

9 PM Current Affairs Monthly Compilation

For UPSC CSE mains examination



August
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.

Indian Cities Struggle with Monsoon Preparedness

Context: The article discusses how Indian cities are unprepared for monsoons due to poor drainage systems. It highlights the impact of climate change, outdated infrastructure, and neglected urban planning. It also emphasizes the vulnerability of poorer communities during extreme weather events.

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

Why Do Indian Cities Struggle with Monsoon Preparedness?

- 1. Outdated Drainage Systems:** Delhi's drainage system, designed nearly 50 years ago, cannot handle heavy rainfall. For example, it struggles with even 50 mm of rain, while areas like Pusa recently recorded 58 mm.
- 2. Climate Change Impact:** Intense, localized rainfall is becoming common. On July 26, Delhi's ridge area saw 99 mm of rain.
- 3. Poor Urban Planning:** Urban planning has not considered natural water flow, leading to water accumulation and flooding. Historical areas like Minto underpass in Delhi, which are low-lying, are particularly vulnerable. Cities like Mumbai and Gurugram also face similar issues due to poor planning.
- 4. Vulnerable Populations:** The poor and lower-middle-class bear the brunt of these failures. Informal settlements, often ignored in city planning, experience significant disruptions and health risks due to the ineffective handling of stormwater mixed with sewage.
- 5. Historical Neglect:** Natural water channels have been covered or polluted. For example, the Jarhalla Nallah in Karol Bagh, once a natural drain, is now a polluted waterway.

What Can Be Learned from Historical Water Management?

- 1. Learning from Indus Valley:** The Indus Valley civilization had advanced water management systems, showcasing hydrological acumen. Modern India rarely takes cues from these effective ancient practices.
- 2. Adaptation to Terrain:** Historical water systems adapted to natural contours, unlike current radial or block planning. This neglect results in poor drainage and frequent flooding.

What Can Be Done to Improve the Situation?

- 1. Integrate Natural Hydrology:** Plan urban development considering natural water flow and elevation. Historical systems like those of the Indus Valley can provide useful insights.
- 2. Regulate Urban Infrastructure:** Implement stricter regulations for commercial buildings and ensure they are not built in vulnerable areas, like the coaching center in Old Rajinder Nagar.
- 3. Prioritize Vulnerable Populations:** Include informal settlements in master plans to prevent severe impacts on poor and lower-middle-class communities.
- 4. Desilt Drains Regularly:** Prevent clogging of stormwater drainage by regular desilting, addressing issues like those seen in Mumbai and Gurugram.

For detailed information on **Urban Flooding and Building Safety** [read this article here](#)

Witch-Hunting in India

Context- The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) in India has tracked "motives for murder," including witchcraft, since 1953. In 2022, there were 85 murders with witchcraft as a motive, mainly in Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, and Odisha, with additional cases in Assam, Bihar, and Telangana. In 2021, the UN Human Rights Council passed a resolution to eliminate harmful practices related to witchcraft accusations and ritual attacks. Data from the UN shows that between 2009 and 2019, there were about 20,000 documented cases of such practices across 60 countries.

What are the Legislative Efforts to Address Witch-Hunting?

India has several state-specific laws addressing witch-hunting:

- 1) Bihar: Prevention of Witch (Daain) Practices Act (1993)
- 2) Jharkhand: Prevention of Witch (Daain) Practices Act (2001)
- 3) Chhattisgarh: Tonahi Pratadna Nivaran Act (2005)
- 4) Odisha: Prevention of Witch Hunting Act (2013) etc.

What are the reasons behind persistence of witchcraft or witch hunting in India?

- 1) Lack of education and ignorance often result in mentally ill people being wrongly labeled as "witches," especially during disease outbreaks.
- 2) Widowed, single, or childless women are often targeted due to the desire to seize their property.
- 3) The existing laws are recent. Common problems include low rates of prosecution and conviction, and insufficient penalties, as seen in Jharkhand.
- 4) There is no national law on witch-hunting. The purpose of state laws can be unclear: Odisha's law covers both witch-hunting and witchcraft, Assam and Rajasthan penalize alleged witches (with Rajasthan also targeting communities), and Maharashtra focuses on black magic.
- 5) This issue is likely underreported in India, meaning the actual numbers may be much higher.

