

9 PM Current Affairs Weekly Compilation

For UPSC CSE mains examination



3rd Week

Aug, 2024

Features :

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

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GS Paper 1

Subject: Indian Society

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

Women's Economic Empowerment in India

Context- Over a century ago, Indian women activists began campaigning for female social, political, and economic empowerment. They recognized that women's agency was constrained by financial dependency on male family members.

What are some of the Early Women's Organizations and Their Contributions?

- 1) **The Women's Indian Association-** In 1917, the Women's Indian Association was founded as the first national group focused on women's issues. Their publication, *Stri Dharma*, highlighted the struggles of women, including factory workers. Their activism led to laws banning night work for women and the 1929 Bombay Maternity Benefit Act, which provided eight weeks' wages around childbirth.
- 2) **The All-India Women's Conference (AIWC)-** In 1946, the AIWC approved the Indian Women's Charter, which called for better housing, separate kitchens and bathrooms, equal job opportunities, maternity benefits, and women's rights to consent on property matters and a share of their husband's income.
- 3) **National Planning Committee's -** The sub-committee on women, part of the National Planning Committee set up by Subhas Chandra Bose in 1939, supported the AIWC's ideas by calling for equal job opportunities, a common civil code, and gender-neutral inheritance laws.

What are the challenges faced by the women?

- 1) **Unpaid Domestic Work -** A major focus for these activists was advancing the rights of women in informal employment and acknowledging the value of unpaid domestic work. However, progress in these areas has been gradual.
- 2) **Low Economic Participation-** The World Economic Forum's 2024 Global Gender Gap Index ranks India 142nd out of 146 countries in economic participation. This low position highlights the ongoing struggle for women's economic freedom, as patriarchal barriers still restrict their independence.

A detailed article on **Female Labour Force Participation Rate** can be [read here](#).

- 3) **Inheritance Rights and Social Attitudes-** While inheritance laws have been updated to give women more rights, social attitudes can still undermine these changes. Women who receive equal benefits legally face societal backlash.

What should be the way forward?

- 1) Recognizing unpaid domestic work should go beyond just acknowledging women's resilience. It's important to provide economic support to homemakers through financial assistance.
- 2) Some states offer monthly financial support for women, like *Gruha Lakshmi* in Karnataka and *Lakshmi Bhandar* in West Bengal. These programs should be extended nationwide and updated for inflation.
- 3) Slow progress on gender equality is largely due to outdated attitudes. There is a need to address these issues now and work towards the goals set by past women leaders.

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

Secular Civil Code (SCC) in India

Context: The article discusses Prime Minister Modi's call for a Secular Civil Code (SCC) in India. It argues that the SCC would ensure equal legal rights for all citizens, regardless of religion, addressing legal inconsistencies and reducing judicial backlog.

For detailed information on **Uniform Civil Code (UCC) Debate** [read this article here](#)

What are the Current Problems with Personal Laws?

- 1. Inconsistency Across Communities:** Personal laws vary widely between religious communities, leading to legal inconsistencies. This creates confusion and unequal treatment under the law.
- 2. Discrimination Against Women:** Many personal laws are discriminatory, especially against women. For example, personal laws allow different rights for men and women, depending on their religion.
- 3. Legal Exploitation:** People can exploit these differences, as in the Sarla Mudgal case where a man converted to Islam to marry again, taking advantage of polygamy in Muslim law.

What is the Secular Civil Code (SCC)?

1. The Secular Civil Code (SCC) proposes a single set of civil laws for all citizens in India, regardless of religion.
2. It covers civil matters like marriage, divorce, inheritance, and adoption, ensuring equal legal rights for everyone.
3. The SCC aims to eliminate outdated and discriminatory personal laws, particularly those affecting women.

Why is the SCC Important?

- 1. Equality Under Law:** The SCC would ensure all citizens, regardless of religion, are treated equally under a single legal framework. This aligns with Babasaheb Ambedkar's vision of progress, especially for women.
- 2. Preventing Legal Exploitation:** Current personal laws allow exploitation, as seen in the Sarla Mudgal case, where a Hindu man converted to Islam to marry again, circumventing Hindu personal laws.
- 3. Reducing Judicial Backlog:** With nearly 4.70 crore cases pending in Indian courts as of March 2022, the judiciary is under significant strain. Implementing the SCC would simplify and standardize the legal framework, making it more accessible and understandable, thereby reducing this burden.
- 4. Constitutional Duty:** Article 44 of the Indian Constitution mandates the state to work towards a Uniform Civil Code, making the SCC a step towards fulfilling this constitutional directive.

How Have Other Democracies Implemented Similar Codes?

1. Countries like the United States, France, and Germany have one set of civil laws for all citizens, regardless of religion.
2. This approach has allowed them to maintain cultural diversity while ensuring equality before the law.

GS Paper 2

Subject: Indian Polity

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

Methods of enforcing human rights

Context: The article discusses two methods of enforcing human rights: economic or military sanctions and moral pressure through "naming and shaming." It examines the effectiveness of shaming as a strategy, especially in authoritarian regimes, and suggests focusing on building democratic institutions to better protect human rights.

What Are the Methods of Enforcing Human Rights?

1. The article outlines two main methods to enforce human rights standards globally. The first method involves economic sanctions or military interventions, which are typically employed by powerful nations.
2. The second method is "naming and shaming," where governments or organizations publicly condemn violations, a strategy that can be used by any country or group regardless of power.

How Effective is Naming and Shaming?

1. Naming and shaming can sometimes pressure governments to improve their human rights records, as seen in Myanmar and Ethiopia with the release of political prisoners.
2. However, authoritarian leaders like Vladimir Putin, Xi Jinping, and Kim Jong-un often ignore such condemnations. Notable successes include legal actions against dictators such as Augusto Pinochet and Slobodan Milošević, showing that international censure can lead to significant consequences.

What are the Challenges with Naming and Shaming?

1. Despite its successes, naming and shaming often fails to bring about substantial change, especially in countries with strong authoritarian governments that can resist or deny international pressure.
2. This method can result in only superficial changes without addressing deeper issues.

What Role Should the State Play in Protecting Human Rights?

1. The state should act as the **primary guardian of human rights**, ensuring personal liberty and justice within the framework of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
2. **Establishing strong institutions** to protect democratic norms and uphold human rights is crucial, as suggested by the need for a repression-free state.
3. **Naming and shaming can be effective** in holding violators accountable, as seen in the prosecution of dictators like Augusto Pinochet.
4. **Human rights must be deeply integrated into the national psyche** through democratic institutions, promoting long-term respect for human rights.
5. **The state must resist authoritarian tendencies**, focusing instead on promoting public welfare in an egalitarian environment.

Topic- Structure, Organization and Functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary— Ministries and Departments of the Government

Excessive Government Litigation Clogs India's Judicial System

Context: The article discusses how inefficient judicial processes and excessive government litigation create delays, raise costs, and hinder business. It emphasizes the need for effective judicial reforms and policies to reduce unnecessary government litigation, improve case management, and ensure better implementation of existing litigation policies.

For detailed information on **Issues with the justice system in India** [read this article here](#)

What Are the Current Challenges with Judicial Processes in India?

- 1. Prolonged Case Durations:** Inefficient judicial processes cause delays, as seen in the "Tareekh pe Tareekh" scenario, leading to prolonged uncertainties for all parties involved.
- 2. High Litigation Costs:** These delays escalate litigation costs, discouraging investment and stifling business operations.
- 3. Excessive Government Litigation:** The government is the biggest litigator in India, involved in 46% of all cases, as noted by the Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy in 2019. This excessive involvement not only drains resources but also clogs the judicial system, making it difficult to resolve disputes efficiently.
- 4. Risk Aversion in Bureaucracy:** Bureaucratic hesitation leads to unnecessary litigation, even in minor cases, as evidenced by appeals involving amounts less than ₹1000.
- 5. Weak Implementation of Policies:** The National Litigation Policy (NLP) introduced in 2010 lacked effective implementation, contributing to persistent judicial inefficiencies.
- 6. Overloaded Government Departments:** Ministries like Finance, Railways, and Defence have thousands of pending cases, further straining the judicial system.

What Steps Have Been Taken to Reduce Frivolous Litigation?

- 1. Legal Information Management and Briefing System (LIMBS):** Established in 2016 and updated in 2019, LIMBS serves as a unified platform to monitor legal cases involving the Government of India across all its ministries and departments. LIMBS aims to streamline case management and reduce the backlog within government litigation.
- 2. Efforts to minimize baseless litigation** include the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) and the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) raising the monetary thresholds for appeals, aiming to focus on more significant cases.
- 3. In the Union Budget 2024-25,** thresholds increased to ₹60 lakhs, ₹2 crores, and ₹5 crores for tax tribunals, high courts, and the Supreme Court, respectively.

What Policies Are Proposed to Improve Litigation Practices?

- 1. National Litigation Policy (NLP) 2010:** Aimed to make the government an efficient and responsible litigant, but lacked concrete thresholds and effective enforcement, leading to poor implementation.
- 2. NLP 2024:** Announced by the law minister, this policy focuses on overcoming previous shortcomings with robust implementation mechanisms, measurable targets, penalties for non-compliance, and strict limits on

government appeals.

3. Data-Driven Management: Utilization of systems like LIMBS to monitor and manage government litigation effectively.

Subject: Governance

Topic- Government Policies and Interventions for Development in various sectors and Issues arising out of their Design and Implementation.

Subsidy Rationalization in Indian States

Context- Subsidies in India are essential for welfare and social support, but a recent study shows that state finances have faced major challenges since the pandemic. States are experiencing revenue fluctuations and tighter budgets. For instance, Punjab's debt increased by 44.23% from 2016 to 2022, now making up 45% of its GDP.

What are the Factors Constraining State Finances?

- 1) **Implementation of Goods and Services Tax (GST)** - Following the implementation of GST, state governments have limited capacity to generate additional tax revenues due to reduced residual taxing authority.
- 2) **Committed Expenditures-** From 2017 to 2020, committed expenditures, including essential services like education and healthcare, salaries, administrative costs, and obligatory interest payments, accounted for 60% to 80% of total expenditures in most states.
- 3) **Burden of Explicit Subsidies-** Explicit subsidies, such as financial aid and insurance, strain state budgets. Funding these through borrowing is unsustainable because it limits resources for important infrastructure and investment and slows economic growth.

Read More- [Farm Subsidies in India](#)

What are the Challenges in Subsidy Management?

The report's case studies of seven states reveal common issues contributing to the high levels of explicit subsidies: -

- A) **Poor Targeting:** Subsidies are often not well-targeted, leading to inefficiencies.
- B) **Lack of Transparency:** There is a lack of transparency in how subsidies are distributed and utilized.
- C) **Debt Relief and Free Power Supply:** Debt relief for farmers and free power provisions have pushed state electricity boards into financial trouble.
- D) **Interest Subsidies:** Subsidies on loans further strain state finances.

What should be the way forward?

- 1) **Imperative for Fiscal Space Enhancement:** -There is a need for a careful reassessment and rationalization of subsidies to better align them with their intended objectives and ensure more efficient use of public funds.
- 2) **GST Reform and Fiscal Capacity** -The ongoing fiscal pressure in some states underscores the need for a prompt rationalization of GST rates and slabs to boost revenue and enhance fiscal capacity at both the Union and state levels.

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

Current State of Medicine Affordability in India

Context: The article discusses how recent government measures, like importing medicines and reducing duties, might harm India's domestic pharmaceutical industry. It suggests that these actions could make the country rely more on imports and hinder local production, which affects medicine affordability.

For detailed information on **Healthcare Expenditure In India** [read this article here](#)

What is the Current State of Medicine Affordability in India?

1. In 2021, nearly 47.1% of India's total health expenditure came from out-of-pocket payments by individuals.
2. The government tries to control medicine prices with the Drugs Price Control Order, 2013, but still faces challenges in making medicines affordable.

What Government Policies Are Affecting Medicine Prices?

1. **Global Tenders for Medicine Procurement:** The Department of Expenditure allows the Ministry of Health to import 120 medicines, including anti-diabetes and anti-cancer drugs, from global markets. This could strengthen the monopoly of foreign companies in India.
2. **Removal of Customs Duty:** In the 2024-25 budget, the government proposed removing a 10-12% customs duty on three expensive cancer medicines marketed by AstraZeneca to make them cheaper.
3. These policies might discourage local manufacturers, increasing India's dependence on imported medicines. This reliance could weaken the domestic pharmaceutical industry's competitiveness.

What Legal Provisions Can Support Local Medicine Production?

