detailed information on **Qualifying for Leader of the Opposition** read this article here

What are the Requirements for the Leader of the Opposition?

1. 1950s Order (Direction 121): This direction requires a party to have at least 10% of the members in the House to be recognized as a parliamentary party and receive certain facilities. However, it does not specifically address the recognition of the Leader of the Opposition (LoP).
2. Leader of Opposition in Parliament Act, 1977: Defines the LoP as the leader of the largest opposition party recognized by the Speaker. The party must be the largest in opposition and meet the 10% member threshold. For example, **in 2019,** Congress, with only 52 members, did not meet the 10% requirement (54 members) and thus could not claim the LoP post.
3. 10th Schedule: It states all political entities are "parties" regardless of size, eliminating the 'group' classification. This suggests the need for updates in the LoP Act to align with the 10th Schedule, which recognizes all parties irrespective of their numbers in the House.

What is the Role of the Leader of the Opposition in the Westminster System?

1. Prime Minister-in-Waiting: The Leader of the Opposition is considered the Prime Minister-in-waiting. They lead an alternative government ready to take over if the current government falls.
2. Shadow Cabinet: Forms a shadow cabinet that mirrors the positions of the actual cabinet members. This helps scrutinize government policies and suggest alternatives.

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

3. Policy Scrutiny: The shadow cabinet critiques the government's actions and offers alternative policies. Erskine May describes this as directing criticism and outlining alternative policies.
4. Communication with Prime Minister: In the British tradition, the Prime Minister informs the Leader of the Opposition about major policy initiatives directly. This maintains an open communication channel.
5. Indian Context: Although India follows the Westminster system, it does not have a shadow cabinet practice. The role has been mainly statutory since 1977.

What are the Challenges for the Leader of the Opposition in India?

1. Diverse Opposition: The opposition in India is composed of multiple parties with divergent ideologies and programs, making unity difficult.
2. Maintaining Unity: The role of the LoP is challenging due to the absence of power-sharing incentives to maintain unity among opposition parties.
3. Strong Ruling Party: Over the past 10 years, the ruling party's large majority and intimidatory postures often overawed the opposition, making it feel helpless.
4. Role of Critic: The traditional role of the opposition is to oppose the government, criticize it, and seek to replace it, but this is challenging without substantial influence.
5. New Dynamics in 2024: The 2024 general election resulted in over 234 members in the opposition, creating a stronger and more influential opposition. The LoP must capture this new mood and present effective views to influence parliamentary proceedings.

What should be done?

1. Update the LoP Act: Align the Leader of the Opposition Act with the 10th Schedule, recognizing all parties regardless of size.
2. Promote Opposition Unity: The LoP should work to maintain unity among diverse opposition parties, leveraging their collective strength.
3. Enhance Communication: Adopt the British tradition of keeping open communication channels between the Prime Minister and the LoP.
4. Learn from History: Emulate Jawaharlal Nehru's practice of valuing opposition input and being present during debates to ensure healthy parliamentary democracy.
5. Form Shadow Cabinet: Consider forming a shadow cabinet to scrutinize government policies effectively.

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

One Election One Phase

Context-The article highlights that multi-phase elections were once important for ensuring safety and fairness. However, changes in circumstances and advancements in technology require reforms to streamline the electoral process while maintaining integrity and peace.

What were the reasons for implementing multi-phase elections?

1) Multi-phase elections were introduced at a time when muscle power and violence during elections were rampant.
2) The limited deployment of central armed police forces required phased polling to ensure security in sensitive areas.

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

ForumIAS

3) Political parties supported this approach because they were concerned that local police could be influenced by political pressure.

What are the issues with multi-phase elections?

1) **Heat Wave**- The recent election conducted in seven phases under severe temperatures (45-50°C) resulted in fatalities.

2) **Social Media Explosion**- Multi-phase elections in today's digital age encounter fresh hurdles. The gap between phases allows swift spread of rumors, fake news, and hate speech through social media. This escalates communal tensions and misinformation.

For ex- The Guardian reported that Meta, which owns Facebook and Instagram, authorized AI-altered political ads during India's 2024 election. These ads spread misinformation targeting Muslims and made false allegations against opposition leaders.

3) **Criticized by all stakeholders** -The extended duration of the election received criticism from political parties, media outlets, and voters. Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar acknowledged the necessity for shorter elections.
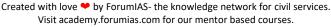
What is the feasibility of conducting one election, one phase elections?

1) The Election Commission (EC) has introduced vulnerability mapping for all polling stations to identify potential troublemakers. Identified individuals are pursued under the CRPC with a bond for good behavior; nearly half a million have been identified recently.

2) Successful efforts have been made to seize illegal arms, including those licensed, which are surrendered, leading to reduced violence.

3) Government officials, including the Home Minister, have endorsed reports of peace restored in previously unstable regions.

4) There are various existing laws that can ensure peaceful elections such as-

A) IPC provisions such as Section 295A, 153A, 499, 505, and 506 address hate speech, cyber-crimes, and defamation.

B) The Representation of the People Act (RP Act), Section 125, addresses promoting enmity between classes during elections, with penalties of one to three years in prison for violations.

5) A general election can be conducted in one phase with the support of 4,000-5,000 paramilitary companies, supported by increased battalions and restored peace in sensitive areas.

Read more- Challenges of holding general elections in India during hot weather

What is the significance of one election, one phase election?

A) Reduced duration of paramilitary force deployment.
B) Cost savings on prolonged campaigns.
C) Less disruption to normal work and governance.
D) Reduced time for mischief and hate mongering.
E) Addresses Prime Minister's expressed concerns about prolonged election

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

Subject: Governance

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

Criticisms of new criminal justice system

Context: The article discusses the introduction of new criminal laws in India, from 1st July 2024, which replace old laws but retain many old provisions. It criticizes these laws for not being a true reform, increasing police powers, and risking civil liberties. It also highlights concerns about whether institutions are prepared to implement these changes effectively.
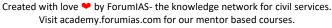
For detailed information on **new criminal law reforms** read Article 1, Article 2

What are the new criminal justice systems replacing the old ones?

The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam (BSA) will replace the Indian Penal Code (IPC), the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), and the Indian Evidence Act (IEA), respectively. These laws aim to update and decolonize India's criminal law system.

What are the criticisms of the new criminal justice system?

1. Retention of Old Provisions: The new laws retain about 75% of the existing provisions from the old laws such as the IPC and CrPC. This calls into question the claim that the laws have been decolonized since a significant part of the legislation remains unchanged.

2. Increased Police Powers: Specifically, Section 187 of the BNSS increases the maximum police custody duration from 15 days to either 60 or 90 days. This represents a substantial extension compared to the limits set under previous laws like the UAPA, POTA, and TADA.

3. Vague Definitions of Crimes: The article mentions the introduction of vague offenses such as "false and misleading information" and "acts endangering sovereignty, unity, and integrity of India." These sections lack clarity and could lead to discretionary enforcement by police, risking abuse of power.

4. Trials in Absentia: The BNSS allows for the prosecution and adjudication of trials against proclaimed offenders in their absence, which severely restricts the accused's right to defend themselves—a drastic change from the previous system where only evidence could be recorded in the absence of the accused.

5. Ambiguity in Transitional Provisions: Section 358 of the BNS states that the IPC will continue to apply to offenses under the IPC, but it remains unclear if this only pertains to offenses committed before July 1 or also to ongoing proceedings, investigations, or remedies related to IPC offenses as of that date. This lack of clarity could lead to legal confusion and inconsistent application in transitional cases.

6. Handling of Ongoing Legal Proceedings: Sections 531 of the BNSS and 170 of the BSA clarify that ongoing appeals, applications, trials, inquiries, or investigations at the time the new legislation takes effect will be governed by the old laws (CrPC or IEA). This provision is crucial for ensuring continuity and fairness in ongoing cases but also introduces potential for interpretative challenges among different courts and jurisdictions, given the major legal shift

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

ForumIAS

Topic- Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Education.

Reasons for the Failures of the Current Exam System

Context: The article discusses the failures of the current exam system, suggests continuous assessment, online testing, AI-based proctoring, and internships for admissions. It emphasizes reforms to reduce fraud and improve education quality, aligning with the National Education Policy 2020 goals.
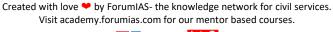
For detailed information on **Revision of Competitive Examination** read this article here

What are the main issues with the current exam system?