Read More- [Women Empowerment- Economic Political and Social- Explained Pointwise](#)

What should be the way forward?

- 1) Modern countries should have specific legislation to address the issue.
- 2) There should be a clear distinction between witchcraft and witch-hunting. The IPC (or its replacement) should have specific sections for both witchcraft and witch-hunting
- 3) The NCRB should update its reporting to include separate categories for these issues, rather than just labeling them as murders with witchcraft motives.

For a country aiming for modernity and development, it is essential to tackle witch-hunting with thorough and effective measures.

Critical Need for a Population Census in India

Context- India's ten-year population Census has been delayed by over three years, causing major concerns. Some officials mistakenly believe that other methods can replace a full Census. However, a Census does much

more than count people; it offers detailed information about where people live, family structures, and individual details, helping understand changes in the population.

What is the significance of Conducting Regular Census Data?

- 1) **Survey Reliability**- Without a recent census, surveys like the National Family Health Survey and Periodic Labour Force Survey are less reliable. They are based on outdated census data that's over 15 years old.
- 2) **Tracking Societal Changes**: Over the past fifteen years, there have been significant changes in population size, demographics, education, jobs, health (including COVID-19), and living conditions. A census is essential to accurately understand these changes.
- 3) **Policy Planning and Evaluation**: Without accurate census data, it's hard to properly assess how well government programs are working. The absence of a proper population denominator can lead to misleading evaluations of coverage and impact.
- 4) **Demographic Dividend**: A census is essential to understand India's rapid demographic transition and the resulting demographic dividend. It provides important data on familial structures, locational distribution, and occupational composition.
- 5) **Global Significance**: India's population has a big impact on global trends. Accurate census data is better than estimates based on projections and guesses.
- 6) **SDG Indicators**: -To effectively track Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), we need detailed indicators for smaller regions. These indicators depend on accurate population counts, which are not possible without a census.

Read more- [Delimitation Exercise- Explained Pointwise](#)

What are the Concerns and Implications?

- 1) **Caste Census Debate**- The push for a caste Census might be driven more by political interests than by a real need for detailed demographic data. Despite long-term affirmative action policies, there hasn't been a clear review of how education and job opportunities have changed for different castes.
- 2) **Administrative Challenges**- Conducting a Census is as challenging as organizing national elections. The real question is whether the delay is due to administrative issues or a deliberate choice to avoid revealing the true data. Delaying the Census may help the government claim progress based only on partial data, without accurate figures to measure it properly.

Way forward- The scientific community must stress the importance of holding a Census soon and make it clear that surveys and administrative data cannot replace a thorough Census.

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,

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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.

Anti-Conversion Law

Context-The Uttar Pradesh Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Act was introduced in 2021. By 2023, more than 400 cases were filed under this law. Recently, the Uttar Pradesh Assembly made the law stricter.

What are the Key Changes in the Amended Law?

- 1) **Increased Imprisonment & Penalties-** The law now includes longer jail sentences for offenses, with up to 20 years or life imprisonment for forcing minors, women, or certain communities to convert. There are also strict penalties for receiving foreign funds for illegal conversions.
- 2) **Stringent Bail Provisions-** New rules make it harder to get bail. The public prosecutor must be given a chance to oppose bail, and the court must be convinced that the accused is not guilty and unlikely to commit the crime again.

3) **Expanded Complaint Filing**- Anyone can file a complaint about forced or fraudulent conversions. Previously, only the victim or their close family could file such complaints.

Read More- [What are the issues in anti-conversion law?](#)

What are the implications of these recent amendments?

- 1) **Impact on Inter-Faith Marriages**- The law's validity is questionable because it criminalizes inter-faith marriages by classifying "conversion by marriage" as illegal. It declares such marriages invalid and requires people to notify authorities before changing their religion.
- 2) **Fundamental Rights**- The amendments might lead to more violations of fundamental rights. The law's approach is seen as incompatible with democratic values and a progressive constitution.

Issues with Proposed Amendments to Waqf Act

Context- The article discusses issues with the government's new draft of the Waqf (Amendment) Bill. Waqf is an Islamic tradition where people donate property to be used for charity, but it's not a religious requirement. This practice, which involves giving land or assets to benefit others, is similar to endowments or charitable trusts in other religions.