1. **Section 83 of the Patents Act:** Encourages inventions to be worked in India on a commercial scale and ensures they are available at reasonably affordable prices. Patents should not create a monopoly for imports.
2. **Compulsory Licences (CL):** Can be issued if a patented medicine is not available at an affordable price. An example is when a CL allowed an Indian company to reduce the price of a medicine from ₹3 lakh to ₹8,000. For detailed information on **Compulsory Licensing** [read this article here](#)
3. **Government-Use Licences:** Under Section 100 of the Patents Act, the government can authorize the domestic production of patented medicines to protect public health.
4. **Updating Biosimilar Guidelines:** Modernizing guidelines to eliminate unnecessary trials can reduce costs and time for domestic producers, enhancing local production capacity.

For detailed information on **Patent Rules 2024** [read this article here](#)

What Changes Are Needed in Regulatory Guidelines?

1. **Update and Simplify Biosimilar Approval Guidelines:** Current guidelines require mandatory animal studies and clinical trials, which are resource and time-intensive. These are no longer mandatory in countries like the U.S. and EU, where regulations are more stringent.
2. **Eliminating duplicative requirements,** as suggested by the International Generic and Biosimilar

Medicines Association, can reduce costs and increase patient access to affordable medicines.

3. **Align with Global Standards:** WHO and U.K. guidelines treat clinical trials for biosimilars as exceptions, not the rule. India should adopt similar standards to reduce unnecessary burdens on domestic producers.

Need for better understanding and guidelines on euthanasia

Context: The article discusses a Supreme Court judgment on euthanasia in India, specifically about withdrawing a Ryles tube from a terminally ill patient. It questions the ethical and legal clarity of such decisions, highlighting the need for better understanding and guidelines on euthanasia and end-of-life care.

For detailed information on **The Debate on Euthanasia** [read this article here](#)

What is the Case About?

1. **Case Background:** The Supreme Court of India ruled on a case involving Harish Rana, a 32-year-old man in a vegetative state for 11 years.
2. **Parent's Request:** Harish's parents requested the removal of a Ryles tube, which provides nutrition through the nose, arguing it was not essential for life support.
3. **Supreme Court Decision:** The court denied the request, stating that a Ryles tube is not considered life support.

Why is the Verdict Controversial?

1. **Conflicting Definitions:** In 2018, the Supreme Court allowed "passive euthanasia," meaning natural death can occur by not using life-prolonging measures in terminal cases. However, the Court stated that a Ryles tube is not considered life support, complicating decisions on its removal.
2. **Ethical Principles:** It challenges ethical principles:
 - a) **Beneficence:** Acting for the patient's benefit is questionable as continuing treatment may prolong suffering.
 - b) **Non-maleficence:** The decision may cause harm by prolonging a low-quality life.
 - c) **Autonomy:** Harish's parents are denied the right to choose for their son's dignity in death.
3. **Cultural Impact:** The verdict reflects cultural fears around death and dying, viewing the withdrawal of feeding as taboo, despite the patient's vegetative state and suffering.

What Should be Done?

1. **Clarify Legal Definitions:** There should be clear legal distinctions between euthanasia and withdrawing futile life-sustaining measures. This confusion is evident in the denial of Ryles tube removal for Harish Rana.
2. **Promote Early Palliative Care:** Integrate palliative care early in treatment to avoid prolonged suffering, as suggested by the potential benefits it could have offered Harish Rana's family.
3. **Educate on Patient Rights:** Increase public awareness about patient rights and available options such as Advance Care Planning and Advance Medical Directives to empower individuals to make informed decisions about their care and end-of-life options.

Mark Inflation in Indian School Board Examinations

Context -School boards in India are often accused of inflating marks for classes 10 and 12, mainly due to high pass percentages. In 2023, the pass rate was 85% for class 10 and 82% for class 12, with 61% of class 10 students and 56% of class 12 students scoring over 60%. This high concentration of high marks, known as mark compression, accompanies mark inflation.

What are the issues with Mark inflation and mark compression?

- 1) It damages the credibility of the education system and hurts students' prospects.
- 2) Students might not be adequately prepared for higher education or employment, leading to increased demand for entrance exams as a solution to these problems.

What are the steps taken to address this?

- 1) Marks from school board exams are often compared with national tests to check for inflation. In India, exams like NEET, JEE, and CUET are used for this comparison.
- 2) The National Achievement Survey (NAS), conducted by NCERT, assesses students in classes 10 and below using 'Item Response Theory' to estimate scores in subjects like English, Math, Science, Social Science, and a regional language.

Read More- [Findings of National Achievement Survey \(NAS\) 2021](#)

What are the limitations of these comparisons and surveys?

- 1) **Tests**- These tests are mainly for admissions and do not fully cover the school board curriculum. Many students get extra coaching to excel in these tests, making them unreliable for comparing educational standards across states.
- 2) **NAS Survey**- It does not cover classes 11 and 12 or link scores to curriculum design and school efficiency, making it an ineffective benchmark for detecting mark inflation or compression.

What should be the way forward?

- 1) **Automated Question Paper Setting**- Question papers should be automated with clear guidelines to ensure consistency in question formats and expected answers.
- 2) **Publication of Guidebooks**- Guidebooks should be provided to students, showing how learning outcomes are assessed and how marks are awarded, with examples included.
- 3) **Codification of Processes**- The process from setting question papers to publishing results should be clearly defined and include detailed steps for printing, distributing, and collecting answer scripts, with regular self-checks to ensure accuracy.
- 4) **Partial Automation of Valuation**- Using partial automation, like scanning and online grading, can reduce errors in marking.
- 5) **Access and Revaluation**- Students should have free access to their answer scripts post-results and the option to apply for revaluation at a nominal fee.
- 6) **Transparent Awarding of Marks**- The process for awarding marks on difficult or irrelevant questions should be clear. The board of examiners should publish meeting minutes to explain question paper quality, difficulty levels, and marking decisions.
- 7) **Standardized Scores**- Results should be shown in two ways: the actual marks and standardized scores. Standardized scores, which use statistical methods to account for mark distribution and question difficulty, offer a more accurate comparison of student performance across different boards and years.

Serious threat of antimicrobial resistance (AMR) in India

Context: The article discusses the serious threat of antimicrobial resistance (AMR) in India, highlighting efforts by the Kerala government and pharmaceutical companies to reduce the misuse of antibiotics. It emphasizes the need for responsible antibiotic use to prevent AMR.

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

What is Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR)?

Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) is a critical public health issue where microbes become resistant to antimicrobial medicines such as antibiotics, antivirals, antifungals, and antiparasitics. Here are key points about AMR:

- a) **Global Impact:** AMR caused approximately 4.95 million deaths globally in 2019, with 1.27 million deaths directly attributed to it.
- b) **Impact in India:** In 2019, India reported 297,000 AMR-related deaths.
- c) **Children's Risk:** One in five AMR-related deaths occurred among children under five years of age, highlighting the severe risk to vulnerable populations.

How is Kerala Addressing AMR?

Kerala is proactively addressing antimicrobial resistance (AMR) through several strategic initiatives:

1. **State Coordination Committee:** Established to oversee AMR control measures.
2. **District-Level Efforts:** Appointment of coordinators and formation of AMR squads in districts.
3. **Public Awareness Campaigns:** Targeted at retail shops, identified as key points in AMR spread.
4. **Operation Amrith:** Launched in January 2024 to conduct surprise inspections in pharmacies to curb over-the-counter sales of antibiotics.
5. **Regulatory Actions:** Strict actions against shops violating prescription norms, which led to a 30% decline in antimicrobial sales in the state.

What are the Challenges in Addressing AMR?

1. **Overuse in Retail Outlets:** Despite regulatory efforts like Kerala's Operation Amrith, antibiotics continue to be sold over-the-counter, leading to misuse and increased resistance.
2. **Exposure Through Migration and Trade:** Kerala faces unique challenges due to antibiotic-resistant pathogens brought in through vegetable supplies from Tamil Nadu and human migration, exposing the population to new strains of resistant bacteria.
3. **Balancing Access and Regulation:** Experts suggest that while restricting higher-tier antibiotics, first-line antibiotics should remain accessible, especially in regions with limited medical services, ensuring essential care while preventing resistance escalation.

Why are Pharma Companies Involved in AMR Stewardship?

1. Pharmaceutical companies have a vested interest in ensuring that antibiotics remain effective for longer periods.
2. By promoting responsible usage and marketing practices, they aim to prevent the rapid development of resistance which would render these drugs ineffective.

What Should be Done?

- 1. Implement Strict Regulation:** As demonstrated by Kerala's Operation Amrith, strict regulations and surprise raids can effectively reduce the sale of antimicrobials without prescriptions, cutting down misuse.
- 2. Educational Campaigns:** Increase awareness among the public and healthcare providers about the proper use of antibiotics, similar to Kerala's campaigns in retail shops and Cipla's Oasis program for medical professionals.
- 3. Promote Responsible Marketing:** Encourage pharmaceutical companies to engage in responsible marketing and stewardship programs, like those conducted by Cipla and Venus Remedies, to prolong the effectiveness of antibiotics and prevent resistance.

Need for better mental health policies in India

Context: The article discusses the urgent need for better mental health policies in India, highlighting the high number of medical student suicides and overall mental health issues. It criticizes the current low funding and poor policy attention, suggests learning from India's HIV-AIDS program strategies, and calls for community-based and affordable mental health interventions.

For detailed information on **Issues with Mental Health and Mental Healthcare in India** [read this article here](#)

What is the Issue with Mental Health in India?

- 1. High Suicide Rates:** The National Medical Commission reported 122 suicides among medical students over the past five years, highlighting severe mental health issues within this group.
- 2. Prevalence of Mental Health Conditions:** A survey by the Commission revealed that 27.8% of undergraduate students had mental-health conditions and 31.3 per cent of postgraduate students had suicidal thoughts.
- 3. General Population Affected:** The 2015-16 National Mental Health Survey indicated that 10.6% of Indians over 18 suffer from mental disorders, with a significant 16% in the productive age group of 30-49 years affected.
- 4. Inadequate Resources:** The survey also showed an 80% treatment gap due to insufficient human resources and facilities to manage mental health effectively.

What initiative have been taken for Mental Health in India?

1. The **National Medical Commission formed a Task Force** for medical students' mental health, addressing 122 suicides in five years.
2. The **2014 National Mental Health Policy** and the **2017 Mental Health Act** aimed to prioritize mental health but lack clear implementation plans.
3. The **Union government allocated Rs 1,000 crore for mental health** in the latest budget, with most funds directed to tertiary institutions.
4. Civil society groups like Banyan in Tamil Nadu developed evidence-based interventions, such as the **Home Again program**, focusing on homeless and mentally ill women, highlighting community-based care models.

What Can India Learn from the HIV-AIDS Program?

- 1. Strategic Interventions:** Use epidemiological evidence to craft interventions. This approach helped in HIV-AIDS control and can guide mental health strategies.

2. Modeling Different Options: Tailor interventions for different regions and groups. This method provided cost-effectiveness data for scaling up HIV-AIDS programs.

3. Advocacy and Stigma Reduction: Engage parliamentarians, media, and judiciary to address systemic issues and reduce stigma, as done in the HIV-AIDS program.

4. Community Engagement: Allocate resources for community involvement. The HIV-AIDS program devoted 25% of its budget to engaging community leaders.

5. Autonomous Agency: Create an agency like NACO to coordinate efforts, mobilize resources, and ensure comprehensive mental health interventions, balancing institutional care with community involvement.

What Should be Done?

1. Implement Community-Based Interventions: Learn from successful programs like Banyan's Home Again, which addresses the needs of homeless mentally ill women through a five-stage process: awareness, rescue, treatment, rehabilitation, and reintegration.

2. The government needs to prioritize mental health and create community-based and affordable interventions.

3. The task force for medical students' mental health is a good start, but broader action is needed to address mental health challenges for all citizens.

Challenges and Solutions of the Indian Education System

Context: The article discusses the issue of education in India, including its performance in the **PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment)** tests, where India lagged significantly behind other countries. This serves as an example of the broader problems in the Indian education system, such as low foundational literacy and numeracy, which the article addresses by suggesting ways to enhance community involvement and support for teachers and students.

For detailed information on **Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)** [read this article here](#)

For detailed information on **Issues with India's education system** [read this article here](#)

How Far Behind is India in Education Compared to China?

1. India was 12 years behind China in math, science, and reading in the 2009 PISA test.

2. Between 2010 and 2023, China's higher education enrolment rose from 26.5% to 60.2%, while India's remained between 25-28% since 2017.

3. Low foundational literacy in India contributes to 44% lower labor productivity compared to China.

What are the Main Challenges in India's Education System?