1. High-Stakes Exams: Exams like NEET and UGC NET are single high-stakes tests that push students towards cramming. Coaching centers flourish, focusing on passing exams rather than understanding subjects.
2. Impact on School Education: Grades 11 and 12 are overshadowed by coaching institutions, compromising holistic personality development outlined in the National Education Policy 2020.
3. Drop in Engineering Graduates: In the last five years, the number of engineering graduates has decreased by 40%, indicating a lack of student interest after securing admission.
4. Outdated Assessment Methods: School boards use outdated and non-standardized assessment methods, focusing on rote learning. The 2022-23 deadline for implementing competency-based assessments from NEP 2020 has been missed.
5. Exam Conduct Issues: The inability to conduct large-scale exams professionally is troubling. Despite the NTA's establishment in 2017, pen and paper exams prone to fraud are still used.

What should be done?

1. Change Selection Process: Introduce continuous assessment over two years for higher education admissions, reducing reliance on single high-stakes exams.
2. Implement Continuous Online Assessments: Assign 40% weightage to eight quarterly online assessments using a standardized question bank. These tests ensure critical thinking and conceptual understanding and are taken within school premises.
3. Promote Social and Professional Aptitude: Allocate 40% weightage to internships and participation in NSS/NCC or social upliftment programs. These experiences enhance practical skills and social awareness through two six-week long internships.
4. Conduct Final Exams with Reduced Weightage: Assign 20% weightage to a final online exam like NEET/JEE, conducted twice a year, allowing students to choose the best score.
5. Use Technology for Integrity: Employ AI-based proctoring and robust question banks to prevent fraud. Collaborate with institutes like IITs and the Indian Statistical Institute to design secure exam protocols.

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

Subject: International Relations

Topic- India and its Neighborhood- Relations.

The key area of focus in the India-Bangladesh relationship

Context: The article discusses the strong relationship between India and Bangladesh, led by Prime Ministers Narendra Modi and Sheikh Hasina. They have met frequently to enhance their countries' partnership, focusing on improving trade, defense, and regional cooperation. They aim to address remaining challenges and strengthen their bond further.

For detailed information on **India-Bangladesh relationship** read this article here

What have India and Bangladesh achieved in bilateral relations?

Prime Ministers Narendra Modi of India and Sheikh Hasina of Bangladesh have strengthened their countries' relationship significantly. They have met 10 times over the past year, emphasizing the importance of their partnership. Their efforts are described as a "golden chapter" in the history of bilateral relations between the two nations.

What are the key areas of focus?

1. Easing Visa Procedures and Freer Movement of Goods: The countries plan to simplify visa processes to support easier and more frequent travel. They also aim to enhance the free movement of goods across borders.
2. Cross-border Energy and Electricity Flows: There is a focus on facilitating energy exchange, which includes the flow of electricity across the border to ensure mutual energy security and integration.
3. Building Digital Bridges: The efforts to create digital connections that will likely support advancements in technology and communication between the two nations.
4. Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA): India and Bangladesh intend to commence negotiations on a CEPA to encourage free trade. This is particularly important given the breakdown of the global trading order, positioning the partnership as a regional economic imperative.
5. Defense Modernization: Plans to modernize bilateral defense ties involve collaboration between armed forces and supporting Dhaka's military modernization, contributing to regional stability in the Indo-Pacific.

What challenges remain?

1. River Water Management: Despite significant progress in bilateral relations, the management of river water remains a challenge. This issue is critical as it affects agriculture and livelihoods in both countries.
2. Unfinished Connectivity Agenda: The ongoing efforts to ease visa procedures and enable freer movement of goods and energy are crucial for seamless cross-border interaction but have yet to be fully realized.
3. Negotiations on Economic Partnership: The long overdue negotiations for a comprehensive economic partnership agreement (CEPA) have yet to commence, which is essential for enhancing trade and economic integration between India and Bangladesh.

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

India's Tibet Policy amid US-China Tensions

Context- A US delegation visited Dharamshala soon after the US Congress passed the 'Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act.' This legislation aims to support Tibet and criticize China's treatment of Tibetans. The Central Tibetan Administration invited the delegation to express solidarity with the Tibetan diaspora and to urge renewed talks between the Dalai Lama's representatives and Beijing. India hosted the delegation, with the External Affairs Minister arranging a dinner and the Prime Minister meeting them the next day. This gesture was seen as a carefully considered move amidst ongoing tensions with China.

How has Indias Tibet policy evolved in last few decades?

1) **Diplomatic and Humanitarian Commitment-**-India recognized Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) as a part of China in 1954, reflecting its diplomatic position on territorial issues. Since 1959, India has provided asylum to the Dalai Lama and Tibetan refugees. This demonstrates its robust commitment to humanitarian principles.
2) **Changed Stance due to Chinas Disregard** - China's disregard for India's territorial integrity, its renaming of places in Arunachal Pradesh, and its practice of issuing stapled visas to residents of Jammu and Kashmir, India has opted not to publicly support a 'One China' policy. This indicated a shift in India's approach towards Tibet.
3) **Position on the Dalai Lama** -India highlights the Dalai Lama's status as a respected spiritual leader instead of categorizing him as a "separatist," despite China's objections. India does not officially recognize the Tibetan Government in Exile or Parliament in Exile as independent entities.

What are the difficulties linked to the United States' engagement with Indias immediate neighborhood?

1) **Marginalizing of India**- India has chosen not to publicly endorse U.S. criticisms of China's policies towards Tibetans. Instead, India has maintained its own carefully balanced approach to relations with Beijing. Allowing U.S. leaders to deliver messages to Beijing from India neglect India's historically calibrated Tibet policy.
2) **Diminishing Regional Influence**-Similar challenges are being observed in other parts of South Asia, including the Maldives, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and the Indian Ocean islands, where India's influence has diminished amidst rising competition between the United States and China.

Read more-India-Maldives Relations

What should be the way forward?

1) **Maintain Strategic Autonomy**-India's Tibet policy requires careful recalibration considering changing geopolitical dynamics. While maintaining its historical stance of providing refuge to Tibetans, India must navigate the complex U.S.-China relationship and assert its own interests in the region.
2) **Reevaluation of Tibet Policy**- India needs to reassess its approach and maintain a balanced, independent Tibet policy that serves its strategic interests without compromising sovereignty or diplomatic relations.

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

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

The new pact between Russia and North Korea

Context: The article discusses a new military pact between Russia and North Korea. This agreement promises immediate military support if either country is attacked. The pact strengthens their alliance, raises security concerns in South Korea and Japan, and impacts global geopolitical dynamics.

What is the historical context of Russia-North Korea relations?

After World War II, the Soviet Union supported the establishment of a communist regime in North Korea.
The USSR provided military aid to North Korea during the Korean War.
In 1961, the USSR and North Korea signed the Russo-North Korea Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance.
Relations declined after the Soviet Union dissolved in 1991.
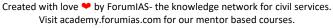Russia and North Korea's relations improved in the early 2000s under Putin.
In 2022, Russia's invasion of Ukraine further strengthened their alliance.

What is the new pact between Russia and North Korea?

1. Immediate Military Assistance: Russia and North Korea agreed to provide immediate military support if either is attacked.
2. Historical Context: The pact echoes the 1961 Russo-North Korea Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance.
3. Article 4: According to Article 4, if either nation is attacked, the other will provide military and other assistance without delay, in line with Article 51 of the UN Charter and the laws of both nations.
4.Technological Cooperation: The pact includes unspecified technological assistance, likely crucial for North Korea's missile and nuclear programs.

What are the impacts of the new pact between Russia and North Korea?

1. Technological Support: It involves technological assistance, potentially helping North Korea improve missile guidance and nuclear capabilities.
2. Regional Security Concerns: South Korea and Japan perceive this as a direct threat, prompting them to reconsider their defense strategies and potentially strengthen military capabilities.
3. Global Diplomatic Reactions: NATO and the U.S. have expressed concerns. This pact could lead to further military alliances between authoritarian states, increasing global tensions and nuclear proliferation risks.
4. China's Dilemma: While the pact strengthens the anti-Western bloc, it might reduce China's influence over North Korea, complicating regional politics.