The laws governing Waqf in India have changed over the years, with the Waqf Act of 1995 being a key piece of legislation. This Act was updated in 2013, and now the central government is suggesting more major changes to it.

What are the Concerns Regarding Proposed Amendments?

- 1) **Nature of Waqf Properties**: - Government has ignored that Waqf properties are privately owned by Muslims, not public assets. This means the government should have minimal control over their management and use.
- 2) **Increased Government Interference**-It could allow more government interference in Waqf properties. This is a violation of the rights of Muslims and Article 26 of the Constitution, which protects religious properties from being taken over.
- 3) **Role of District Collector**- District collectors will decide if a property is Waqf or government land. This is concerning, especially since collectors have recently threatened even private properties of Minorities. Further, introducing adverse possession for Waqf properties could make them vulnerable to decisions by the Collector.
- 4) **Changes in Waqf Board Composition**-Removing the requirement for a Muslim CEO on Waqf Boards may lead to Muslims being excluded from managing these properties.
- 5) **Impediments to Creating New Waqfs**- The amendments create barriers to starting new Waqfs and allow government bodies, even local panchayats, to interfere with existing Waqf properties.
- 6) **Removal of "Waqf by User" Concept**-It removes the concept of "waqf by user," which is widely practiced. This could result in the takeover of Muslim graveyards and other properties if they aren't actively used for Waqf purposes.
- 7) **Violation of Constitutional Rights** -It may breach Articles 25 and 26 of the Constitution, which protect religious freedom and the rights of religious groups. In the past minority rights under Article 30 (regarding educational institutions) were encroached upon under the guise of better administration.

Debate Around Free Speech on Telegram

Context: The article discusses the need for balancing free speech with responsibility on platforms like Telegram. It highlights the arrest of Telegram's CEO, Pavel Durov, and questions whether absolute free speech can justify ignoring harmful content like extremism and child pornography.

For detailed information on **Amendment to IT Rules and regulating fake news** [read this article](#)

What is the Debate Around Free Speech on Telegram?

1. Telegram's CEO, Pavel Durov, supports absolute free speech, which has attracted both dissidents and harmful content like extremism and child pornography.
2. Durov's recent arrest in France has sparked debate on whether his approach is a threat to public safety or a defense of free speech.
3. Telegram's moderation practices are criticized; unlike Signal, it doesn't use end-to-end encryptions for all messages, allowing some criminal content to be accessed.
4. The spread of misinformation on platforms like WhatsApp in India demonstrates the dangers of unchecked content, emphasizing the need for responsible moderation.

How Does Telegram Handle Content?

1. Telegram offers encryption, but it does not use full "end-to-end" encryption like Signal.
2. This means that while some messages remain private, others can be accessed by Telegram and potentially shared with law enforcement.
3. Telegram claims its moderation practices meet industry standards, but investigations show that the platform ignored requests to curb illegal activities.

What Should be Done?

- 1. Balance Free Speech and Responsibility:** Telegram must moderate content to prevent illegal activities like extremism, drug dealing, and child pornography, while still supporting free speech.
- 2. Respond to Law Enforcement Requests:** Telegram should act on requests to curb illegal content, as failing to do so may lead to legal consequences, like the arrest of CEO Pavel Durov by French authorities.
- 3. Learn from Other Platforms:** Following WhatsApp's example, which introduced restrictions to curb misinformation, Telegram could implement similar measures to control the spread of false information and harmful content effectively.

Topic- Separation of Powers between various organs Dispute Redressal Mechanisms and Institutions.

Impact of New Arbitration Guidelines

Context- The government introduced new guidelines for arbitration and mediation in public procurement contracts. Although the guidelines promote mediation, they indicate a move away from using arbitration in government projects.

The 2015 amendments aimed to make India a top international arbitration center by reducing court delays. However, the recent shift away from arbitration seems to reverse this progress.

What are the problems with arbitration?

- 1) **Speed of resolution**- The recent reversal of reforms comes from worries that cases are being resolved too quickly.
- 2) **Quality of arbitrators**-The perceptions that poor-quality or corrupt arbitrators are to blame misses the true issues. The real issues are inadequate legal representation and flawed case facts, rather than the arbitrators themselves.

What will be the impact of these new guidelines?