1. Teacher and Student Disengagement: 8 out of 10 students don't reach grade 8, and 25% of teachers often don't show up to class, indicating deep-seated disillusionment.

2. Ineffective Community Involvement: Despite 88% of schools having School Management Committees, parents and teachers are largely unaware of their roles, leading to poor community engagement.

3. Limited Teaching Time: Teachers spend only 37% of their time teaching, and lack of proper training further reduces their effectiveness, as seen in the low impact of ad-hoc training sessions.

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What Should be Done?

- 1. Utilize Technology to Enhance Teacher Efficiency:** Technology can significantly reduce the administrative burden on teachers and improve their effectiveness. The **Chimple app**, used in Satya Bharti Schools, allowed teachers to assign tasks based on a child's ability, leading to better learning outcomes. 94% of teachers found this model helpful. Implementing similar technological solutions can free up more time for teachers to focus on teaching, allowing them to better support students.
- 2. Recognize and Motivate Teachers:** Programs like **Madhya Pradesh's Classroom Heroes**, which celebrate top performers, should be expanded to boost teacher motivation.
- 3. Enhance Parental Involvement:** Schools with strong parental engagement are 10 times more likely to improve learning outcomes. Providing parents with clear, contextual information on their child's progress can help bridge gaps.
- 4. Strengthen Community Involvement:** Learn from Vietnam, where strong community expectations improved student discipline and PISA scores, even with low educational spending.

Topic- Important Aspects of Governance, Transparency and Accountability, E-governance- applications, models, successes, limitations, and potential; Citizens Charters, Transparency & Accountability and institutional and other measures.

The challenges the Indian government faces with lateral entry into administration

Context: The article discusses the challenges the Indian government faces with lateral entry in administration. It argues that public administration differs greatly from corporate management, requiring systemic reforms rather than just bringing in private sector talent.

What is Lateral Entry and How is the Government Using It?

- Lateral entry involves bringing professionals from the private sector into government roles, particularly at the mid-level.
- The government sees lateral entry as a solution to administrative inefficiencies, believing that private sector talent can overcome the shortcomings of civil servants selected through the UPSC.
- Successful examples include Nandan Nilekani, who created the Aadhaar system, and S Ramadorai, who developed a skill development system; both were given Cabinet Minister rank to ensure authority.

What are the Differences Between Public Administration and Corporate Governance?

1. Objective Clarity:

- a) Corporate Governance:** Focuses on clear, unchanging objectives like profit maximization and increasing stock values.
- b) Public Administration:** Deals with diverse, changing objectives across sectors like education, health, and security, which shift with government policies.

2. Operational Flexibility:

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- a) **Corporate Governance:** Operates with stable goals, allowing for consistent strategies.
- b) **Public Administration:** Must adapt to varying policies and political leadership.

3. Interaction with Politicians:

- a) **Corporate Governance:** Interacts with politicians on a case-by-case basis.
- b) **Public Administration:** Requires continuous collaboration with politicians to implement policies.

Why is the Government's Approach Criticized?

1. The government assumes that the flaws in public administration are due to individual officers rather than systemic issues.
2. Bringing in private sector professionals at lower levels, like joint secretary or director, is seen as ineffective due to existing bureaucratic constraints. Successful lateral entries, like Nandan Nilekani's work on Aadhaar, occurred at higher levels with Cabinet Minister rank.
3. The civil service system is criticized for being outdated and rigid, deepening the bureaucratic model inherited from the British.
4. The real challenge lies in reforming the overall system, not just replacing individuals.

What Steps are Needed for Systemic Change?

1. **Political Ownership:** Central and state-level political support, led by the Prime Minister and Chief Ministers, is crucial.
2. **Collaboration with States:** Just as GST was implemented through state cooperation, administrative reforms require state acceptance.
3. **Learning from Other Countries:** Studying systems in Australia, New Zealand, and OECD countries for possible adaptation.
4. **Periodic Meetings:** Regular meetings between the Cabinet Secretary, DAR&PG, state chief secretaries, and GOI secretaries could improve coordination.

Subject: Social Justice

Topic- Welfare Schemes for Vulnerable Sections of the population by the Centre and States and the Performance of these Schemes; Mechanisms, Laws, Institutions and Bodies constituted for the Protection and Betterment of these Vulnerable Sections.

Addressing Violence Against Women Doctors

Context- A 31-year-old trainee doctor was raped and murdered at R G Kar Medical College and Hospital in Kolkata, sparking nationwide outrage. The postmortem suggests possible gang-rape, and the Kolkata High Court moved the case to the CBI on August 14 due to police mishandling. According to the National Crime Records Bureau, India reported nearly 90 rape cases daily in 2022, with numbers rising each year.

What are the issues faced by women doctors?

- 1) **Hospital Infrastructure:** - The hospital lacks dedicated, safe, and hygienic restrooms for female doctors, forcing the Kolkata case victim to use a seminar hall for rest after a 36-hour shift due to inadequate facilities.
- 2) **Violence Against Doctors-** The 2015 Indian Medical Association (IMA) survey found that over 75% of doctors in India encountered workplace violence, with women, who represent 30% of the medical workforce, being more vulnerable than their male colleagues.

A detailed article on Women Safety in India- Challenges and Way Forward can be [read here](#).

- 3) **Central Protection Act** -The Central Protection Act, proposed in the Lok Sabha in 2022 to protect medical professionals from violence, has still not been enacted.

What are the Factors Contributing to Violence?

- 1) **Root Causes** -Violence mainly stems from unmet patient expectations, high out-of-pocket costs, and poor communication between doctors and patients.
- 2) **Inadequate Healthcare** -People need free and accessible healthcare, and when they don't receive it, their frustration often falls on doctors instead of the broader healthcare system.
- 3) **Insufficient Healthcare Spending** -Healthcare spending is insufficient, with India investing less than 2% of its GDP, whereas the World Health Organization recommends a minimum of 6%.
- 4) **Low Conviction Rate-** Despite 25 states having laws to protect medical professionals, convictions remain rare. The Indian Medical Association (IMA) contends that the Centre's claim that existing laws are adequate is flawed and calls for the introduction of a Central Act.

Read More- [Women Safety in India](#)

What steps can be taken to address violence against women doctors?

- 1) **Arming Women Doctors** -The central government should equip women doctors, especially those working night shifts in public hospitals, with taser or stun guns. Both central and state governments need to set aside funds to buy these devices for them.
- 2) **Self-Defense Training and Security Measures** -They should receive self-defense training and, like some Haryana hospitals, have bouncers during night shifts. Schools should also teach girls self-defense to help them protect themselves.
- 3) **Enhancing Hospital Security** -Robust security measures, such as installing CCTV cameras and employing trained security personnel, should be implemented, especially in government and small-to-medium private facilities.
- 4) **Adopting Kerala's Model Nationwide** -There is a need to implement Kerala's approach across the country by strengthening laws, responding quickly to violence, and using the effective Code of Grey Protocol.

5) Infrastructure and Working Conditions:

- A) Limiting working hours for doctors, especially postgraduate students
- B) Addressing mental health issues among medical professionals
- C) Establishing hospital protection committees

- 6) **National Medical Commission's Safety Advisory** -The National Medical Commission's advisory on improving safety in medical colleges needs to be effectively implemented.

- 7) **Boosting Health Spending-** Increasing GDP spending on health and strengthening the public health system is essential to ensure proper treatment at hospitals and reduce violence against healthcare workers.

Lack of representation of SC/ST officers in senior government roles

Context: The article discusses the lack of representation of SC/ST officers in senior government roles. It suggests that age-related barriers prevent them from reaching top positions and proposes a fixed tenure for all civil servants to ensure fairer promotion opportunities.

What Concern Did Rahul Gandhi Raise?

1. Rahul Gandhi, in his July 29, 2024, parliamentary address, pointed out the **lack of SC/ST officers involved in the 2024 Budget-making process.**
2. He mentioned that only one minority and one OBC officer were part of this important exercise.
3. Gandhi aimed to emphasize the underrepresentation of poor and deprived sections in key government policy-making roles.
4. The Union Finance Minister countered by pointing out the lack of SC/ST representation in the Rajiv Gandhi Charitable Trust and Foundation.
5. This response shifted the focus to political blame rather than addressing the core issue of representation in government roles.

What Is the Real Problem?

1. **Underrepresentation of SC/ST Officers:** There is a significant lack of SC/ST officers in senior government roles, as highlighted by Rahul Gandhi during his parliamentary address on July 29, 2024.
2. **Dominance of Upper Castes:** Data from December 2022 shows that out of 322 senior officers, only 16 were SC, 13 ST, and 39 OBC, while 254 were from the General category, reflecting upper caste dominance.
4. **Age-Related Barriers:** SC/ST officers typically join the civil service later due to extended age limits, causing them to retire before reaching senior positions. In contrast, General category officers, who enter earlier, have more time to rise in ranks.
4. **No Reservation in Promotions:** There is no reservation for promotions in Class A services, further limiting SC/ST officers' advancement to top roles.

What Should be Done?

1. **Increase Representation:** Ensure SC/ST officers have greater representation in senior government roles. As of December 2022, only 4% of Secretary-level and 4.9% of Joint Secretary-level officers are from SC/ST categories.
2. **Implement Fixed Tenure:** Introduce a fixed tenure of 35 years for all civil servants, irrespective of entry age. This would help SC/ST officers reach top positions before retirement.
3. **Age Limit Adjustments:** Consider lowering the current age limits to ensure all officers retire by 67 years of age, while allowing sufficient time for promotions.
4. **Form an Independent Committee:** Establish a committee with adequate SC/ST, OBC, and PwBD representation to review and implement these proposals, ensuring fairer opportunities in government services.
5. **Address Political Distractions:** Focus on structural changes rather than political blame games, which divert attention from real issues.

Crimes Against Women in India

Context- The recent rape and murder of a young doctor in Kolkata has once again brought attention to the issue of women's safety in India. Despite strengthened rape laws since the infamous 2012 Delhi gang rape case, the problem persists.

What are the atrocities faced by the women in India?

- 1) **Dowry Deaths-** In 2022, India reported 6,516 dowry deaths, or one every 90 minutes. The problem is worsened by low conviction rates, as accused individuals often pay "blood money" to victims' families. This practice, sometimes accepted by the police and courts, weakens the justice system and lets offenders escape serious punishment.
- 2) **Domestic Violence** - It is inadequately tackled across different social and economic backgrounds. The maximum three-year prison term limits effective punishment. As a result, offenders are often released on bail due to lenient rules for minor crimes, leaving victims feeling ignored and unsupported.
- 3) **Stalking and Harassment-** They are poorly addressed due to weak legal responses. Lenient bail rules allow offenders to keep engaging in abusive behavior. For example, in the Kolkata case, the accused, who had a history of violence, faced minimal legal consequences.

Read more- [Women Safety in India- Challenges and Way Forward](#)

What should be the way forward?

- 1) **Comprehensive Legal Response** - To enhance women's safety, the law should cover all types of abuse and impose penalties based on the severity of the crime. Serious offenses like forcible disrobing or persistent stalking should have harsher penalties than minor harassment.
- 2) **Reform of Bail and Judicial Procedures-** The bail system, along with other judicial processes, needs reform. In 2022, 64% of dowry death cases were settled without a trial, and only 35% of those that went to trial resulted in convictions. This shows that perpetrators do not fear legal consequences.
- 3) **Need for Fast-Track Justice** - The criminal justice system must handle cases involving crimes against women more quickly. Sentences should be proportional to the severity of the crime. Additionally, courts need to take a firm stance against out-of-court settlements, which are promoted by the slow legal process and societal norms.

The Importance of Reservation in Lateral Entry

Context- The recent job ad for 45 senior posts by lateral entry, which lacked reservation provisions, seems to go against the Indian principle of "antyodaya" which aims to uplift and include the most disadvantaged in government and judiciary. Despite progress in elections, Dalits and other marginalized groups still struggle to achieve fair representation in these areas.

What are Potential Benefits and Concerns of lateral entry?

1) Potential Benefits-

- A) Bring new and diverse perspectives
- B) Introduce new approaches to understanding complex issues

- C) Reflect a shift from traditional governance models
- D) Incorporate technical experts

2) **Concerns-**

- A) The ad calls for "talented and motivated Indian nationals" to help build the nation. However, history shows that without quotas, candidates from Dalit and Scheduled Tribe (ST) communities are often overlooked, even if they are highly qualified.
- B) A key issue with the lateral entry process is determining who qualifies as a technical or domain expert and whether these experts reflect a diverse mix of castes and social groups
- C) It can reinforce the power of privileged groups and hinder efforts to give fair opportunities to those disadvantaged by their caste.