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

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

The New Eurasian Geopolitics

Context- Recent events, including Russian President Vladimir Putin's visits to North Korea and Vietnam, along with the US presidential debate between Joe Biden and Donald Trump, underscore the deepening interconnections between European and Asian security. These developments present new strategic opportunities for middle powers like India.

What are the four dimensions of the New "Eurasian" Geopolitics?
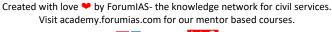
1) **Asia's Active Role in European Geopolitics-**

A) Asian countries have now become influential in European geopolitics. Russia and Western Europe are actively seeking Asian support to influence the narrative on the Ukraine conflict. For ex- the Ukraine peace conference attempted to gain political and diplomatic support from non-Western countries to reverse the Russian occupation.

B) Asia's role as a major arms supplier in European conflicts is strengthening. For ex- North Korea is supplying ammunition to Russia, South Korea is supporting Ukraine, and Japan may increase missile production and relax export controls to contribute further.

2) **Emerging Asian Diplomatic Dynamics**- Major powers are trying to make relations with Asian nations stronger amidst current conflicts. For ex-

A) Vladimir Putin's recent trips to Pyongyang and Hanoi signal Russia's renewed involvement with North Korea. His treaty with North Korea seeks to enhance security cooperation, which could impact regional dynamics and pose challenges to Western interests.

B) Vietnam has hosted leaders like Biden, Xi Jinping, and Putin in recent past. This reflects its efforts to manage economic ties with both China and the US, while also seeking security cooperation with Russia to balance regional interests.

3**) Navigating Asia's Geopolitical Shifts**- Growing maneuverability among Asian nations complicates Western decision-making, highlighting a fault line in US foreign policy debates.

Historically, the US dominated both regions after World War II. However, the recent Russia-China alliance and their combined influence across Europe and Asia have compelled the US to rethink its primary challenges.

4) **Asia's Growing Role Amid Europe's Strategic Challenges** – Europe is hesitant in encountering China and enhancing its defense capabilities internally. Economic connections with China are also causing European leaders to hesitate in directly challenging Beijing. Whereas countries in Asia such as Australia, India, Japan, and South Korea are becoming more inclined to contribute significantly to regional security.

What are the opportunities for middle powers like India in this evolving landscape?

1) Significant changes are happening as Europe and Asian are becoming more connected. This highlights the rise of middle powers like India and others whose influence is growing across Eurasia.
 2) The United States is actively seeking strong security alliances with these middle powers to counterbalance the increasing influence of China and Russia.US has adopted a strategy called "integrated deterrence," that gives middle powers like India a unique opportunity to enhance their overall national strength, including military capabilities.

Read more- Successes and challenges in the India-U.S. relationship

Way forward- India's bureaucracy needs to act quickly to take advantage of current international opportunities to modernize its defense industry and expand domestic arms production rapidly. Achieving self-sufficiency in arms production is important for maintaining India's "strategic autonomy."

GS Paper 3

Subject: Indian Economy

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

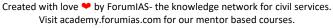### Need to Revive Manufacturing Sector in India

Context-The article highlights the need to revive the manufacturing sector. It suggests that the government must align policies to augment domestic investment, improve domestic value addition and export competitiveness.
The manufacturing sector's contribution to GDP stood at 16.1% in 2014-15 at current prices but declined by three percentage points to 13.1% by 2022-23. At constant prices, it marginally decreased to 15.6%.

Policymakers believed that excessive capital and labor regulations deterred investors from establishing businesses. They aimed to reduce this "regulatory cholesterol" by aligning regulations with global standards like the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Index (EDBI).

What are the challenges faced by India's Manufacturing Sector?

1) Negative Impact of EDBI Improvements on Investments - Improvements in EDBI rankings did not lead to increased investments anywhere. On the contrary, it has only benefitted employers who have got the opportunity of self –certification for some mandatory compliance by compromising the interest of workers.
2) **Limited Value Addition**-There was a reported increase in production and exports of mobile phones due to the introduction of Production Linked Incentive Scheme.However,it has mainly led to a shift from importing finished goods to importing their basic components that resulted in minimal domestic value addition.
3) **Disparity Between GVA and GDP Growth-** From 2014 to 2022, the industrial growth rate, as measured by gross value added (GVA), averaged a modest 3% annually according to credible estimates from the Annual Survey of Industries. This is significantly lower compared to the GDP growth rate of 6-7% over the same period.
4) **Inability to Increase Fixed Investment**- Government policies have not succeeded in raising the overall rate of fixed investment (gross fixed capital formation), which stands at approximately 30% of GDP at current prices, according to national accounts data. Investment has increasingly favored services, especially in telecommunications and infrastructure, while the manufacturing sector's share has remained stagnant at 18% or slightly decreased.
5) **Industrial Investment and Manufacturing Sector Performance** -The actual lack of industrial investment is more severe than indicated by national account figures. Recent discussions on GDP estimates have emphasized that the performance of the manufacturing sector was overstated in the current National Accounts Statistics (NAS).

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

6) **Discrepancies Between NAS and ASI Data** -Comparing NAS and Annual Survey of Industries (ASI) data up to 2021-22 reveals large discrepancies. According to NAS, gross fixed capital formation (GFCF) and net fixed capital formation (NFCF) grew annually by 5.3% and 6.9%, respectively, from 2014-15 to 2021-22 at constant prices. In contrast, ASI estimates indicate declines of -1.6% and -9.6% per year over the same period.

7) **Stagnant Net Fixed Investment** -Since 2014-15, there has been minimal growth in the net fixed investment rate, leading to stagnation in manufacturing capacity.

Read more- Semiconductor manufacturing in India: significance and challenges

What should be the way forward?

1) **Need for a Well-designed Industrial Policy-**

A) Address the lack of net investment growth in manufacturing
B) Prioritize productive investment over speculative property development
C) Align trade and industrial policies to augment domestic investment

2) **Improve domestic value addition and export competitiveness-**

A) Support for Small Industries
B) Implement localized, context-specific, and "last-mile" interventions
C) Focus on boosting productive employment in small industries
3) **Statistical Improvements**-There is an urgent need for the National Statistical Office to correct shortcomings in GDP estimation.

Issues with India's FTA

Context: The article discusses India's need to reform its FTA strategy. It suggests focusing on deep trade agreements to integrate with global value chains. This involves reducing tariffs, improving manufacturing competitiveness, and negotiating investment, intellectual property, and environmental standards. The "**Chintan Shivir**" initiative, organized by the Ministry of Commerce, aims to address these issues by developing new strategies and standard operating procedures for future FTA negotiations.

For detailed information on **India's Foreign Trade Agreements (FTAs)** read Article 1, Article 2

What is deep FTA?

1. Deep FTA covers extensive regulatory policy issues including the liberalization of investment, protection of intellectual property rights, and environmental, social, and governance (ESG) issues.
2. These agreements extend beyond commitments made at the World Trade Organization and often include aspects not covered by the WTO, which helps anchor domestic producers in global value chains (GVCs).

What are the various Provisions in FTAs?

1. Tariff Reductions: FTAs typically include substantial reductions or complete elimination of tariffs on traded goods between member countries to promote bilateral trade.
2. Intellectual Property Rights (IPR): Deep FTAs often enhance protection beyond WTO commitments, safeguarding innovations and creative outputs which are crucial for competitive edges in global markets.
3. Investment Liberalization: These provisions facilitate foreign direct investment by providing a clearer and more secure legal framework for investors, essential for integrating into global value chains.

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

4. Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) Standards: FTAs increasingly include ESG issues, addressing sustainability and ethical practices within trade agreements to ensure comprehensive regulatory alignment.

5. Service Sector Liberalization: Many FTAs also focus on liberalizing trade in services, expanding market access for service providers in partner countries.

What Are the Current Issues with FTA?

1. Negotiation Delays: India's FTA negotiations with the European Union and the UK have faced repeated delays, showing inefficiencies.

2. High Tariffs and Trade Deficits: India's high MFN tariffs, especially in manufacturing, create significant preferential margins (10-15%) in FTAs, leading to trade deficits favoring partner countries.