- 1) **Business Ecosystem**-It will negatively impact private litigants, India's "Ease of Doing Business" ranking and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI).
- 2) **Legal System**- It will add pressure to already overloaded courts, causing delays, increased court interference, and lengthier appeals. As the government will often be involved in disputes, cases are likely to reach the Supreme Court frequently.
- 3) **Shift to Foreign Arbitration** -Large domestic companies will choose foreign arbitration, leaving only smaller disputes to be handled in India.

Read More- [Alternative dispute resolution](#)

What are the likely positive outcomes?

- 1) **Increased Commercial litigation**-This shift will foster strong legal principles in damages, indemnities, discovery, and trial practices, expand Indian law on damages, and encourage innovative use of tort law.
- 2) **Demand for skilled trial lawyers**- There will be a need for lawyers skilled in litigation, damages, and cross-examination, which will enhance the overall legal system.

What should be the way forward?

- A) **Addressing Arbitration Issues**- The real issue with arbitration should be addressed by improving legal representation and case details, rather than blaming the arbitrators. Enhancing training and accreditation can resolve these problems without abandoning arbitration.
- B) **Commercial Courts** -Substantial investments and a commitment to improving commercial courts should be made for a successful transition.

Topic- Polity-Parliament and State Legislatures - structure, functioning, conduct of business, powers & privileges and issues arising out of these.

Issue with Money Bills

Context: The article discusses the Supreme Court of India's upcoming review of what constitutes a Money Bill. The decision will affect many laws passed without the Rajya Sabha's approval and impact India's federal structure and balance of power.

For detailed information on **Money bill and Finance bill** [read this article here](#)

What is the Issue with Money Bills?

1. What is a Money Bill?: A Money Bill involves matters like taxation, government borrowing, and spending, as outlined in Article 110 of the Indian Constitution. It requires only the Lok Sabha's approval, with the Rajya Sabha having limited influence.

2. Issue with Money Bills: The problem arises when legislation with broader implications, beyond financial matters, is passed as a Money Bill. This strategy bypasses the need for approval from the Rajya Sabha, raising concerns about the balance of power in Parliament.

3. Specific Example - Finance Act 2017: This act, certified as a Money Bill, made extensive changes to tribunal structures, affecting the judiciary's independence. This is argued to stretch beyond the intended scope of a Money Bill.

What Did Previous Court Rulings Say?

1. K.S. Puttaswamy vs Union of India (2018):

- a. The Aadhaar Act was upheld as a Money Bill because it involved government expenditure from the Consolidated Fund of India. The Act's Section 7 related to subsidies and benefits funded by the government.
- b. **Issue:** The ruling did not consider other extensive provisions like biometric data collection and administrative authority.

2. Rojer Mathew vs South Indian Bank Ltd. (2019):

- a. The Finance Act, 2017, was challenged for being passed as a Money Bill. The Act made broad changes to tribunal structures, which went beyond typical financial matters.
- b. **Finding:** The court noted the need for clear rules on Money Bills and highlighted the misuse of the Money Bill certification.

3. Vijay Madanlal Choudhary vs Union of India (2022):

- a. The Supreme Court upheld amendments to the Prevention of Money Laundering Act made through a Money Bill.
- b. **Pending Issue:** The validity of using the Money Bill route for such amendments remains unresolved.

What are the Implications of the Upcoming Ruling?

1. Definition of Money Bills: The upcoming Supreme Court ruling will clarify what qualifies as a Money Bill, crucial for determining how laws can bypass the Rajya Sabha.

2. Impact on Past Legislation: A stricter definition could challenge the validity of past laws like the Finance Act of 2017, which made sweeping changes to tribunal structures but was passed as a Money Bill.

3. Federal Balance: The ruling will influence the balance of power between the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha, crucial for maintaining India's federal structure. This is evident from cases like the Aadhaar Act and Finance Act amendments, where extensive non-financial measures were included under Money Bills.

4. Judicial Precedents: The decision could redefine or affirm previous court interpretations, impacting how similar cases are handled in the future.

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

Concerns About Bias in Resource Allocation to the state

Context: The article discusses the concerns of opposition Chief Ministers about alleged bias in resource allocation by the Centre. It covers the issues of discretionary grants, the role and powers of the NITI Aayog, tax resource distribution, cesses, and borrowing limits for states.