A detailed article on **Lateral Entry** can be [read here](#).

D) Social justice means not just providing equal opportunities but ensuring fairness in all areas, including politics, economics, and administration. Introducing lateral entry without reservations could undermine these principles and the fairness of the recruitment process.

What should be the way forward?

- 1) Interviewers must approach the process with impartiality, setting aside their social and caste positions.
- 2) Regular assessment of the social composition of recruits should be standard practice.
- 3) Interventions to address social inequalities in recruitment should be implemented.
- 4) In Indian academia, addressing the "Not Found Suitable" (NFS) issue requires a review committee to investigate these decisions and the establishment of clear, objective criteria for eligibility and qualifications to ensure fairness and equal opportunities.

Subject: International Relations

Topic- India and its neighborhood- relations.

India's relationship with its neighboring countries

Context: The article discusses India's relationship with its neighboring countries, highlighting challenges and shifts in policy from past to present leaders. It critiques India's approach as overly assertive, which has strained relations, and suggests adopting softer, more inclusive strategies like scholarships and cultural exchanges to improve ties and respect among neighbors.

For detailed information on **India's neighbourhood dilemmas** [read this article here](#)

What is India's historical approach to neighborhood relations?

- 1. **Vajpayee's Initiative:** In 1999, Atal Bihari Vajpayee initiated peace with Pakistan by taking a bus ride to Lahore, emphasizing the importance of good neighborly relations.
- 2. **Manmohan Singh's Policy:** In 2008, he promoted the "neighborhood first" policy, prioritizing regional relationships.
- 3. **Modi's Actions:** In 2014, Narendra Modi invited regional leaders to his swearing-in and made surprise

visits, like the one to Lahore in 2015.

4. Current Scenario: Despite efforts, relations have strained, with issues in Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nepal, and Sri Lanka reflecting challenges in India's neighborhood approach.

What are the consequences of India's current neighborhood strategy?

1. Strained Relations with Bangladesh: India's closest ally for 15 years, Bangladesh, is now in crisis. Dhaka's role in securing India's northeast is critical, but the current instability jeopardizes this relationship. For detailed information on **Sheikh Hasina's Exit and India Bangladesh Relations** [read this article here](#)

2. Deterioration with Pakistan: Since the August 2019 changes in Jammu and Kashmir, Pakistan has almost fully broken off from India, leading to heightened tensions.

3. Increased Distrust with Nepal: Nepal altered its national maps to include Indian territories, showing a significant rise in distrust. This move was unanimously endorsed by Nepal's Parliament.

4. Growing Anti-India Sentiments: In Sri Lanka, Maldives, and Bhutan, India's perceived hectoring and nationalist rhetoric have caused negative reactions. For instance, the rise of Mohamed Muizzu in Maldives was fueled by an "India Out" campaign.

5. Pressure on Bhutan: Bhutan faces intense pressure from China to "settle" its border disputes, potentially compromising its close relationship with India.

6. Media and Public Opinion: Aggressive media portrayals and ultranationalist social media have exacerbated these issues, worsening India's image in the region.

What Should be Done?

1. Adopt Softer Diplomacy: Shift focus from "muscular" strategies to cultural and intellectual engagement. Example: Offer more scholarships and internships to students from neighboring countries.

2. Strengthen Educational Ties: Improve academic institutions to attract students from neighboring countries who currently study overseas. Example: Encourage cultural performances and movie exchanges.

3. Reduce Religious Overtones: Avoid highlighting religious visits in diplomacy, as seen in Nepal and Bangladesh, which may alienate Muslim-majority neighbors.

4. Engage in Inclusive Policies: Respect sovereignty and public opinion in neighboring countries. Example: The 2015 blockade against Nepal harmed relations.

5. Promote Economic Cooperation: Continue vital economic linkages like power trade with Nepal, Bhutan, and Bangladesh, while reducing nationalist rhetoric in the media.

Issues associated with India Bangladesh BIT

Context: The article discusses the potential risks and challenges faced by Indian companies operating in Bangladesh following the resignation and fleeing of Sheikh Hasina. It also highlights the legal frameworks available to protect these investments, with a focus on the India-Bangladesh Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT). Presently, Indian companies that have heavily invested in various sectors like edible oil, power, infrastructure, and pharmaceuticals face the risk of adverse regulatory changes that could harm their investments.

What are the legal Protections that are available for Indian Investors?

Indian companies operating in Bangladesh can rely on three broad legal frameworks to protect their investments:

- 1) Domestic laws of Bangladesh,
- 2) Contracts between the investor and the government or local companies, and
- 3) International law, particularly the India-Bangladesh BIT.

What is the level of protection provided by the Domestic and international Laws?

Domestic laws: While domestic laws, even of Bangladesh also, provide some level of protection, these laws can be unilaterally changed by the state.

International Law: International law, especially the BIT, plays a crucial role in protecting foreign investments by imposing conditions on the host state's regulatory behavior. The BIT prevents unlawful expropriation and ensures fair and equitable treatment (FET) of investments. It also allows foreign investors to sue the host state in international tribunals if their rights are violated, known as investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS).

How India-Bangladesh Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT) can be useful?

The India-Bangladesh BIT, signed in 2009, contains broad investment protection features, including an **unqualified FET provision** that can help Indian companies challenge adverse regulatory actions by Bangladesh.

However, in 2017, on India's insistence, India and Bangladesh adopted **Joint Interpretative Notes (JIN)** to clarify various terms in the BIT. It diluted some of the investment protection features. For instance,

- 1) Taxation measures were excluded from the BIT's ambit,
- 2) FET provision was linked to customary international law, which requires a higher threshold to prove a treaty violation.

While this JIN was designed to safeguard the regulatory powers of capital-importing countries like Bangladesh, it may prove disadvantageous for Indian investors in Bangladesh.

Conclusion-India's outbound foreign direct investment (FDI) has grown significantly, with the country ranking among the top 20 capital-exporting nations. Therefore, it is essential for India to evolve its investment treaty practices to protect its interests as both a capital exporter and a host country.

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

Economic Implications of China's Slowdown for India

Context- Recent data shows that China experienced a record \$15 billion net outflow of foreign investment from April to June. This raises concerns about China's slowing economic growth, which could have important effects on the global economy, including India.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has confirmed that China's economy is slowing down. After growing at 5.2% in 2023, it is projected to slow to 5% in 2024 and further to 3.3% by 2029.

What are the Challenges faced by Chinese economy?

1) Internal Challenges-

- A) **Stagnant Consumption:** Demand within the country remains sluggish.
- B) **Real Estate Issues:** The real estate sector is experiencing decreased demand.

- C) **High Government Debt:** Elevated debt levels are constraining economic flexibility.
- D) **Decelerating Productivity:** Productivity growth is slowing.
- E) **Aging Population:** The demographic shift towards an older population is impacting economic growth.

2) External Challenges-

- A) China's export sector is facing obstacles like tariffs and trade restrictions, especially from the US and Europe, which are affecting its global trade.
- B) China's steel sector, the world's biggest, is struggling. Steel prices have dropped to their lowest in years, numerous mills are reporting financial losses. This situation is aggravated by decreased investment in real estate and increased export duties, such as those imposed by the EU on Chinese electric vehicles.

Read more- [Strengthening China-India Relations](#)

What are the Economic Implications for India?

- 1) **Steel Industry-** Domestic steel prices in India have hit a three-year low, even though consumption rose by 12% in 2023-24 due to increased government spending and private investment. This drop threatens recent growth trends and could impact government programs like the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) for specialty steel.
- 2) **Chinese Imports on India's Trade Deficit-** Increased imports of subsidized Chinese steel and a rising influx of cheap Chinese manufactured goods are likely to widen India's trade deficit with China. This growing trade imbalance may also reduce demand for Indian goods and services in the Chinese market
- 3) **Potential Chinese Stimulus Effects-** If China launches a stimulus program with subsidies and low-cost loans for its manufacturers, it could lead to tougher competition for Indian businesses due to a rise in cheaper Chinese products.

Way ahead- The Economic Survey's suggestion to boost Chinese foreign direct investment (FDI) needs careful thought. The government should create a practical FDI policy that focuses on real benefits and uses the opportunity to tackle ongoing border issues.

Concerns About China's Trade Practices

Context: The article discusses concerns about China's trade practices, focusing on its growing export dominance, especially in sectors like electric vehicles. Despite various global trade restrictions, China's exports continue to rise, puzzling experts and challenging conventional economic policies.

For detailed information on **US-China trade war affected global trade** [read this article here](#)

What Are the Concerns About China's Trade Practices?

- 1. China is accused of exporting excess capacity, particularly in emerging sectors like electric vehicles (EVs), raising concerns in the U.S. and Europe.
- 2. China might be using unconventional or concealed subsidies to boost exports, or its firms may be very efficient in mastering new technologies.

How Has China's Trade Changed Over Time?

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- 1. Rising Imports:** From the mid-1980s to 2008, China's import-to-GDP ratio more than doubled, increasing from about 14% to around 33%. This reflected China's trade liberalization and global integration.
- 2. Export Dominance:** China's current-account balance shifted from a 4% GDP deficit to a nearly 10% surplus. This was due to aggressive export-promotion policies, including currency manipulation and restrictions on foreign capital.
- 3. WTO Accession:** After joining the World Trade Organization in 2001, China's share of global manufacturing exports surged from less than 1% in 1985 to 12% by 2007, reaching up to 50% in sectors like apparel and footwear.
- 4. Continued Growth:** Despite global pressures and policy changes, China's share of global manufacturing exports further increased to 22% by 2022. This shows the resilience of China's export strategy.

What Steps Has China Taken to Boost Exports?

- 1. Currency Manipulation:** China kept its currency, the renminbi, undervalued to make its exports cheaper. This helped its foreign reserves grow to \$4 trillion.
- 2. Export Promotion Strategy:** China limited foreign capital inflows and accumulated foreign exchange to maintain a competitive exchange rate, boosting export competitiveness.
- 3. Government Stimulus:** Post-2008, China invested heavily in infrastructure, indirectly supporting the export sector by strengthening the economy.

How Did Global Policies React to China's Rising Exports?

1. The U.S. pressured China to let its currency, the renminbi, appreciate, leading to a 50% increase over a decade.
2. The U.S. also implemented higher tariffs on Chinese goods under Presidents Donald Trump and Joe Biden.
3. These policies aimed to reduce China's export dominance but had limited success, as China's exports continued to grow significantly.

What Should Be the Focus Now?

1. There is a need to understand why China's exports are still increasing despite these measures.
2. It might be due to hidden subsidies or because Chinese companies are very efficient, especially in new technologies.
3. The U.S. and Europe should consider these factors before deciding on further actions.

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

India's PM Historic Visit to Ukraine:

Context: The article discusses Prime Minister Narendra Modi's upcoming visit to Ukraine, the first by an Indian PM. The visit will focus on bilateral relations, ongoing conflict, and India's stance of promoting diplomacy between Russia and Ukraine while maintaining ties with both.

For detailed information on **Ukraine conflict and its implications for India** [read this article here](#)

What is the significance of Prime Minister Modi's visit to Ukraine?

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- 1. Historic First Visit:** This marks the first visit by an Indian Prime Minister to Ukraine since establishing diplomatic relations over 30 years ago, highlighting a significant step in bilateral relations.
- 2. Focus on Diplomacy:** India will emphasize its stance on resolving the ongoing Ukraine conflict through diplomacy and dialogue, maintaining neutrality without directly blaming Russia.
- 3. Strategic Balance:** The visit seeks to balance India's deepening ties with the West and its longstanding relationship with Russia, despite Western sanctions on Russia and U.S. concerns about India's continued trade with Moscow.

For more information on **Significance of India's PM Visit to Ukraine** [read this article here](#)

What will be discussed during the visit?

- 1. Bilateral Relations:** Strengthening diplomatic and economic ties between India and Ukraine, marking a historic visit since the establishment of relations over 30 years ago.
- 2. Ongoing Conflict:** The Ukraine conflict will be a significant focus, with India advocating for diplomacy and dialogue as the path to resolution.
- 3. Neutral Stance:** India maintains independent relations with both Russia and Ukraine, continuing trade with Russia despite Western sanctions, emphasizing India's balanced approach in global diplomacy.

What are the international reactions?

- 1. U.S. Concerns:** The United States has expressed worries about India's ongoing relationship with Russia. This concern is heightened by the U.S.'s strategic interest in strengthening ties with India as a counterbalance to China's growing influence.
- 2. Global Tensions:** Western countries, notably the U.S., have imposed sanctions on Russia following its 2022 invasion of Ukraine. Despite this, India has continued its trade with Russia, reflecting its independent foreign policy.