3. Skepticism in Negotiations: Past experiences of increased trade deficits with FTA partners have led to a skeptical approach, affecting deeper engagements.

4. Lack of Deep Provisions: India struggles to negotiate deep provisions like investment liberalization and ESG issues, limiting the effectiveness of its FTAs, as seen with the Australia-India agreement lacking an investment chapter.

What should be done?

1. Focus on Deep FTAs: India should prioritize deep FTAs that integrate regulatory policies, ensuring alignment with global value chains and enhancing export competitiveness.

2. Reduce MFN Tariffs: Aligning India's MFN tariffs closer to the global average of 0-5% can reduce preferential margins and balance bilateral trade.

3. Calibrate Preferential Tariffs: India should strategically set preferential tariffs in FTAs to benefit sectors that are dynamic in global value chains.

4. Address Non-Trade Issues: Negotiating deeper provisions like investment liberalization and ESG standards is essential, moving away from viewing these areas as non-trade issues to remain competitive globally.
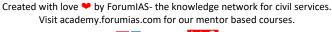
Issues with India's capital gains tax regime

Context: The article discusses the need to simplify India's capital gains tax. It highlights the inconsistencies in tax rates across different asset classes and calls for a uniform, fair, and straightforward system to make investment planning easier and stimulate more investments.

For detailed information on **concerns related to India's income tax system** read this article here

What are the issues with India's capital gains tax regime?

1. Complexity and Inconsistency: India's capital gains tax rates differ by asset classes. This variation makes investment planning difficult.

2. Short-term vs. Long-term Gains on Listed Shares: Gains on listed shares or equity mutual funds held for less than 12 months are taxed at 15%, while long-term gains (over 12 months) are taxed at 10% if annual gains exceed ₹1 lakh.

3. Debt Mutual Funds: These are taxed at the marginal rate of income tax, regardless of the holding period.

4. Real Estate: Gains on property sold within two years are taxed at the marginal rate; after two years, they are taxed at 20% (with inflation adjustment). Reinvesting the proceeds in another property can avoid this tax.

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

5. Gold Investments: Physical gold gains are considered long-term only after three years, with different tax treatments for ETFs and sovereign gold bonds.

What should be done?

1. Simplify the Regime: Simplifying India's capital gains tax regime can make investment planning easier.
2. Uniform Cut-off Period: Use a common cut-off period of one year for all short-term holdings. This ensures consistency and fairness.
3. Standard Rates: Apply the same tax rates for short-term and long-term gains across all asset classes. This removes confusion and aligns investment incentives.
4. Inflation Adjustment: Provide inflation adjustments for gains on holdings longer than five years to account for value changes over time.
5. Consistency Across Assets: Ensure similar tax treatment for comparable assets. For example, treating gold ETFs the same as physical gold to avoid distortions in investment choices.

India needs to develop a unique economic strategy

Context: The article discusses the need for India to develop a unique economic strategy that is sustainable and not resource-heavy like China's. It emphasizes joining global trade groups, reducing tariffs, and supporting the informal sector to boost manufacturing and overall economic growth.

For detailed information on **Indian Development Model** read Article 1, Article 2
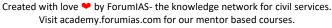
What is India's external economic footprint?

1. Currently, India accounts for 1.8 per cent of world exports and is ranked 18th.
2. It accounts for 2.8 per cent of global imports and ranks ninth worldwide.

Why should India not follow the China growth model?

1. Resource and Energy Demand: China's growth relied heavily on extensive resource and energy consumption. This model is unsustainable for India, given global resource limits and the world's inability to support another such heavy consumer.
2 Ecological Sustainability: The Chinese model is incompatible with the needs for ecological sustainability and addressing climate change. India requires a growth strategy that significantly reduces environmental impact.
3. Greenhouse Gas Emissions: China may have peaked in terms of its greenhouse gas emissions. In contrast, India's emissions are set to increase, which will lead to international pressure to curb them.

How can India enhance its global economic influence?

1. Expand Foreign Trade: India aims to become the third-largest trading power by expanding its foreign trade, aligning with its current status as the fifth-largest economy.
2. Join Major Trade Groups: Engaging with major trade groups like the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) and applying to join the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) will integrate India more deeply into global trade dynamics.
3. Reduce Tariffs: Lowering high custom tariffs, which have increased since 2014, will facilitate India's participation in global and regional supply chains, essential for being a global trading power.

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

4. Support the Informal Sector: Simplify GST procedures and reconsider the Production-Linked Incentive scheme to bolster small and medium enterprises, which are vital for employment and economic resilience.

Discrimination in employment

Context: The article discusses discrimination against married women in employment, particularly at Foxconn, where they are not hired due to assumed family and pregnancy commitments. It criticizes societal expectations that limit women's careers and calls for policy changes and better support systems to enable true workplace equality.

For detailed information on **Challenges Of Female Labour Force Participation (LFP)** read this article here

Why do women face discrimination in employment?

1. Discriminatory Hiring Practices: Companies like Foxconn reportedly avoid hiring married women due to concerns about their family responsibilities, potential pregnancies, and perceived higher absenteeism, which unfairly assumes they are less dedicated to their jobs.
2. Societal Expectations: There's a prevalent bias that women are more focused on family duties. Examples include criticisms of women bosses who are perceived as not inspiring because they prioritize family, which can affect their professional opportunities and advancements.
3. Inequitable Workload: Women often manage both professional roles and domestic responsibilities. Despite their ability to multitask, they are not given the same opportunities for career advancement or compensation as men, who are typically freer to pursue professional growth without the same level of domestic distraction.
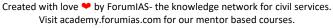
What should be done to address these issues?

1. Implement Comprehensive Training Programs: Educate men about sharing domestic responsibilities equally, so women can have more opportunities to focus on their careers, similar to their male counterparts.
2. Enforce and Strengthen Discrimination Laws: Strengthen existing laws like the Equal Remuneration Act, making them more comprehensive and closing loopholes that allow discrimination in hiring practices.
3. Create Supportive Workplace Policies: Introduce policies such as flexible working hours, onsite childcare facilities, and safe accommodation to help women balance work and family life more effectively.
4. Establish Paternity Leave: Advocate for comparable-length paternity leaves to encourage shared parental responsibilities, allowing women to return to their careers with less strain postpartum.

Decision of Recent GST Council

Context: The article discusses the recent GST Council meeting, which addressed various tax issues, provided exemptions, and aimed to simplify the GST system. It also mentioned plans for future reforms, including rationalizing tax rates and incorporating excluded items like petroleum and electricity.

For information on **GST Council** read this article here

What did the GST Council decide in the recent meeting?

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

1. **Exemption Decisions:** The GST Council exempted hostel accommodation up to ₹20,000 per month and railway services from GST, reducing costs for students and rail passengers.
2. **Rate Unification:** A uniform GST rate of 12% was set for packing cartons, milk cans, and solar cookers, eliminating inconsistencies in tax rates based on materials or technology.
3. **Interest and Penalty Waivers:** Interest and penalties on tax dues from the first three years of GST implementation will be waived if paid by March 2025, providing relief to taxpayers.
4. **Appeal Pre-deposits:** The required pre-deposits for filing appeals were lowered, making the appeals process less burdensome for businesses.

What changes will affect industry and tax administration?

1. The anti-profiteering clause was removed, which had required companies to pass on tax cut benefits to consumers.
2. The Council also plans to implement Aadhaar authentication for GST registrations to prevent fraud and make the process more efficient.

What future plans were discussed?

1. **Review of GST Rate Structure:** The Council discussed plans to review the GST rate structure, particularly the multiple-rate system that was last planned for rationalization in 2021 but has been inactive since.
2. **Extension to Excluded Items:** Plans to bring previously excluded items like petroleum and electricity under the GST umbrella were mentioned, indicating a significant expansion of the GST net.
3. **Tax Rate Adjustments:** There is an intention to possibly adjust tax rates in the future, aiming to better align them with economic needs and simplifications.

Concerns related to the "Washington Consensus" approach

Context: The article discusses the need for India to shift its focus from solely aiming for GDP growth to actively creating jobs through state intervention and smart policies. It criticizes the reliance on free markets and suggests adopting strategies similar to East Asian countries to boost industrial growth and employment.