For detailed information on **Issue with Financial Transfers to States** [read this article here](#)

Why Are the Opposition's Concerns About Bias in Resource Allocation Valid?

1. Recent budgets have focused on schemes for Bihar and Andhra Pradesh, raising concerns about political favoritism.
2. Discretionary grants lack clear criteria, leading to perceived arbitrariness in allocations.
3. Cesses and surcharges collected by the central government, totaling ₹36 lakh crore between 2015-16 and 2024-25, have not been shared with states.
4. The NITI Aayog, replacing the Planning Commission, lacks financial powers, reducing its effectiveness in addressing regional inequalities.
5. Kerala has faced reduced revenue deficit grants and borrowing limits despite investing heavily in social sectors, highlighting unfair treatment in resource distribution.

For detailed information on **Concern with NITI Aayog** [read this article here](#)

What should be done?

- 1. Ensure Transparency in Discretionary Grants:** Establish clear criteria for discretionary grants to avoid arbitrariness. Recent budgets have shown favoritism towards states like Bihar and Andhra Pradesh, reflecting political motivations.
- 2. Strengthen NITI Aayog's Role:** Empower NITI Aayog to provide capital grants through a consultative process with states, ensuring flexibility without the rigidity of centrally sponsored schemes (CSS).
- 3. Revise Tax Devolution:** Address fiscal inequalities by increasing the devolution share in the divisible pool to 50%. Use grants judiciously to meet specific state needs and balance post-devolution differences.
- 4. Limit Cesses and Surcharges:** Reduce reliance on cesses and surcharges, which have accumulated ₹36 lakh crore from 2015-16 to 2024-25, with none shared with states.
- 5. Support Social Sector Investments:** Continue revenue deficit grants for states like Kerala, which invest heavily in social sectors. Kerala faces borrowing constraints despite its fiscal prudence due to significant social investments.

Topic- Structure, Organization and Functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary— Ministries and Departments of the Government; Pressure Groups and Formal/Informal Associations and their Role in the Polity.

The Economic Impact of Judicial Delays in India

Context- The Chief Justice of India has highlighted that delays in resolving cases mean denying justice. India's judicial system is one of the slowest in the world. According to the World Bank, it takes an average of nearly four years to enforce a contract in India, ranking it among the bottom five countries for speed.

What are the reasons behind judicial delay in India?

- 1) **Government Litigation-** Government departments, especially revenue and labor, are involved in a large portion of legal disputes. The lengthy duration of these cases has a major overall impact.
- 2) **Government Legal Capacity:** - Government legal departments struggle to handle litigation effectively, highlighting the need to build their capacity at both central and state levels.
- 3) **Judicial Vacancy-**India has about 25,000 judges, which need to be increased to two or three times this number to better serve a population of 1.4 billion.

Read More- [Reasons Behind Judicial Pendency](#)

What are the Economic Implications of Judicial Delays?

- 1) **Asset Lockup:** - Delays in resolving cases tie up assets, land, and resources, preventing their effective use. In India, around \$200 billion is stuck in land disputes.
- 2) **Legal Costs-** Long delays in cases result in high legal fees and take up a lot of management time, but calculating the exact costs is difficult due to the widespread nature of the problem.
- 3) **Informal Economic Relationships-**Due to the difficulty of enforcing contracts, many economic relationships stay informal. This results in increased reliance on personal connections, the continued importance of community networks despite modernization, and small businesses staying in the unorganized sector.
- 4) **Impact on Business Behavior-**Unethical practices may become common because delays prevent timely punishment. When enforcing contracts is difficult, businesses become more cautious and focus on short-term goals.
- 5) **Economic Growth-** Studies estimate that judicial delays reduce GDP growth by 1-2 percentage points each year, especially affecting industries that are dependent on specific investments and contracts. Modern manufacturing, global trade, and investments depend on timely and fair contract enforcement, which is hampered by these delays.

What should be the way forward?

- 1) **Expansion of Judicial Positions-** Increasing the number of judges is important to reducing judicial delays, and this expansion will necessitate investment in new courts, libraries, and administrative staff.
- 2) **Enhancing Infrastructure and Technology-** The use of new information technology mechanisms should be enhanced to streamline processes.
- 3) **Administrative Reforms-** Frequent rotation of judges and lack of effective grouping of cases can hinder efficiency. Addressing these issues can help speed up case resolution and improve overall judicial efficiency
- 4) **Need for Legal Reforms-**Older laws that are outdated or ineffective should be revised or abolished. Practices like frequent adjournments and misalignment of judges' expertise with case requirements need to

be addressed.