Key Areas of Cooperation between Japan and India

Context: The article discusses the visit of a Japanese Minister for Foreign Affairs to India, highlighting the historical and current cooperation between Japan and India in areas like defense, economics, people-to-people exchanges, and women's roles in peace and security. The visit aims to deepen these partnerships further.

For detailed information on **India-Japan relations** read [Article 1](#), [Article 2](#) here

What are the Historical Ties Between Japan and India?

1. Japan and India share historical ties dating back to the 6th century with the introduction of Buddhism from India to Japan.
2. Shizuoka Prefecture in Japan, famous for green tea, has a connection with India through Tada Motokichi, who learned black tea production techniques in India and applied them to green tea in Japan.

What are the Key Areas of Cooperation?

- 1. Defense and Security:** Japan and India have strengthened their defense cooperation through joint exercises involving land, sea, and air forces. The third "2+2" Foreign and Defence Ministerial Meeting will

further these efforts. An example is the collaboration on defense technology.

2. Economic Cooperation: Both nations are working on the High-Speed Rail project and developing India's northeastern region. They aim to achieve a 5-trillion-yen investment target set in 2022. New focus areas include Green Transformation and Digital Transformation.

3. People-to-People Exchanges: The extension of the "Japan-India Tourism Exchange Year" to 2024 and events like "Japan Month" and "India Month" aim to foster cultural exchanges and strengthen ties.

4. Women, Peace, and Security (WPS): Japan values India's experience in deploying women in peacekeeping operations. They are collaborating on the WPS agenda, focusing on women's leadership in peace and security.

What is the Future of Japan-India Relations?

1. The relationship between Japan and India is expected to grow stronger, with both countries contributing to peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region and beyond. The visit is seen as a step towards deepening this unique and historical partnership.

2. **Global Cooperation:** Japan and India's alignment in global forums like the Quad supports a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific," reflecting their shared commitment to regional stability.

Topic- Important International Institutions, agencies and fora - their Structure, Mandate.

Taxation of MNCs

Context- After the global financial crisis, the G20 asked the OECD(Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) to tackle low tax rates by multinationals. Over ten years, the OECD developed fifteen action points to improve transparency and prevent tax avoidance.

It also established the Inclusive Framework (IF) to ensure low-income countries were included equally with developed nations, due to global changes and growing tax competition.

What are the Challenges in Tax Redistribution?

1) The main issue was whether large tech companies should be taxed in their home country (like the US) or in the markets where they operate, such as India.

2) The OECD had difficulty reaching a consensus, as its solutions became more complex with each revision.

Read More- [Base Erosion and Profit Shifting](#)

Disillusioned countries and regional groups started pushing for an UN-based intergovernmental tax body.

What is the UN Tax Convention Proposal?

In 2023, 125 countries, including India, backed a UN global tax convention. However, 48 countries, including the UK and the US, opposed it.

Despite the opposition, the UN moved forward with the draft. The final version, released on August 15, was rejected by just eight countries, including the US and the UK, while the previously divided EU countries abstained from voting.

What Factors Will Shape the UN's Effectiveness in International Taxation?

1) **Institutional Overlap**- The OECD has invested heavily in systems for information sharing and preventing abuse. Replicating these at the UN may not be needed. UN convention notes this overlap and suggests combining both systems. However, there is no certainty about how well this will be done.

2) **Economic Interests**: Conflicting economic interests make it difficult to agree on cross-border tax issues. Balancing national sovereignty with fair taxing rights is challenging.

3) **Consensus Building** -It's unclear if major countries like the US and the UK will accept the UN's tax convention, especially since countries can choose to sign or reject it. The UN's success in international taxation will depend on how well it can address these issues and work with existing frameworks.

Way ahead- The UN's method of formal processes, like fair member elections and transparent voting, differs from the IF's practices. This transparency helps engage experts and the public more effectively. A practical approach will be needed to tackle issues like cross-border services, digital transactions, and illicit financial flows.

GS Paper 3

Subject: Indian Economy

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

Need for sustainable mass employment in India

Context: The article discusses the need for sustainable mass employment in India. It emphasizes creating jobs with dignity, improving skills through education and vocational training, and involving communities in these efforts. It also highlights the importance of public and private sector roles.

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

Why is there a need for employment reforms?

1. **Low Wages:** A wage earner in the top 10% makes only ₹25,000 per month, indicating wage disparity.
2. **Short-Term Skilling Issues:** Short-duration skill programs have low long-term placement rates due to inadequate wages, especially in urban areas.
3. **Regional Disparities:** States like Tamil Nadu and Kerala, with better education and skills, have higher consumption levels, while Odisha, despite skilling efforts, lags due to insufficient education infrastructure.
4. **Public Employment Gaps:** India's public employment per capita is much lower than in developed countries, highlighting the need for government intervention in creating sustainable jobs.

What are the incentives taken by the government for employment reforms?

1. **Budget Allocation:** The government has allocated ₹2 lakh crore over five years to create jobs and skill opportunities for 4.1 crore youth.
2. **MGNREGA Focus:** 70% of MGNREGA funds are directed to water-scarce and high-deprivation areas, emphasizing livelihood security through skills and better wage rates

3. Community-Based Programs: Initiatives like community cadres of crèche caregivers and expanding apprenticeships aim to improve job readiness and support women's employment.

4. Support for Women-Led Enterprises: Programs like the Start-Up Village Enterprise Programme (SVEP) and the Rural Livelihoods Mission help women access capital and scale their businesses, supported by innovations from the Reserve Bank Innovation Hub.

What are solutions for improving employment with dignity?

1. Community-Based Skilling: Encourage local communities to identify skill needs and connect with employers through registers and planning.

2. Integration of Services: Converge education, health, and employment services at the local level to enhance community accountability and effectiveness.

3. Education Reform: Introduce vocational courses alongside traditional degrees in colleges to improve employability.

4. Standardizing Training: Standardize courses like nursing to international levels to improve quality and employability.

5. Support for Caregivers: Develop community-based caregiver programs for better childcare and women's employment.

6. Enhancing Technical Education: Improve infrastructure and curricula in ITIs and polytechnics to meet current industry standards.

7. Fostering Enterprise Skills: Introduce enterprise and technology education in schools to encourage innovation and business skills.

8. Apprenticeship Reforms: Create a co-sharing model of apprenticeships with industries to ensure practical training and job readiness.

9. Access to Capital: Streamline capital loans for women-led and first-generation enterprises to facilitate business scaling.

10. Skill Accreditation: Launch a universal accreditation for skill providers to ensure quality and relevance of training.

11. Focused Use of MGNREGA Funds: Direct a significant portion of MGNREGA funds to skill development in deprived regions to enhance productivity and wage levels.

12. Expanding Apprenticeships: Increase the scale of apprenticeships to improve skill acquisition and ensure fair wages.

Deposit Insurance and Banking Stability

Context- The article highlights the decreasing popularity of bank deposits and highlights the importance of deposit insurance in preserving trust in the banking system. With banks struggling to attract deposits, the finance minister and RBI Governor have urged increased efforts to boost deposit mobilization. Since banks keep only a small portion of deposits and lend out the rest, maintaining depositor trust is important to prevent bank runs and potential collapses.

What are the reasons behind decline in bank deposits in India?

Read More- [The Deposit Crunch in Indian Banking](#)

What is the Importance of deposit insurance?

In India, deposit insurance is managed by the Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC). As of March 31, 2024, 97.8% of all deposit accounts were fully insured

- 1) **Protection for Depositors-** It is a vital safety net that protects individuals' money if a bank fails. In India, it covers up to ₹5 lakh per depositor, giving account holders peace of mind that their savings are secure.
- 2) **Macroeconomic Confidence-** It is important for maintaining trust in the banking system. It reassures depositors that their money is safe, which helps banks function effectively and lend to various sectors. This support is essential for economic stability and growth.
- 3) **Risks Amplified by Technology-** The rise of digital financial services and social media has heightened the risk of bank runs, as panic spreads quickly online, causing rapid withdrawals. Recent bank failures in the US and Europe in 2023, driven by poor liquidity and flawed business models, underscore the urgent need for strong deposit insurance.

What are the challenges in insuring deposits?

- 1) Regulators face challenges in deciding whether to provide full deposit insurance, address moral hazard concerns, and whether to offer extra coverage to specific groups like senior citizens and small depositors.
- 2) A major challenge in deposit insurance is matching insurance costs to each bank's risk level. This helps prevent risky behavior and keeps insurance premiums fair.
- 3) Digital banking adds new challenges, like how to insure digital deposit products and manage risks such as climate change affecting credit quality and borrower repayment.

Reassessing Inflation Measurement

Context: The article discusses the debate on whether India's inflation targeting should focus on non-food inflation, given that monetary policy better controls demand-driven inflation, while food inflation is supply-driven. It suggests reconsidering how inflation is measured and targeted.

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

What Does Recent Data Show on Inflation?

1. Recent data indicates that food inflation has remained consistently high, exceeding 6% in both urban and rural areas since July 2023.
2. In contrast, non-food inflation has steadily decreased and is now below 2%.
3. Despite the decline in non-food inflation, overall headline inflation remains above the 4% target due to the persistent rise in food prices.
4. The Household Consumption Expenditure Survey (HCES) reveals a decline in the share of food in total household expenditure since 2011-12—from 36.4% to 34% in urban areas and from 54.2% to 45.7% in rural areas.
5. This decline suggests that the Consumer Price Index (CPI) may be overestimating inflation, as the weighting for food might be outdated.

What Is the Debate on Inflation Targeting?

1. Focus on Non-Food Inflation: The Chief Economic Advisor suggests focusing inflation targeting on non-food inflation, as monetary policy effectively controls demand-driven inflation, unlike supply-driven food inflation.

2. Importance of Food Inflation: The RBI Governor argues that food inflation significantly shapes public inflation expectations, as people primarily perceive inflation through food prices. Persistently high food inflation has kept headline inflation above 4% since July 2023.

How Does Monetary Policy, Combined with Fiscal Strategy, Impact Domestic Manufacturing and Economic Recovery?

1. Monetary Policy and Manufacturing Costs: Restrictive monetary policy increases the operational costs for domestic manufacturers. This makes them less competitive compared to global manufacturers, as their products become more expensive to produce. This can negatively impact the balance of trade, leading to increased tariffs, higher prices, and slowed economic growth.

2. Government Response to Trade Imbalances: If the government responds to trade imbalances by raising tariffs, it could lead to higher domestic prices and slower growth. This information is correctly reflected in the point.

3. Economic Recovery: The article suggests that monetary policy should be aligned with a more accurate inflation measure, especially when the government is following a prudent fiscal strategy, to support economic recovery. This is consistent with the content provided.

Why Is Reassessing Inflation Measurement Important?

1. Outdated Weighting: The Consumer Price Index (CPI) uses a weighting basket from 2011-12. Household Consumption Expenditure Survey (HCES) shows food's share in household expenditure has dropped (urban: 36.4% to 34%; rural: 54.2% to 45.7%), suggesting the CPI may overestimate 'real' inflation.

2. Different Impact Across Income Groups: The poorest 5% of urban households spend 44% of their income on food, compared to 27% for the richest 5%. This creates significant disparities in experienced inflation.

3. Monetary Policy Effectiveness: Monetary policy is more effective in managing demand-driven inflation, not supply-side food inflation. Focusing on outdated CPI measures could misalign policy with economic realities, potentially hindering economic recovery and growth.

4. Perception vs. Reality: Public perception often overestimates actual inflation, influenced by short-term changes in food prices, leading to potentially misguided policy decisions.

What Should the Monetary Policy Committee Consider?

1. The Monetary Policy Committee should consider re-weighting the CPI using the latest HCES data to better reflect current spending patterns.

2. It should also recognize that monetary policy is less effective in controlling supply-side food inflation.

3. The inflation targeting framework may need to be updated to align better with actual economic conditions rather than public perceptions.

The RBI's Currency Management

Context- The Indian rupee operates under a managed floating exchange rate system, where the central bank steps in to buy or sell dollars to stabilize the rupee's value. Recently, the RBI appeared to be using its regulatory authority to exert more control over the rupee's exchange rate.

Currency fluctuations are a natural part of the market. However, using regulations to manage these fluctuations creates uncertainty and increases costs for businesses in regulated sectors.

What are the Three Regulatory Measures and Their Implications?