For detailed information on "**Washington Consensus**" read this article here

What are the concerns related to the "Washington Consensus" approach?

1. Limited Job Creation: Despite high GDP growth rates post-1991 reforms influenced by the "Washington Consensus," job creation has been inadequate. The focus on free markets didn't lead to the expected employment benefits.
2. Comparison with China: In 1991, India's per capita income and technological status were similar to China's. However, unlike India, China used state-driven policies for industrialization and export success, now being significantly ahead economically.
3. Market Forces Limitations: Relying solely on market forces has shown limitations, as seen in India's underperformance in job creation compared to its potential and historical economic strategies.

What should be done?

1. **Intervene in Currency Markets:** Reserve Bank of India need to intervene in currency markets to prevent the appreciation of the real exchange rate, which harms domestic value addition and job creation.
2. **Reduce Business Costs:** Address high logistics costs, which are about 50% higher than those of competitors, and rationalize high diesel taxes that nearly double the highest GST rates.

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

3. **Implement Sector-Specific Policies:** Follow the successful example of the Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme, which turned India into a significant manufacturing hub for Apple, creating approximately 150,000 jobs.
4. **Identify labor-intensive sectors** in manufacturing and services where India can compete globally. Governments can help firms create competitive advantages and attract foreign direct investment.
5. **Implement sector-specific measures** that yield results within two to three years. Use tools like concessional finance, cheap land, public investment, and import duty adjustments as needed.
6. Focus on a few sectors initially to achieve a critical mass and self-sustaining growth. **Avoid spreading resources too thinly**. Success in the domestic and export markets should move together.
7. **Favor producers who create jobs and workers over consumers and traders**. A balanced approach in the globalized economy is necessary for job creation and economic growth.

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

Issues and status of the Kavach Signaling System

Context: The article discusses a recent train accident in India involving deaths and injuries. It critiques Indian Railways' safety practices, the slow implementation of a new signaling system called Kavach, and the need for better management and technology use to prevent future accidents.

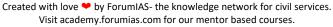For detailed information on **The Issue of Indian Railway Safety** read this article here

How has Indian Railways improved safety?

1. Track Maintenance: Indian Railways has focused on maintaining tracks better, reducing the risk of accidents.
2. Closing Unmanned Level Crossings: Efforts have been made to close unmanned level crossings, which has decreased accidents.
3. Government Investment: The Union government allocated nearly 25% of its total capital expenditure to railways, ensuring funding for safety improvements.
4. Kavach System: The indigenous Kavach signaling system, designed to prevent collisions, was tested over 1,400 kilometers on the Southern Central Railway and is being implemented on key routes.
5. Prioritizing Safety Roles: Despite issues, Indian Railways has revised recruitment targets for critical safety positions to reduce staff shortages.

What are the issues with railway safety?

1. Insufficient Implementation of Safety Measures: Despite the government allocating nearly 25% of its capex to railways, the implementation of safety measures like the Kavach signaling system has been slow.
2. Miscommunication and Premature Blame: The premature declaration of the cause of accidents by high-level officials leads to misinformation, as seen when the Chairperson of the Railway Board incorrectly announced details about the train crew involved in the accident.
3. Staffing Shortages: There are nearly 20,000 vacancies in critical safety roles like loco pilots, contributing to overwork and potential safety lapses, with only a recent adjustment in recruitment targets following public pressure after the accident.

What is the status of the Kavach Signaling System?

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

1. Slow Implementation: Kavach, an indigenous signaling system, was chosen over the European ETCS Level II system three years ago.

2. Limited Rollout: Despite successful trials over 1,400 kilometers on the Southern Central Railway, implementation has been slow.

3. Missed Targets: The system is under implementation on the Delhi-Howrah and Delhi-Mumbai sections, but completion targets have been missed.

4. Industry Capacity Issues: The Railway Board Chairperson cited limited industry capacity as a reason for the slow rollout.

5. Safety Recommendations: The Commissioner of Railway Safety (CRS) recommended prioritizing Kavach in Automatic Signaling territories and faster installation in locomotives to prevent collisions.

Investing in pumped-storage hydropower (PSH)

Context: The article discusses Adani Group's plan to invest in pumped-storage hydropower (PSH) dams to help India's transition to clean energy. These dams store energy and provide electricity consistently, even when renewable sources like wind and solar are not available.

What is Pumped-Storage Hydropower?

Pumped storage hydropower (PSH) plants are storage systems based on hydropower operations between two or more reservoirs (upper and lower) with an elevation difference. At the time of demand, downward water flow generates electricity with a hydraulic turbine, and water is pumped back to the upper reservoir using power from grid or RE sources, with an overall efficiency of 75-80%.

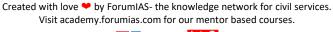For more information on **Pumped storage hydropower** read this article

Why is Pumped-Storage Hydropower Important?

1. Consistent Energy Supply: Pumped-Storage Hydropower (PSH) dams store energy and deliver it consistently, unlike solar and wind sources which are dependent on weather 2. conditions.

2. Control Over Output: PSH allows for adjustable power output to meet varying electricity demands, acting as a reliable backup for renewable energy sources.

3. National Impact: PSH can help manage India's peak electricity demands, aiming to support the country's 2030 goal of 500 gigawatts from non-fossil sources

For more information read article 1, Article 2

What investments have been made in pumped-storage hydropower technology?

1. Adani Green Energy Ltd has committed to investing between ₹25,000 and ₹27,500 crore in pumped-storage hydropower (PSH) projects over the next five years. Their initial target is to achieve a PSH capacity of 5 gigawatts, aiming to eventually expand to 25 gigawatts.

2. The Union environment ministry earlier approved PSH projects totaling over ₹80,000 crore, highlighting the government's support for this technology to enhance India's renewable energy capacity.

3. Other major companies like Tata Power, JSW, and NTPC are also planning investments in PSH dams, indicating a significant industry trend towards utilizing this technology to stabilize and supplement the renewable energy supply in India.

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

Selecting Routes for Vande Metro Train

Context- The article discusses the introduction Vande Metro trains in India. The Vande Metro aims to run up to 250 kilometers between major cities and nearby towns. The first Vande Metro prototype, with 12 coaches and amenities **like Vande Bharat trains**, was produced by the Rail Coach Factory in Kapurthala, Punjab.

What are the challenges with the Vande Bharat trains?

1) **Low Passenger Numbers**-The Vande Bharat trains have captured the nation's imagination. However, out of the 51 origin-destination pairings served by 82 Vande Bharat rakes introduced by Indian Railways, at least 10 pairs have very low passenger numbers.
2) **Financial Loss**-Estimates suggest that Indian Railways has incurred losses of approximately ₹100 crore due to poor patronage on some of the Vande Bharat routes.
3) **Lack of Analysis**-Indian Railways did not systematically analyze each route to ensure sufficient passenger demand before launching the Vande Bharat trains.

What is the significance of the introduction of Vande Metro Train?

1) **Facilities**-Vande Metro trains, like Vande Bharat trains, feature a continuous, fully air-conditioned gangway that allows passengers to move freely between coaches and use bio-toilets.
2) **Safety**-Doors are closed that prevents accidents often seen during boarding and disembarking on other types of trains like EMU and MEMU.

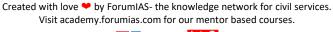Read More- The Issue of Indian Railway Safety

3) **Speed**-They can run with maximum design speed of 130 kmph, averaging between 75 kmph and 90 kmph depending on the route. This promises quicker and more comfortable journeys, secure boarding and disembarking, and modern restroom facilities.
4) **Convenience-** Buses traveling distances up to 250 km are generally not luxurious, and while cars offer faster travel, they are not economically feasible for middle-class passengers. Therefore, the Vande Metro train aims to offer a comfortable and affordable travel experience for passengers in this segment.

What are the financial issues with the introduction of Vande Metro trains?