5) **Coordination Approach-** To fix the coordination issues between the judiciary and government, a high-level committee led by a respected former Chief Justice should be established.

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.

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

Issues with State Election Commissions (SECs)

Context- SECs were created by Articles 243K and 243ZA of the Indian Constitution, added by the 73rd and 74th Amendments in 1993. These articles give SECs the power to manage electoral rolls and oversee elections for panchayats and urban local governments.

Holding regular and fair elections for local governments is essential for grassroots democracy and effective service delivery in both cities and rural areas. Elections must be held before the end of the five-year term for local governments, just as seriously as national elections.

What are the issues with the functioning of State Election Commissions?

- 1) **Disempowerment of State Election Commission** – State governments frequently delay delimitation and elections for panchayat raj institutions. The CAG's report on Karnataka found that these delays are often due to the weakened authority of SECs, which harms local governance and erodes public trust.
- 2) **Findings on Urban Local Governments-** The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) found that 70% of urban local governments across 18 states—1,560 out of 2,240—did not have elected councils at the time of the audit.
- 3) **Survey Findings-** Janaagraha's 2023 survey found that only 11 of the 34 states and Union Territories have given SECs the power to handle ward delimitation. These areas represent just 35% of India's population based on the 2011 Census.

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

What should be the way forward?

1) Enhancing Transparency and Independence-

A) SECs should be as independent and transparent as the Election Commission of India, with the same level of authority over local elections. This is also affirmed by the Supreme Court in the 2006 **Kishan Singh Tomar case**.

B) A proposed reform is to establish a three-member SEC appointed by a committee consisting of the Chief Minister, the Leader of the Opposition, and the Chief Justice of the High Court. This change could be implemented through an amendment to the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act.

2) **Fixed Intervals for Delimitation-** To avoid arbitrary delays by state governments, delimitation of ward boundaries and seat reservations should happen every ten years. This will help ensure timely elections and reduce delays caused by state decisions.

3) **Delimitation and Reservation Powers-** SECs should be given the authority to handle ward delimitation and seat reservations for local governments. They should also manage the reservation of key positions like mayors or presidents at regular intervals to prevent delays.

4) **Preventing Malpractices-** SECs should oversee elections for important local roles like mayors and

presidents to prevent malpractice, as seen in the 2024 Chandigarh Municipal Corporation mayoral election.

Subject: Governance

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

The Ongoing Debate on Genetically Modified Crops in India

Context- Recently, a two-judge Bench of the Supreme Court of India gave a split verdict on whether to permit genetically modified mustard, DMH-11, for use in farms. DMH-11, developed at Delhi University's biotechnology department with public funding, features genes that make it appealing for creating new hybrid varieties.

Currently, only GM cotton is allowed in India. Although GM seeds have been developed for crops like rice, wheat, tomato, brinjal, and mustard, none of these have been approved for use.

What are the Key points about DMH-11?

- 1) **Approval Process-** To be approved in India, crops must be tested over three seasons in various climates and show consistent improvement over current varieties.
- 2) **Trial Results-** Trials by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research over three years showed that DMH-11 met these criteria.
- 3) **GEAC Approval-** Based on these results, the Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC) approved DMH-11 in October 2022, subject to certain tests.

A detailed article on **GM Crops in India: Issues and challenges** can be [read here](#).

What are the issues with DMH-11?

- 1) **Environmental Concerns-** Environmentalists argue that DMH-11 is 'herbicide tolerant,' which would require farmers to use certain pesticides. This may harm the environment.
- 2) **Transparency Issues-** The developers did not clearly disclose that the crop is herbicide-tolerant.
- 3) **Legal Challenges-** The Supreme Court's split verdict highlights the complexity of the issue, so the case will be reviewed by a larger Bench led by the Chief Justice of India.
 - A) **Justice Nagarathna's View-** She believed the GEAC ignored the 'precautionary principle,' which requires careful consideration of new technologies before approval.
 - B) **Justice Karol's View-** He was satisfied with how the approval process was handled.