- 1) **Prohibiting Speculative Trades on Exchanges**-In 2008, the RBI allowed currency derivatives trading with rules on design and limits. By 2016, traders could trade up to \$100 million without proving underlying exposure. However, a new rule requiring proof of exposure led to an 80% drop in trading volumes, potentially decreasing liquidity in the onshore market and increasing costs as trading could move to offshore markets.
- 2) **Regulating Offshore Trading Platforms**-The RBI's proposal seeks to oversee the offshore market by requiring ETBs (electronic trading platforms) to register and giving it powers to refuse registration, demand information, and set terms. This approach is criticized as overreach because it attempts to regulate offshore platforms used by Indian residents.
- 3) **RBI's Instructions to Banks**- The RBI recently asked banks not to increase trade that weakened the rupee as it neared 84. It also required banks to settle UAE transactions in rupees rather than dollars to stabilize the rupee and cut dollar reliance. These measures may impact market behavior and raise costs.

Read More- [Inflation Targeting in India](#)

Conclusion- The RBI should avoid broadly expanding its regulatory powers to manage rupee volatility. Regulations, unlike market operations, set the rules of the game and can have long-lasting, negative impacts on business incentives and costs.

India's progress and challenges in agriculture

Context: The article discusses India's progress and challenges as it approaches its goal of becoming a developed nation by 2047. It highlights successes in agriculture, contrasts with China's faster growth, and emphasizes the need for better policies, particularly in agriculture and nutrition.

For detailed information on **India's Economic Growth and challenges** [read this article here](#)

What Achievements Has India Made in Agriculture?

1. India's agricultural GDP grew by an average of 3.6% annually from 2004-05 to 2023-24, reflecting steady progress.
2. The Green Revolution in the late 1960s transformed India's food production, making the country self-sufficient.
3. India is now a net exporter of agricultural products, with exports worth around \$51 billion in the last three years.
4. Key export items include rice, marine products, spices, and buffalo meat.
5. India has achieved food security and is capable of feeding its population, with population growth under 1% annually.

How Does India Compare to China in Agriculture and Economic Growth?

1. **Economic Growth:** Since the economic reforms in 1978, China's rural areas saw incomes rise by over 14% annually up to 1984, creating a robust demand base. This contrast sharply with India's slower economic reforms and lower income growth rates.
2. **Agricultural Reforms:** China initiated agricultural reforms in 1978, dismantling the commune system and introducing the household responsibility system. These reforms led to a 14% annual increase in farmers'

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incomes between 1978 and 1984, fueling demand for goods from China's Town and Village Enterprises (TVEs).

3. Support for Farmers: China offers substantial support to its farmers through income support per acre and market price supports that are higher than those in OECD countries. In contrast, India's government support for farmers is effectively negative, with policies that restrict trade and market access while providing subsidies for inputs like fertilizers and power.

4. Impact of Policy Decisions: China's one-child policy helped accelerate its economic growth and per capita income. India, without such measures, focuses on education, particularly for girls, to manage population growth and boost economic development.

What Should be Done?

1. Implement Policy Changes: India needs bold policy changes, especially in agriculture. Policies need to encourage diversification, like shifting from paddy to pulses in the Punjab-Haryana belt, which requires less water and fertilizer.

2. Increase Farmer Support: Adopt China's model of substantial income and market price support for farmers. For instance, Chinese farmers received more than 14% income growth annually between 1978 and 1984 due to reforms.

3. Focus on Nutritional Security: India should move from food security to nutritional security. Currently, 35% of Indian children under five are stunted, underscoring the need for improved nutrition alongside basic food availability.

4. Enhance Agricultural R&D and Infrastructure: Invest in agricultural research and development and improve irrigation and land-lease markets. Building efficient value chains for perishables, like the Amul model, is also crucial.

5. Set Milestones for 2047: To achieve "Viksit Bharat@2047," India must set clear, short-term goals and continuously monitor progress, making course corrections when necessary to ensure long-term success.

Evolution of India's economic policies and their impact

Context: The article discusses the evolution of India's economic policies, emphasizing shifts from planned development in 1951 to liberalization in 1991. It highlights the need for government neutrality in corporate relations and stronger competition policies to achieve developed nation status by 2047.

For detailed information on **India's Economic Growth and challenges** [read this article here](#)

What Were the Major Economic Transformations in Independent India?

1. 1951 Planned Development: India launched its First Five-Year Plan in 1951, marking the start of planned economic development. This period focused on public sector growth, especially in heavy industries, with private investment also increasing.

2. 1991 Economic Liberalization: In July 1991, India liberalized its economy, reducing government control over investment and foreign trade, leading to a significant increase in private sector participation.

How Did the India's Economic Policies Impacted Its Growth?

1. The 1951 shift led to public-sector-focused growth, particularly in heavy industries, with private investment also increasing.

2. The average annual growth rate rose from 0.5% before independence to much higher levels post-1951, marking a substantial improvement.
3. In 1951, India's share in global merchandise exports was 1.9%, but it fell to 0.4% by 1980 during the first transformation phase. Despite this decline, India's share in world manufacturing exports doubled during the high-growth phase from 2003 onwards, reaching 1.8%, still slightly below the 1951 level.
4. The 1991 liberalization reduced government control, opened banking to private players, and led to a massive increase in capital issues, from 2600 crore in 1981-82 to 21.5 trillion in 2021-22.
5. India's share in global commercial service exports increased from 0.6% in 1990 to 4.3% in 2023, showing the positive impact of these policies on global trade participation.

What Is the Role of the Public Sector in India's Growth?

1. Public sector corporations in India have historically been pioneers in technology development, contributing significantly to the country's growth.
2. These corporations have produced a large pool of technologically skilled professionals, many of whom have been recruited by the private sector.
3. While the government currently views public sector corporations as liabilities and aims to privatize them, this approach overlooks their potential.
4. Public sector entities are crucial in managing monopoly infrastructure, preventing private corporations from exploiting market power.

What Changes Are Needed for India to Become a Developed State by 2047?

- 1. Market-Friendly Government:** Shift from promoting selected corporations to a neutral, market-friendly approach. Avoid cronyism and allow the market to guide growth.
- 2. Strengthen Competition Policy:** Enhance the role of the Competition Commission to drive management dynamism. Reduce barriers on takeovers to encourage professional management over family-run businesses.
- 3. Reevaluate Public Sector Corporations:** Recognize public sector corporations as assets. Support them in managing monopoly infrastructure to prevent private sector exploitation.
- 4. Focus on Technology and Exports:** Encourage corporations to focus on product and process technologies.

Topic- Effects of Liberalization on the Economy, Changes in Industrial Policy and their Effects on Industrial Growth.

Benefits and Challenges of E-commerce Growth in India

Context: The article discusses concerns about e-commerce platforms using predatory pricing, which may hurt small retailers. Minister Piyush Goyal highlighted these issues. It highlights the benefits and challenges of e-commerce growth in India and emphasizes the need for fair competition and transparency.

For detailed information on **the online marketplace is skewed in favor of big players and hurts small businesses** [read this article here](#)

Why is E-commerce Under Scrutiny?

1. Investigations for Unfair Practices: The Competition Commission of India (CCI) launched an investigation into Amazon and Flipkart in 2020. These platforms were examined for alleged deep discounting and favoring certain sellers.

2. Allegations of Predatory Pricing: Companies like Shopee and Ola faced allegations of selling services below cost to eliminate competition. These claims were later dismissed by the CCI.

Note: Predatory pricing is when companies sell goods or services at prices lower than their production costs. This is done to drive competitors out of the market. Once competition is reduced, the company might increase prices, harming consumers in the long run.

3. Market Disruption Concerns: Rapid growth of e-commerce is feared to impact small retailers adversely, potentially leading to market monopolies and reduced competition.

What are the Impacts of E-commerce Market in India?

1. The **report by the Pahle India Foundation** challenges some accusations against e-commerce platforms.
2. Despite rapid growth, e-commerce made up just 7.8% of total retail sales in 2022.
3. Around 1.76 million retail enterprises engage in e-commerce, creating 15.8 million jobs, including 3.5 million for women.
4. Many vendors, especially in smaller cities, report increased sales and profits after joining online platforms.
5. The report argues that e-commerce growth hasn't harmed traditional brick-and-mortar stores, as consumers enjoy more choices and favorable pricing.

What Should Be the Focus of Regulation?

1. To ensure fair competition, the Competition Commission should monitor e-commerce practices closely.
2. There should be greater transparency in pricing and reduced information asymmetry to maintain a level playing field for all businesses.

Topic- Effects of Liberalization on the Economy, Changes in Industrial Policy and their Effects on Industrial Growth.

A change in India's power export rules

Context: India's power export rules have been amended. It will resolve the challenges faced by Indian power exporters supplying electricity to neighbouring countries.

This amendment allows Indian power exporters to reroute their output to Indian grids if there is a delay in payments from partner countries.

What is Godda project?

The Godda project is India's first transnational power project that supplies all the power generated to another nation, specifically Bangladesh.

This Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) was signed with the Bangladesh Power Development Board (BPDB) in November 2017 for a duration of 25 years.

The power generated is from an ultra-supercritical thermal power plant located in Godda, Jharkhand, with a capacity of 1,496 MW.

The project aims to provide a stable power supply to Bangladesh, replacing more expensive liquid fuel-based power, thereby reducing the overall cost of power in Bangladesh.

What are the issues highlighted associated with the project?

The project has faced criticism due to the high cost of coal imported from Australia to India for the power generation. It is making the power more expensive in Bangladesh. Additionally, the high capacity and maintenance charges regardless of actual electricity generation have been criticized as being too high by industry standards.

Underutilization of Domestic Capacity: Despite progress in expanding electricity access, Bangladesh faces fuel and gas supply constraints that lead to underutilization of its power plants.

What is the significance of amendment?

- 1) The new regulatory change grants Indian power exporters more flexibility by allowing them to reroute power to domestic grids if payment issues arise with partner countries.
- 2) Furthermore, they have been granted access to the domestic market.
- 3) This reduces dependency on external markets and mitigates risks associated with economic and political instability in neighboring countries.

Subject: Agriculture

Topic- Major Crops - Cropping Patterns in various parts of the country, - Different Types of Irrigation and Irrigation Systems; Storage, Transport and Marketing of Agricultural Produce and Issues and Related Constraints; E-technology in the aid of farmers.

Crop Diversification Challenges

Context- India's agriculture is largely focused on growing rice and wheat. Despite various government efforts to increase oilseed and pulse production, the country still often faces shortages. India imports about 60% of its oilseeds and experiences price hikes for pulses like tur and urad due to fluctuating outputs.

What are the Reasons for the Preference for Rice and Wheat in India?

- 1) **Subsidies on Power and Water:** Many Indian states offer large subsidies on power and water, which lower the cost of growing rice and wheat. This support makes producing these crops more affordable and attractive compared to other options.
- 2) **Minimum Support Price (MSP) Scheme:** The Food Corporation of India (FCI) operates an open-ended procurement scheme, where it purchases any quantity of rice and wheat at a Minimum Support Price (MSP). This price, set using a cost-plus formula, guarantees farmers a steady return on their crops.
- 3) **Guaranteed Returns:** The MSP system guarantees a stable income for rice and wheat farmers, even when market prices fluctuate. Other crops don't have this guaranteed price.
- 4) **Government Export Policies:** -T The government's shifting policies on rice and wheat exports lead farmers to produce lower-quality crops. This uncertainty keeps them focused on these crops.

A detailed article on **Crop Diversification: Need, Advantages and Challenges** can be [read here](#).

5) **Economic Incentives-** Farmers aim to maximize income by comparing harvest prices with cultivation costs. For 2022-23, rice and wheat are the most profitable due to high yields, despite lower net gains of ₹12-17 per kilogram.

Crop choice
Rice and wheat offer the highest income per hectare even though their net gain per kilogram of output is lower than many other crops.

Cost, price and income on various crops (in ₹)

Crop	Yield (kgs/hectare)	Cost/kg	Price/kg	Difference	Income per hectare
Rice	2,833	15.33	32.22	16.89	47,849
Wheat	3,520	11.28	23.92	12.64	44,493
Maize	3,544	14.47	20.35	5.88	20,839
Tur	814	47.61	87.46	39.85	32,438
Chana	1,171	34.00	57.65	23.65	27,694
Moong	662	57.88	79.74	21.86	14,471
Urad	675	48.83	79.54	30.71	20,729
Soybean	1,145	32.61	46.46	13.85	15,858
Groundnut	2,075	45.22	64.55	19.33	40,110
Mustard	1,428	28.55	51.61	23.06	32,930

Sources: CMIE based on government sources
SATISH KUMAR/MINT

Figure 1. Source-LiveMint

What should be the way forward?