1) **High Energy Cost-**Vande Metro trains have higher energy costs compared to non-air-conditioned second-class carriages.
2) **High Manufacturing Cost**- The prototype Vande Metro coach costs ₹8 crore to manufacture, significantly more than second-class suburban coaches. Due to these higher costs, Indian Railways cannot operate Vande Metro trains at fares comparable to second-class trains currently in service.
3) **Fare Disparities and Passenger Preferences**- Passengers in second-class pay 45 paisa, 22 paisa, and 18 paisa per kilometer on mail/express, ordinary, and EMU/MEMU trains, respectively. Traveling at a low cost is a behavior many rail travelers adopt. Whether these passengers would switch to more expensive air-conditioned Vande Metro trains is uncertain.
4) **Underwhelming Response**-The introduction of air-conditioned coaches on certain suburban trains in Mumbai did not meet expectations due to factors such as passengers traveling without valid tickets and a disappointing response from commuters.

What should be the Way forward?

1) **Conduct Proper Analysis of Demand Projection**-Indian Railways should learn from the mistakes of the Vande Bharat trains when planning the Vande Metro. Conducting a methodical analysis of demand projections

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

Forum IAS

for different origin-destination pairs before finalizing routes for Vande Metro trains would be beneficial. 2) **Enhancing Utilization through Passenger-Centric Planning**- This approach should consider passengers' willingness and ability to pay. This will lead to higher patronage and improved utilization of train services

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.

Benefits of government buffer stocks in stabilizing food prices

Source: The post benefits of government buffer stocks in stabilizing food prices has been created, based on the article "**Why govt must create a buffer stock of all main food items**" published in "**Indian express**" on 28th June 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- minimum support prices; Public Distribution System objectives, functioning, limitations, revamping; issues of buffer stocks and food security

Context: The article discusses the benefits of government buffer stocks in stabilizing food prices. It highlights how releasing stocks of wheat and chana (chickpea) from surplus production years helped lower inflation in cereals and pulses despite adverse weather and crop failures.

For detailed information on **government buffer stocks** read this article here
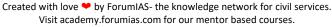
What is the current status of buffer stock and food information?

1. Wheat Buffer Stock: In 2022-23, FCI sold 34.82 lakh tonnes (lt) of wheat, rising to a record 100.88 lt the next year, helping reduce wheat inflation from 25.37% to 6.53% by May 2024.
2. Chana Buffer Stock: NAFED procured 25.56 lt and 23.53 lt of chana in 2021-22 and 2022-23, respectively. It sold 14.06 lt through auctions and 16.09 lt as 'Bharat Dal'.
3. Current Inflation: Cereal inflation was 8.69% and pulses inflation was 17.14% in May 2024.

What are the reasons for food inflation?

1. Climate Change: Unpredictable weather, such as fewer rainy days, extended dry spells, and intense precipitation, has impacted food production. Poor crops over the last three years reduced wheat stocks from 603.56 lt in July 2021 to 301.45 lt in July 2023.
2. Increased Demand: High demand has driven up prices. For instance, chana prices rose from Rs 70 to Rs 90 per kg in a year, while tur/arhar prices jumped from Rs 120 to Rs 170 per kg.
3. Limited Procurement: NAFED could procure only 43,000 tonnes of chana this season, compared to higher quantities in previous years.
4. Market Volatility: Prices of pulses, like urad and moong, have increased due to market volatility, with inflation rates for cereals and pulses at 8.69% and 17.14% respectively in May 2024.

What are the benefits of buffer stocks?

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

1. Price Stability: Buffer stocks help stabilize prices. For example, wheat inflation dropped from 25.37% in February 2023 to 6.53% in May 2024 due to FCI's open market sales.

2. Consumer Protection: Consumers benefit from lower prices. NAFED sold 16.09 lakh tonnes of chana as 'Bharat Dal' at Rs 60/kg, helping keep prices affordable.

3. Support for Farmers: During surplus years, farmers benefit from minimum support prices (MSP). NAFED bought chana at MSP of Rs 5,230 and Rs 5,335 per quintal in 2021-22 and 2022-23.

4. Supply Management: Buffer stocks ensure supply during poor crop years. NAFED's chana stocks reduced price volatility, even with market prices above MSP.

5. Inflation Control: Overall CPI inflation was 4.75% in May 2024, the lowest in 12 months, aided by buffer stock interventions in essential commodities.

What should be done?

1. Expand Procurement: The government should increase procurement of pulses and oilseeds, beyond just rice and wheat.

2. Include Vegetables: Buffer stocking should extend to staple vegetables like onion, potato, and tomato. These can be stored as paste, flakes, or puree for future use.

3. Build Milk Powder Stocks: The government should create buffer stocks of skimmed milk powder (SMP) during periods of low prices, like the current drop from Rs 315-320 to Rs 210 per kg.

4. Improve Market Interventions: Continuously release buffer stocks during scarcity to stabilize prices. FCI's wheat sales helped reduce cereal inflation from 16.73% to 8.69%.

5. Monitor Climate Impact: Adapt buffer stock policies to address climate-induced price volatility, ensuring both consumer protection and farmer support.

Subject: Science & Technology

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

Issues with the implementation of Kavach

Context: The article discusses the slow implementation of Kavach, India's train safety system, designed to prevent accidents by warning pilots and automatically applying brakes. Despite ample funding, the installation has been slow, covering only a small fraction of trains and tracks.
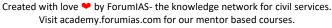
For detailed information on **Issues and status of the Kavach Signaling System** read this article here

What is Kavach?

Kavach is India's Automatic Train Protection (ATP) system designed to enhance railway safety. It warns locomotive pilots if there is a risk of overshooting a red signal. Kavach can automatically apply brakes if the train's speed is not reduced below a certain limit. For more information on **Kavach** read this article

What is needed to implement Kavach?

A. Needed:

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

1. RFID Tags: Place Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) tags on the tracks.
2. Engine Setup: Equip engines with RFID readers, a computer, and brake interface equipment.
3. Radio Towers: Install radio towers at railway stations.

B. Cost of Implementing Kavach:

1. Tracks: ₹50 lakh per kilometer. Total cost for 68,000 km of tracks is ₹34,000 crore.
2. Engines: ₹70 lakh per engine. Total cost for 15,200 engines is ₹10,640 crore.
3. Total Cost: ₹45,000 crore for complete implementation.
4. Yearly Cost: Spread over 10 years, the yearly cost is ₹4,500 crore.
5. Budget Proportion: This yearly cost is less than 2% of the Railway's annual capital expenditure of ₹2,52,000 crore.

What are the issues with the implementation of Kavach?

1. Slow Progress: Since field trials in 2016, Kavach has been installed on just 1,465 route kilometers as of February this year, which is only around 2% of the total railway network.
2. Low Coverage of Locomotives: Of the total 15,200 diesel and electric engines in the Indian Railways, only 139 are equipped with Kavach, accounting for less than 1% of engines.
3. Slow Deployment Rate: If the current rate of implementation continues, it would take approximately 46 years to cover all routes and over 100 years to equip all engines with Kavach.
4. Need for Increased Pace: To complete installation within 10 years, the deployment rate must increase to 6,800 route kilometers per year and 1,500 engines per year.
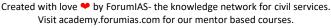
Subject: Environment

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

Climate Change and Cooperative Federalism

Context- India has seen significant innovations recently, such as Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) like Unified Payments Interface (UPI) and Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT), which have greatly improved financial inclusion. These achievements highlight India's capacity to solve complex issues through innovative solutions. Despite these successes, one of India's most pressing challenges is its insufficient response to climate change. The slow action in adapting to climate change threatens India's future, risking the progress made in other areas.

What is the multi-dimensional impact of Climate Change?

1) **Environment and Ecology: -**Climate change manifests in India through erratic monsoons, extreme heatwaves, rising sea levels, and increased natural disasters. The country faces risks of longer-lasting heat waves and wildfires in forest areas.
2) **Agriculture and Food Security** -It presents an existential crisis for India, home to a significant portion of the global population. The majority of Indians are vulnerable to climate change-induced disasters, especially those dependent on agriculture for livelihood and food security, which heavily relies on favorable climatic conditions.

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

What are the issues with Climate Change management in India?