- 1) To encourage crop diversification, there is a need to create systems for procuring and distributing pulses and oilseeds like those for rice and wheat. Currently, there is no policy for regularly stocking and distributing these crops through fair price shops.
- 2) The existing open-ended procurement approach is outdated and should focus on small farmers instead of large producers.
- 3) States should set clear limits on power and water subsidies to

encourage farmers to grow different crops.

India's initiatives for agriculture towards 2047 targets

Context: The article discusses India's efforts to transform agriculture to achieve the goal of becoming a developed nation by 2047. It highlights challenges, government initiatives, and the need for sustainable practices, technology, and strategic planning to boost productivity and farmer incomes.

For detailed information on **Challenges for Indian agriculture to realize its aspiration of a Viksit Bharat by 2047** [read this article here](#)

What are the goals for Indian agriculture by 2047?

1. India aims to become a developed nation by 2047, which requires a significant increase in Gross National Income and improvements in agriculture.
2. The government focuses on sustainable practices, technology, and strategic planning to enhance productivity and farmer incomes.

What initiatives are being implemented to support sustainable agriculture?

1. **Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY):** This program has improved water use efficiency through micro-irrigation, covering 78 lakh hectares with a budget of ₹93,068 crore for 2021-26.
2. **Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY):** Launched in 2016, it has enrolled 49.5 crore farmers and disbursed claims worth over ₹1.45 lakh crore for crop losses.

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3. Electronic National Agriculture Market (eNAM): Since 2016, this platform has integrated 1,361 mandis, benefiting 1.76 million farmers and facilitating trades worth ₹2.88 lakh crore.

4. Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN): Offers ₹6,000 annually to farmers, benefiting over 11.8 crore farmers.

5. Soil Health Card (SHC) scheme: Has distributed over 23 crore SHCs, helping farmers manage soil nutrients better.

6. Agriculture Infrastructure Fund: Aims to modernize post-harvest management and has sanctioned over 38,326 projects, improving farmer incomes by 20%-25%.

What are the challenges in Indian agriculture?

1. Employment vs. GDP Contribution: Agriculture employs about 46% of the workforce but contributes only 18% to GDP, indicating an imbalance.

2. Low Growth Rate: Agricultural GDP growth is just 3.3%, lagging behind the overall GDP growth rate of 6.1% since 1991-92.

3. Climate Impact: Unseasonal rains led to a weak agricultural GDP growth of 0.7% in 2023-24.

4. Future Food Demand: Meeting the food needs of a population expected to reach 1.5 billion by 2030 is challenging with current agricultural practices.

What is the strategic plan for 2047?

1. Anticipating Demand: Projected food grain demand for 2047-48 ranges from 402 million to 437 million tonnes.

2. Exceeding Production Needs: Production is expected to exceed demand by 10%-13% under the Business-As-Usual (BAU) scenario.

3. Rationalizing Subsidies: The government plans to rationalize food and fertilizer subsidies, redirecting savings toward agricultural research and development.

4. Funding Innovations: The 2024-25 budget allocates ₹20 lakh crore for targeted agricultural credit and introduces the Agriculture Accelerator Fund.

5. Improving Infrastructure: Over 38,326 agricultural infrastructure projects have been sanctioned, mobilizing ₹30,030 crore to enhance post-harvest management and increase farmer incomes by 20%-25%.

Benefits of Bamboo cultivation for India

Context: Bamboo, often referred to as the "poor man's timber," has transformed into a lucrative crop for Indian farmers, now being recognized as "green gold." With modern agronomic practices, bamboo cultivation is proving more profitable than traditionally lucrative crops like sugarcane and cotton. Bamboo farming is rapidly spreading beyond its traditional Northeastern habitat to regions like Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, the Western Ghats, and Gujarat.

Present status of bamboo cultivation in India

1) The land under bamboo cultivation is estimated at over 15.70 million hectares, with the Northeastern zone holding about 50% of the country's bamboo resources.

2) India boasts 136 documented native species of bamboo and produces approximately 3.23 million tonnes annually, underscoring its importance as a versatile and valuable plant.

3) NITI Aayog projects the global bamboo market to reach around \$98.3 billion by 2025. As the world's

second-largest bamboo producer after China, India is well-positioned to capture a significant share of this market.

What are the Legal and Agricultural Reforms Boosting Bamboo Cultivation?

Amendment to the Indian Forest Act, 2017: The reclassification of bamboo from "tree" to "grass" under this amendment removed various restrictions on its harvesting, transportation, and sale, making bamboo cultivation more accessible to farmers.

National Bamboo Mission: This shift has been supported by government initiatives like the National Bamboo Mission and the Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture, which aim to promote bamboo farming across the country. These initiatives focus on encouraging the use of bamboo as a sustainable alternative to wood, and on developing a value chain for bamboo production, marketing, and export.

Economic Incentives: Maharashtra is expanding bamboo farming, offering financial incentives ~7 lakh per hectare.

What are the Environmental and Economic Benefits of Bamboo cultivation?

Environmental Impact: Bamboo is a highly efficient carbon dioxide converter, producing 35% more oxygen than most plants and growing up to 90 cm per day, making it an excellent biomass producer.

Economic benefits: High-yielding varieties like "Beema Bamboo" offer significant profit potential, with growers earning a net annual profit of ₹75,000-80,000 per hectare, making bamboo one of the most profitable crops in India.

Health benefits: Bamboo based foods are deemed healthy because these are rich in fiber and low in calories. Some parts of bamboo plants, including their roots, are believed to have therapeutic traits and are used in the traditional health care systems in the Northeast

Energy: Bamboo can be converted into biofuels like ethanol or pulped to produce paper. It is also widely used in construction as an alternative to wood and for making scaffoldings, thanks to its strength, resilience, and flexibility.

Subject: Science & Technology

Topic- Achievements of Indians in Science & Technology

Recent Developments in India's Space Program

Context- The article highlights the significant progress of India's space program over the past year, with ISRO achieving key missions and milestones.

What are the major missions and achievements in the recent past?

1) **Aditya-L1 Mission** – Launched with the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV), the Aditya-L1 spacecraft is studying solar radiation from the Earth-Sun Lagrange point (L1). It reached its orbit around L1 by January 6, 2024, and completed its first orbit on July 2, 2024. In May 2024, it tracked a solar storm in collaboration with ground observatories and lunar spacecraft.

2) **Gaganyaan TV-D1 Test Flight** - This mission used a modified L-40 Vikas engine to test the Crew Escape System (CES). The test successfully separated the crew module from the Test Vehicle (TV), ensuring it safely descended and was recovered by the Indian Navy vessel INS Shakthi. This test is a key part of ISRO's human spaceflight program.

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- 3) **XPoSat Launch**- It studies the polarization of radiation from celestial objects and follows NASA's IPEX mission. Equipped with XSPECT and POLIX instruments, XPoSat started its operations on January 5 and 10.
- 4) **INSAT-3DS Satellite**- The INSAT-3DS meteorological satellite was launched on February 17, 2024, using a Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV). This mission tested the GSLV's performance before the upcoming NISAR mission in early 2025.
- 5) **RLV-TD Tests**- ISRO tested its Reusable Launch Vehicle (RLV), Pushpak, with landing experiments that mimicked conditions from space. These successful tests provided key data and set the stage for the upcoming Orbital Return Flight Experiment.
- 6) **SSLV Development**- ISRO successfully completed the final test flight of the Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV), deploying the EOS-08 and SR-0 Demosat satellites. This milestone confirms the SSLV's readiness for commercial use. The payloads included earth observation tools and an ultraviolet dosimeter for the Gaganyaan mission.
- 7) **NSIL Missions NewSpace India Ltd. (NSIL)**- NSIL now manages commercial activities like Indian Remote Sensing satellite data. On May 1, 2024, NSIL signed a launch deal with SpaceX for the GSAT-20/GSAT-N2 satellite. It also sought qualifications for LVM-3 production and signed a launch agreement with an Australian company for the SSLV.
- 8) **Private Sector Contributions** - Private space companies are progressing with their missions: Agnikul Cosmos launched its SoRTeD-01 vehicle on March 21, 2024, Skyroot Aerospace is developing the Vikram 1 rocket, and Dhruva Space and Bellatrix Aerospace contributed to the PSLV-C58 mission on January 1, 2024.

9) Regulatory Developments -

- A) India's space regulator, IN-SPACe, has updated its policies and issued new licenses, including the first satellite broadband license to Eutelsat OneWeb and the first ground station license to Dhruva Space.
- B) The government has amended its foreign direct investment (FDI) policy to allow 100% FDI in most space sectors, with some limits on satellite manufacturing (74%) and launch infrastructure (49%).

What are Future Roadmaps and Initiatives?

1) Gaganyaan Program-

- A) ISRO is progressing with its Gaganyaan human spaceflight program, training astronaut-candidates for a crewed ISS mission in 2025 using SpaceX's launch vehicle.

Read More- [GAGANYAAN- Indian Human Spaceflight Programme](#).

- B) Four more abort tests are planned before the uncrewed Gaganyaan flight in late 2024. By 2035, ISRO aims to establish India's own space station, the 'Bharatiya Antariksh Station' (BAS).
- 2) **Next-Generation Launch Vehicle**- ISRO is working on a Next Generation Launch Vehicle (NGLV), a three-stage rocket using semi-cryogenic, liquid, and cryogenic engines. The NGLV will replace the GSLV. ISRO is also upgrading the LVM-3 rocket with a new semi-cryogenic engine.

Topic- Awareness in the fields of IT, Space, Computers, Robotics, Nano-technology, Bio-technology and issues relating to Intellectual Property Rights.

Growth in India's space technology and the role of private players and start-ups

Context: The article discusses India's recent launch of the Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV), which can carry small payloads and is expected to boost the country's space sector. It highlights the potential growth in space technology and the role of private players and start-ups.

For detailed information on **ISRO has successfully launched the Earth Observation Satellite through the SSLV** [read this article here](#)

What Is the Market Scenario for Space Tech?

1. The space tech market is expected to grow significantly in the next five years.
2. The US and EU are currently leading, while China, Australia, and Russia are expanding. China aims to launch over 13,000 satellites by 2030 for 6G communications.
3. India's current share in the global space economy is about 2%.
4. With the SSLV and related developments, the Indian government plans to increase this share four-fold by 2033.

How does the SSLV benefit space technology?

1. The SSLV is designed for quick assembly, requiring less than a week with a smaller team.
2. This efficiency makes it ideal for launching small satellites used in weather forecasting, communications, defense, urban planning, and disaster management.
3. It also supports the growing Internet of Things by enabling more frequent launches.

What Role Does ISRO Play in India's Space Policy?

1. ISRO plays a critical role in enabling India's space expansion by supporting private space companies like Skyroot and Agnikul, which collaborate closely with it.
2. ISRO launched the Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV), designed to carry payloads up to 500 kg, crucial for expanding the small satellite market.
3. The agency's work is vital for India's social objectives, including education, healthcare, agriculture, and security.
4. India's space policy, introduced last April, emphasizes transitioning from an ISRO-dominated ecosystem while ensuring ISRO's crucial role remains intact.

How are private companies contributing to space technology?

1. Indian startups like Skyroot and Agnikul are collaborating with ISRO, advancing the space sector.
2. Agnikul has even constructed its launch pad at Sriharikota and plans to launch a rocket weekly, focusing on payloads smaller than those of the SSLV.
3. India aims to increase its space economy stake fourfold by 2033, driven by private sector contributions, helping the country expand beyond its current 2% global share.

Environment

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

Climate Change Challenges Faced by The Panama Canal

Context -The Panama Canal, which opened on August 15, 1914, celebrates its 110th anniversary. Spanning 82 kilometers, this engineering marvel links the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, offering a shortcut through Central America's Isthmus of Panama. It shortens the trip between New York and San Francisco by about 12,600 kilometers.

The Panama Canal, a key shipping route, usually handles 36 to 38 ships daily. However, last December traffic fell to just 22 ships per day, with over 160 vessels stranded due to a severe drought that lowered Lake Gatun's water levels.

What is the Canal's Engineering and Functioning?

- 1) **Canal Structure:** The Panama Canal is not just a simple water channel; it is a sophisticated, highly engineered system that uses locks and elevators to transport ships efficiently.
- 2) **Lock System Functionality:** The Panama Canal uses a system of three lock sets—twelve locks in total—to manage the elevation difference between the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans. These locks, supported by artificial lakes and channels, act as water elevators to raise or lower ships to the necessary sea levels.
- 3) **Lock Operation Process:**
 - a. Ship enters the lowest chamber at sea level.
 - b. Gate closes behind the ship.
 - c. Valve between first and second chambers opens, equalizing water levels.
 - d. Ship moves to the next chamber.
 - e. Process repeats for elevation gain or loss.