1) **Governance and Policy-**

A) Initiatives such as the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) have been slow, fragmented, and underfunded, focusing more on prevention than adaptation.
B) The Prime Minister's Council on Climate Change (PMCCC) operates infrequently and lacks adequate staffing.
C) At the policy level, India lacks formal climate legislation, hampering coordinated efforts across federal and state levels.
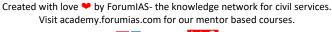
2) **Lack of Financial Capacity of States-**

A) State-level units lack the capacity and financial resources to act, despite their responsibility for implementing India's international commitments.
B) State action plans on climate change, including targets like achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2070, suffer from insufficient leadership and limited progress due to resource shortages.
3) **Lack of Comprehensive Data**-Many Indian workers labor outdoors, risking their safety, productivity, and daily income. Currently, there's little to no cohesive plan for dealing with extreme heat waves or comprehensive data on illnesses from severe weather patterns.
4) **Implementation Gaps in HAPs Across India-** Currently, only two out of 37 HAPs in India conduct vulnerability assessments to identify and assist impacted communities. Moreover, HAPs lack the establishment and institutionalization of monitoring systems to ensure adherence.

Read more-Heat Action Plans

5) **India's Development vs. Climate Priorities-** India's main development agenda focuses on helping the poor, while the climate agenda appears more targeted at international forums and wealthy domestic groups. There is a concern that such actions could alienate powerful industrial interests and disrupt the current political and industrial status quo.

What should be the way forward?

1) India must implement strong water conservation measures, building strategic reservoirs, transferring water between basins, and replenishing groundwater through effective policies.
2) Climate-resistant crops must be swiftly developed for each region's climate conditions, without delay in moving from lab to field.

3) There is a need to invest in long-term programs for afforestation and improve green spaces in urban areas.

4) A national awareness and action plan must be developed involving experts, and it should encourage the private sector to innovate with affordable local solutions.

5) India's climate adaptation efforts are largely reactive as opposed to being pro-active. Thus, there's a need for better coordination and resources for local and state-level adaptation plans.

6) Cooperative federalism is essential for the decarbonization of industrial assets and for the adaptation efforts needed to mitigate climate change. Therefore, prioritizing climate adaptation should be a key agenda item for the newly established 16th Finance Commission.

7) Climate action should be treated as a national security issue and integrated into development agendas at all levels of government.

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

ForumIAS

Environmental concerns in India

Context: The article discusses India's urgent need for genuine environmental policies. It criticizes the government's lackluster response to environmental degradation, including deforestation, city pollution, Himalayan damage, and ineffective environmental impact assessments. It calls for real action to protect the environment and public health.

What are the major environmental concerns in India?

1. Climate Change Vulnerability: Despite frequent mentions, India has taken limited action on climate change. Rising energy consumption has not been matched by emissions cuts. Floods, famines, and droughts are becoming more common, requiring better contingency plans.

2. Forest Cover: India has only 28 trees per person, compared to Canada's 8,953 and China's 130. Forest cover has significantly decreased in the last 20 years. The Forest (Conservation) Amendment Bill, 2023, exacerbates this issue.

3. Urban Pollution: Cities like Delhi and Mumbai suffer from severe air pollution. Bengaluru and Delhi face water shortages. Rivers like the Yamuna have become sewers. Only 28% of urban sewage is treated nationwide.

4. Himalayan Degradation: Glaciers are receding rapidly, with up to 80% forecast to disappear this century. Changes in rainfall and temperature patterns have significantly impacted the region. This affects water and food security in North India. Protests in Ladakh have been ignored.

5. Ineffective Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs): EIAs have become mere formalities. Projects like the Char Dham Highway have caused significant environmental damage. EIAs need stronger legal status.

6. Wetlands and marginal landscapes, crucial for biodiversity, face increasing threats due to climate change and poor conservation efforts.
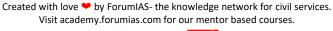
What should be done?

1. Reduce Emissions: Implement strict policies to cut down emissions. Prioritize clean energy sources beyond solar energy.

2. Improve Climate Resilience: Develop contingency plans for floods, famines, and droughts. Update building guidelines and preserve natural barriers like mangrove forests.

3. Protect the Himalayas: Address glacier retreat and changing weather patterns. Respond to protests from affected areas like Ladakh.

4. Strengthen EIAs: Elevate EIAs to statutory status. Ensure meaningful stakeholder participation.

Avoid Greenwashing: Replace green credits and compensatory afforestation with genuine conservation efforts. Strengthen enforcement mechanisms for environmental laws.

For detailed information on **Greenwashing** read this article here

Unsustainable development in the Indian Himalayan Region (IHR)

Context- The Indian Himalayan Region (IHR) serves as India's primary source of water and provides essential ecosystem services. However, there is a significant disparity between the region's unique development needs and the current development practices being pursued, which threaten to undermine its economic viability.

The article highlights the need for a sustainable development model in the Indian Himalayan Region that balances economic growth with environmental preservation and disaster resilience.

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

What approach has the Supreme Court recently regarding environmental conservation?

There is a shift towards a rights-based regime for sustainable development

1) State **of Telangana vs Mohd. Abdul Qasim-** The court emphasized adopting an ecocentric perspective where nature is central. It stated that humanity, as an enlightened species, must act as Earth's trustee
2) **Ashok Kumar Raghav vs Union of India**: The Supreme Court asked the central government and the petitioner to propose a way forward for the Court to issue directions on the carrying capacity of Himalayan States and towns.
3) **Great Indian Bustard case**:

A) The court acknowledged the right to be protected from the negative effects of climate change. It explored the intersection of Articles 14 and 21, addressing both development rights and climate adaptation.
B) The court emphasized that a stable, pollution-free environment is important for ensuring the right to life. Failure to support marginalized communities in adapting to climate change violates their rights to life and equality. Articles 14 and 21 mandate sustainable, strong infrastructure to ensure equal opportunities across the country.

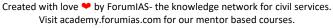A more detailed article on SC Ruling on right against Climate Change can be read here.

What are the issues with the current developmental model?

1) Hydroelectric power stations are rapidly multiplying along rivers and streams in the IHR, ignoring the rights of these water bodies.
2) Existing hill roads are being recklessly widened to four lanes in the name of development, often washed away during river floods.
3) A post-disaster assessment by the National Disaster Management Authority on the 2023 floods in Himachal Pradesh identified rampant construction violations on riverbeds, flood plains, steep slopes, seismic zones, and landslide-prone areas.
4) The Teesta dam breach in Sikkim and monsoon floods in Himachal Pradesh in 2023 underscore the environmental and ecological havoc caused by current development practices in the mountains.

What should be the way forward?

1) **Adopting an ecocentric approach:**

A) The idea of giving nature fundamental rights highlights that natural elements like rivers, forests, and mountains have the right to exist, survive, persist, and regenerate their essential cycles.

B) This approach advocates for an ecocentric perspective where human development aligns with scientific principles and respects the rights of both humanity and the natural environment.
2) **Integrated approach**: Involving policymakers, planners, scientists, and local communities in addressing environmental challenges ensures that decisions are based on research, compliance with policies, and meet local needs and concerns.
3) **Need for sustainable infrastructure**-There is a need to develop resilience against climate change impacts and disasters because it ensures that everyone has a fair chance to access opportunities and achieve equality and equity in their lives.
4) **Coordinated Planning for Disaster and Climate Resilience**- Different authorities must urgently coordinate their planning stages to ensure that every development plan includes provisions for disaster preparedness and climate resilience. Projects should proceed to implementation only after obtaining approval in these essential areas.

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

⬈Forum IAS

Opposition to NITI Aayog's Great Nicobar Development Project

Context: The article discusses opposition to NITI Aayog's development project in Great Nicobar. Concerns include environmental impact, tribal rights violations, and potential seismic risks. The island, home to endangered species and tribal communities, faces significant ecological and social threats from the project.

For detailed information on **Concerns related to the infrastructure project planned for Great Nicobar** read this article here

Where is Great Nicobar, and who lives there?

A. Location and Description of Great Nicobar:

1.Great Nicobar is located at the southernmost tip of India, part of the Andaman and Nicobar archipelago.
2.The island spans 910 sq km and features lush rainforests, beaches, and diverse wildlife, including the endangered giant leatherback turtle and Nicobar megapode.