Figure 2. Source-The Indian Express

- 4) **Water Requirements:** Each ship passage through the Panama Canal requires over 50 million gallons (about 200 million liters) of water

Read More- [Important Oil Transit Choke Points in World](#)

What are the challenges faced in the functioning of Panama Canal?

- 1) **Climate Change Impact-** The frequency of extreme rainfall deficits is increasing, with three major deficits occurring in the last 26 years compared to the historical average of once every 20 years, and the 2023 water shortage was unprecedented in the past century.
- 2) **Water Source:** -The Panama Canal relies on a large amount of fresh water from Lake Gatun to operate its locks. Recent droughts have reduced Lake Gatun's water levels, restricting ship traffic and cargo capacity. Using ocean water to make up

the shortfall could increase Lake Gatun's salinity, affecting its role as a drinking water source for over half of Panama's 4.4 million residents.

3) **Proposed Solutions and Controversy**- A proposal to dam the Rio Indio as an additional water source for the canal could help address water shortages. However, this project would displace about 2,000 people, mainly from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

Environmental Degradation and Empowerment of the Meek

Context-Ongoing environmental damage in India, highlighted by recent disasters, shows the impact of unregulated human activities. For example, the landslide in Meppadi, Wayanad, which killed around 400 people, highlights the severe consequences of quarrying, mining, and construction on unstable slopes. Quarrying causes severe health issues among locals, including asthma and lung cancer, due to diesel emissions and dust. The activity also results in landslips and damage to agriculture. The displaced Jharkhand tribals working in the quarries endure harsh conditions, and there are reports of quarry operators concealing worker deaths to avoid scrutiny.

What is the importance of technology in empowering marginalized sections of society?

1) **Access to Affordable Smartphones** -Affordable smartphones have allowed illiterate tribal people in remote areas to stay connected. For instance, tribals in Maharashtra's Gadchiroli and landless women in Bihar now use smartphones to communicate and sell goats online for higher prices.

2) **Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel (WGEEP) Report**- The report's wide distribution, especially through its Malayalam translation in Kerala, shows how technology empowers marginalized communities. It helped spread information and build support, driving awareness and action on environmental issues.

A detailed article on Wayanad Landslide- Causes, impact and management of Landslides in India can be [read here](#).

What are the Proposed Actions for Sustainable Development?

1) **Transfer of Quarry Operations**- Transfer control of rock quarries to Kudumbashree groups. Past examples, like a women's savings group in Mendha (Lekha) village, show that women can run such operations successfully, providing local jobs and protecting the environment.

2) **Tourism Regulation**: Prevent the establishment of new tourist resorts in sensitive areas and instead promote homestays organized by tribal communities. For ex- Goa and Sikkim.

3) **Management of Tea Estates**: Transfer tea estate management to well-organized labor cooperatives. These cooperatives should provide decent wages and housing for tea garden workers.

4) **Reevaluation of Wildlife Protection Act**- The Wildlife Protection Act (WLPA) should be reassessed because it restricts people's ability to protect themselves from wildlife attacks. Although the Indian Penal Code allows self-defense against assault or property damage, current rules often leave communities vulnerable to attacks by animals like pigs, elephants, tigers, and panthers.

Tanager-1 Satellite

Context: The article discusses the launch of the Tanager-1 satellite, which tracks methane and carbon dioxide emissions. It highlights the importance of reducing methane, a potent greenhouse gas contributing to global warming and harmful ground-level ozone, primarily from fossil fuel operations.

For detailed information on **MethaneSAT- A satellite to track Methane** [read this article here](#)

What is the Tanager-1 Satellite?

1. Tanager-1 is a satellite launched to track methane and carbon dioxide emissions.
2. It was developed by a coalition of companies and organizations, including NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory, and launched aboard a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket.
3. The satellite uses imaging spectrometer technology to measure light wavelengths reflected by Earth's surface.
4. This technology identifies the unique spectral fingerprints of gases like methane and carbon dioxide.
5. Tanager-1 scans 130,000 square kilometers of Earth's surface daily, pinpointing emission sources, including individual facilities.
6. This data is crucial for accelerating efforts to mitigate harmful emissions.

Why Track Methane Emissions?

1. Methane is a potent greenhouse gas, second only to carbon dioxide in contributing to global warming.
2. It is 80 times more powerful than carbon dioxide over a 20-year period.
3. Methane is responsible for 30% of global warming since the Industrial Revolution.
4. The gas also contributes to ground-level ozone, which causes about one million premature deaths yearly.
5. Fossil fuel operations are the main source, contributing to 40% of human-caused methane emissions.
6. Reducing methane emissions is crucial to slowing climate change and improving air quality.

Challenges of EU's CBAM for India

Context: European Union's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), which mandates that all imports into the EU bear the same carbon cost as those produced within the EU. CBAM will initially target six sectors—iron and steel, aluminum, cement, fertilizers, electricity, and hydrogen. It will have significant impacts for India, specifically in the aluminum and steel sectors. The mechanism is designed to equalize the carbon cost between EU-produced goods and imports, potentially closing markets for high-carbon-footprint products from countries like India.

How will impact India's steel and Aluminum sector?

Exports: The EU accounts for 27% of India's aluminum and 38% of steel exports.

The CBAM's current phase, which runs till 31 December 2025, will focus on detailed data reporting of both direct and indirect emissions.

Direct vs. Indirect Emissions: Direct emissions refer to those generated during the production process, while indirect emissions involve the electricity used during production. From 2026, CBAM will target direct emissions only.

Potential Tariffs: For aluminum, the impact of CBAM could range from 7-10% ad valorem duty. However,

including indirect emissions could increase this impact to over 70%, due to the use of coal-fired electricity. It severely restricts Indian aluminum exports to the EU.

What are the challenges in front of India?

Ripple effect: Even though currently CBAM is in the reporting phase only, non-EU customers who are importing from India and exporting to EU after adding value to it, are demanding CBAM compliance declarations from Indian manufacturers.

Alternative energy sources such as hydro, gas and nuclear energy, and battery-storage options are not available yet.

Violation of WTO Rules: CBAM's alignment with WTO rules is questionable, and there are concerns about how it might disrupt global trade norms.

Discriminatory provisions: The EU's CBAM seems to be discriminatory. The CBAM penalizes imported goods by applying the EU's own carbon pricing system to them. **For example**, even if two products (one produced in the EU and one in a country like India) result in the same amount of CO2 emissions, the product from India would face additional costs if the carbon price in India is lower than in the EU.

Reverse financing: "reverse financing" refers to a situation where developing countries, like India, end up indirectly supporting the EU's carbon budget. It shifts the financial burden of climate action from developed countries (like those in the EU) to developing countries.

It remains to be seen how Carbon Credit Trading System (CCTS) system will align with CBAM requirements.

Data Privacy Concerns: The extensive emissions data required by the EU could expose sensitive business information, necessitating robust data protection measures.

FTA: The CBAM could undermine benefits from tariff reductions and market access under free-trade agreements that India is negotiating with the EU and the UK.

Subject: Internal Security

Topic- Security Challenges and their Management in Border Areas - Linkages of Organized Crime with Terrorism.

Validity of India's nuclear doctrine in the changing landscape of nuclear threats

Context: The article discusses India's nuclear doctrine, established 25 years ago, which emphasizes minimal deterrence and no-first-use of nuclear weapons. Despite evolving nuclear threats from Pakistan and China, the article argues that India's doctrine remains valid and stable in today's nuclear landscape.

For detailed information on **India's nuclear doctrine after 25 years** [read this article here](#)

How has the global nuclear threat changed?

- 1. Pakistan's Full Spectrum Deterrence:** Pakistan now frequently highlights its "full spectrum deterrence" strategy, which includes the possibility of first-use nuclear strikes.
- 2. China's Nuclear Expansion:** China is undergoing a significant expansion of its nuclear arsenal, increasing its capabilities.
- 3. Technological Advances:** Adversaries are improving technologies like highly accurate conventional delivery systems, cyber-attacks on nuclear command structures, AI to counter retaliatory capabilities, and advanced intelligence surveillance.

4. Increased Collaboration Threat: There is concern about potential collaboration between Pakistan and China against India, intensifying the nuclear threat.

What is the validity of India's nuclear doctrine in the changing landscape of nuclear threats?

1. Stable Deterrence: India's nuclear doctrine, established 25 years ago, focuses on credible minimum deterrence and a no-first-use policy. Despite changes in the global nuclear landscape, these principles continue to provide stability.

2. Adaptability to Threats: While Pakistan's first-use policy and China's nuclear expansion are significant, India's doctrine allows for a flexible and responsive nuclear force. This adaptability ensures continued deterrence without an arms race.

3. Technological Considerations: Advances like cyber threats and AI necessitate improved survivability of India's nuclear forces. However, these changes do not require altering the doctrine itself.

4. Global Contrast: India's restrained approach stands out against the aggressive nuclear policies of others, reinforcing its doctrine's relevance as a beacon of nuclear stability in today's world.

What should be India's actions in the changing landscape of nuclear threats?

1. Enhance Survivability: Focus on strengthening the survivability of nuclear forces against advanced threats like cyber-attacks, AI, and improved ISR by adversaries.

2. Measured Arsenal Growth: Continue the steady, measured growth of India's nuclear arsenal, aligning with the doctrine's call for an "effective, enduring, diverse, flexible and responsive" force.

3. Maintain No-First-Use Policy: Retain the no-first-use policy, as it avoids the costly and complex demands of a first-use strategy.

4. Avoid Tactical nuclear weapons: Refrain from deploying tactical nuclear weapons, as their use could lead to unpredictable and destabilizing consequences.

Subject: Disaster Management

Issue with hydropower projects on the Teesta River

Context: The article discusses recent landslides in Sikkim and Wayanad. It highlights concerns over hydropower projects along the Teesta River, especially after disasters have damaged major dams. It emphasizes the need for better environmental assessments and sustainable project planning.

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

What is the issue with hydropower projects on the Teesta River?

1. Frequent Natural Disasters: The Teesta river's hydropower projects are vulnerable to natural disasters. For example, the October 2023 glacier outburst destroyed the Teesta-3 dam, which reduced its power output by 90%.

2. Construction Concerns: Developers of Teesta-3 opted for a cheaper concrete-faced rock fill dam instead of a more durable concrete gravity dam, leading to its complete destruction.

3. Environmental Risks: The river's challenging terrain makes the projects susceptible to environmental risks, which have often been underestimated.

4. Limited Project Development: Out of 47 proposed hydropower projects on the Teesta, only five are operational, with 16 under consideration, showing the difficulty in balancing development with environmental safety.

5. Need for Better Assessments: Accurate environmental impact assessments are crucial to ensure public trust and project sustainability.

For detailed information on **Teesta River** [read this article here](#)

Series of Industrial Accidents in Andhra Pradesh's Atchutapuram SEZ

Context: The article discusses a series of industrial accidents in Andhra Pradesh's Atchutapuram SEZ, including a deadly blast at a pharma plant. It raises concerns about poor safety standards, lax inspections, and the need for stricter safety audits and enforcement.

For detailed information on **Issues with safety inspections in industrial areas in India** [read this article here](#)

What Happened in the Atchutapuram SEZ?

1. A deadly blast occurred at Escientia's pharma plant in the Atchutapuram SEZ, Andhra Pradesh, killing 17 workers and injuring many others.
2. On the same day, a fire at another chemical factory in the same SEZ injured about 10 workers.
3. Last year, a massive explosion at a pharma plant in the SEZ also caused deaths and injuries.
4. The Atchutapuram SEZ houses over 100 factories, raising concerns about repeated industrial accidents.

What Are the Concerns About Safety Standards?

- 1. High-Risk Exemptions:** The 2016 order exempts SEZ units, including high-risk industries like pharma and chemicals, from government inspections.
- 2. Self-Certification Issues:** Medium-risk industries can self-certify compliance through third-party audits, potentially lowering safety standards.
- 3. Historical Precedent:** The 2020 chemical leak in Visakhapatnam, causing 12 deaths, highlights ongoing safety failures in Andhra Pradesh's industrial zones.

What Should be Done?

1. There is a call for a broader investigation into SEZs in Andhra Pradesh to identify and fix safety loopholes.
2. Swift justice, including punishment for non-compliance and awarding punitive damages, is necessary to deter companies from ignoring safety regulations.
3. Reevaluate the 2016 order that exempts SEZ units from government inspections, even in high-risk industries, to ensure compliance with safety norms.