B. Communities Living on Great Nicobar:

1. **Shompen Tribe:** Approximately 250 people, classified as a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group. They mostly live in the interior forests and are hunter-gatherers.
2. **Nicobarese Community:** Includes Great Nicobarese and Little Nicobarese, practicing farming and fishing. Post-tsunami, many were resettled in Campbell Bay.
3. **Settlers:** Around 6,000 people from various Indian states, including retired military servicemen and their families, moved here between 1968 and 1975.
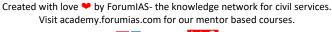
What is the NITI Aayog Project?

NITI Aayog's Great Nicobar Development plan aims to promote the holistic development of Greater Nicobar. Based on that, the Standing Committee of the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) **denotified the entire Galathea Bay Wildlife Sanctuary** for building port and other related infrastructure.

For more detailed information read this article

Why is there opposition to NITI Aayog's Great Nicobar Development Project?

1. **Ecological Impact**: The project requires the diversion of 130 sq km of forest land and the felling of 10 lakh trees. Galathea Bay, a critical nesting site for the giant leatherback turtle, will be affected.
2. **Wildlife Concerns**: The government denotified Galathea Bay and Megapode wildlife sanctuaries for the project. The giant leatherback turtle and Nicobar megapode, both protected under Indian law, will lose their habitats.
3. **Tribal Rights Violations**: The project encroaches on the ancestral lands of the Great Nicobarese. The Tribal Council withdrew its no-objection certificate, citing concealed information and rushed consent processes.
4. **Health Risks for Shompen**: Increased contact with outsiders risks exposing the Shompen tribe to diseases they have no immunity against.
5. **Seismic Risks**: The Andaman and Nicobar archipelago is in a seismically active zone. Researchers criticize the project for lacking adequate earthquake risk assessments.
6. **Local Concerns**: The Campbell Bay panchayat raised concerns about the social impact assessment for land acquisition.

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

How the PESA has boosted forest conservation in India

Context: This article discusses the conflicts between conservation and resource extraction in India. It proposes that giving political representation to marginalized communities, through policies like PESA, can improve forest conservation and support the economic interests of these communities.

For detailed information on **Panchayat Extension to Scheduled Areas (PESA) Act, 1996** read this article here
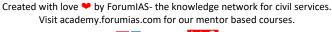
What is the conflict in conservation efforts?

1. The conflict in conservation efforts in India primarily revolves around two issues: **conservation versus local resource extraction and conservation versus economic development**.
2. The central government **often prioritizes large-scale economic projects** like mining and dam construction over forest conservation, influenced by the political elite's interests.

How the PESA has boosted forest conservation in India?

1. Mandated Representation: PESA mandates that all chairperson positions and at least half of the seats on local government councils in Scheduled Areas be reserved for Scheduled Tribes (STs). This political empowerment has directly influenced forest conservation efforts.
2. Increase in Tree Canopy: According to the study, areas with ST representation under PESA saw an average increase in tree canopy by 3% per year. This demonstrates a direct positive impact on forest cover.
3. Reduction in Deforestation: The same study found a significant reduction in the rate of deforestation in areas with ST representation. This indicates that when STs are involved in governance, there is a more pronounced commitment to preserving forests.
4. Resistance to Mining: With increased ST representation, communities were better able to resist mining and other large-scale commercial operations that lead to deforestation. Areas close to mines saw greater reductions in deforestation rates after PESA elections.
5. Comparison with FRA: The study shows that the Forest Rights Act (FRA) did not have additional impacts on conservation beyond those achieved by PESA, highlighting the effectiveness of PESA's approach to mandated political representation for conservation.

What should be done?

1. Implement PESA effectively: Ensure full application of PESA rules to empower Scheduled Tribes (STs) through local governance, especially in regions like Gujarat where implementation has lagged.
2. Empower Scheduled Tribes through PESA: Enhance the representation of STs in local governance by fully implementing PESA, which mandates significant electoral quotas for STs. This empowerment leads to better forest stewardship, demonstrated by increased tree canopy and reduced deforestation rates, and equips ST communities to effectively resist destructive industrial activities such as mining.
3. Focus on democratic decentralization: Enhancing representative and accountable local governance involves giving local actors discretionary power over resource management, proving more effective than merely administrative approaches.
4. Establish a single umbrella institution: Create a centralized institution that empowers marginalized voices, balancing development and conservation efforts. This would consolidate power into a meaningful democratic authority, ensuring more effective management of forest resources and better representation of vulnerable communities' interests.

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

Causes of drought in Maharashtra

Context: The article discusses the drought in Marathwada, Maharashtra. It explains how the rain-shadow effect and climate change worsen water scarcity. It highlights the problems with water-intensive crops like sugarcane and suggests solutions like better water management and crop diversification.

For detailed information on **Water Crisis in India** read this article here

What are the causes of drought in Maharashtra?

1. Rain-shadow Effect: Marathwada lies in the rain-shadow region of the Western Ghats, receiving only 600-800 mm of rainfall compared to 2,000-4,000 mm on the western side.
2. Climate Change: A 2016 IIT Gandhinagar study found increasing drought severity and frequency in central Maharashtra, worsening the situation.
3. Water-intensive Crops: Sugarcane, which requires 1,500-2,500 mm of water, occupies 4% of cropped area but consumes 61% of irrigation water. Government support has expanded its cultivation despite recommendations to ban it in low-rainfall areas.
4. Soil and Topography: Marathwada's clayey black soil (locally called "regur") has a low infiltration rate, causing water runoff instead of groundwater recharge. This soil retains water, leading to logging or runoff, not percolation.
5. Geographic Disadvantage: Upland areas face severe water scarcity as groundwater moves to valleys, leaving upland wells dry a few months after the monsoons.

What should be done?

1. Implement Supply-Side Solutions: Build water-conserving structures like contour trenches, earthen bunds, and gully plugs to capture rainwater runoff. Maharashtra has 1,845 large dams, but more small-scale structures are needed to manage water better.
2. Promote Water-Efficient Crops: Shift from water-intensive crops like sugarcane, which occupies 4% of cropped area but uses 61% of irrigation water, to drought-resistant crops like pulses and millets.
3. Government Policy Change: Follow the Maharashtra Water and Irrigation Commission's recommendation to ban sugarcane in areas with less than 1,000 mm of rainfall.
4. Use Employment Schemes: Utilize funds from the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme to design silt-trapping mechanisms and train farmers on desilting techniques.
5. Diversify Agriculture: Encourage high-value, low-water-using crops and diversify livelihoods to reduce dependency on water-intensive farming.
6. Address Groundwater Variability: Provide special support to upland areas where wells dry up after monsoons.

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

Subject: Internal Security

Topic- Various Security Forces and Agencies and their Mandate.

Benefits of a National Security Strategy

Context: The article argues that India needs a National Security Strategy (NSS). It emphasizes a holistic approach to national security, coordinated long-term planning, and strategic assessment. The NSS would help allocate resources effectively, signal intentions, and ensure government accountability.

For detailed information on **National Security Strategy of India** read Article 1, Article 2

What Problems Does the New Government Face in National Security?

1. Decision-making on Defense Investments: Choices like whether to build another aircraft carrier need to be made, highlighting resource allocation issues.
2. Implementing Theaterisation: This involves restructuring the military into unified commands, a complex process requiring clear direction and coordination.
3. Managing Strategic Relations: Balancing relationships with powerful nations like the United States and addressing competition with China is crucial.
4. Global Security Trends: Challenges such as climate change, pandemics, and evolving military technologies globally impact India's security environment, necessitating proactive and strategic responses.

What Are the Benefits of a National Security Strategy?

1. Strategic Assessment: Forces the government to undertake a comprehensive review of threats and opportunities, like China's growing naval capabilities. Without an NSS, these threats might be overlooked until they become immediate dangers.
2. Long-term Planning: Provides a coherent framework for prioritizing resources. For instance, it can help decide between investing in a new aircraft carrier for the Navy or raising a new infantry division for the Army, preventing waste on less strategic projects.
3. Clear Signaling: Clarifies India's strategic intent to both allies and adversaries, such as affirming its role as a net security provider in the Indian Ocean.
4. Coordination: Ensures synchronization among military services and national security agencies, promoting consistent efforts rather than episodic coordination.
5. Accountability: Introduces transparency, making the government's national security plans visible to Parliament and the public, enhancing trust and adherence to political leadership's intent.

_____

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