Way ahead-The Court ordered the Centre to develop a comprehensive policy on GM crops. Further, the Court and government should keep in mind that striving for improvement should not be hindered by the pursuit of perfection.

Pros and cons of allowing doorstep delivery of alcohol in India

Context: The article discusses the pros and cons of allowing doorstep delivery of alcohol in India. It covers revenue generation, potential reduction in drunk-driving, safety concerns, health risks, economic costs, and policy recommendations for managing alcohol consumption and related harms.

For detailed information on **Alcohol Policies in India – Our hypocrisy on alcohol** [read this article here](#)

Why Consider Doorstep Delivery of Alcohol?

- 1. Revenue Generation:** Taxes on alcohol sales contribute up to 25% of all revenue in various States. For instance, India is the sixth-largest alcohol market globally, generating \$52 billion in revenue.
- 2. Reducing Drunk-Driving:** Doorstep delivery might reduce drunk-driving incidents. In India, 6-48% of fatal road traffic accidents are due to alcohol use.
- 3. Safety for Women:** Doorstep delivery can help women avoid on-premise violence. Evidence from Kerala shows that shutting bars reduced violence against women.

What are the Arguments Against Doorstep Delivery?

- 1. Economic Costs vs. Benefits:** Studies indicate that the costs due to alcohol use in India exceed the economic benefits from alcohol sales.
- 2. Behavioral Assumptions:** Doorstep delivery assumes people will drink responsibly. However, this assumption lacks concrete evidence.
- 3. Increased Consumption:** The availability of alcohol on-demand might increase consumption and promote binge drinking, leading to more alcohol-related harms.
- 4. Questionable Impact on Drunk-Driving:** While reducing drunk-driving is a goal, other measures like sobriety checkpoints and stricter penalties are proven to be more effective.
- 5. Health and Economic Burden:** Treating alcohol-related diseases and injuries could cost India over ₹3 lakh crore between 2011 and 2050. Including productivity losses, the total cost rises to ₹121.3 lakh crore. Revenue from excise taxes will cover only one-fifth of these financial losses.

What Can Governments Do?

- 1. Restrict Availability and Marketing:** Governments can restrict the availability and marketing of alcohol.
- 2. Higher Taxes:** Implementing higher taxes can help reduce consumption.
- 3. Enforce Drunk-Driving Laws:** Enforcing laws and increasing penalties can reduce alcohol-related road traffic fatalities.
- 4. Invest in Treatments:** Governments should invest in psychosocial treatments for alcohol-use disorders. This approach addresses the root causes and helps reduce long-term health costs.
- 5. Monitor Impact:** Regularly monitor the impact of policies like doorstep delivery on alcohol consumption. Use data from service providers to assess the health and economic outcomes, adjusting policies if necessary.

Supreme Court's decision regarding Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia

Context: The article discusses the Supreme Court of India granting bail to Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia. It emphasizes that bail should not be denied as punishment and highlights concerns about delays in trials and the importance of safeguarding citizens' liberty.

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For detailed information on a **Bail Law** read [Article 1](#), [Article 2](#)

What was the Supreme Court's decision regarding Manish Sisodia?

1. The Supreme Court of India granted bail to Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia after nearly a year-and-a-half in prison.
2. The decision emphasized that bail should not be denied as punishment.
3. The court noted that when a case relies mainly on documentary evidence, bail should be the norm unless the suspect is a flight risk or can tamper with evidence.
4. Sisodia was arrested in early 2023 by the CBI and the ED in the Delhi liquor policy case.

Why is this decision important for bail law?

- 1. Bail is the Rule, Not the Exception:** The Supreme Court's decision in granting bail to Manish Sisodia reinforces the principle that bail is the rule, not the exception.
- 2. Documentary Evidence and Bail Norms:** The case involved mainly documentary evidence, indicating that bail should be the norm unless there is a flight risk or tampering with evidence.
- 3. Criticism of Judges' Tendency:** The Supreme Court criticized the tendency of some judges to deny bail unnecessarily, ignoring the principle of timely trials. This may lead to loss of public trust in the judiciary.
- 4. Protecting Citizens' Liberty and Ensuring Fair Trials:** In October 2023, the Supreme Court had directed that Sisodia could reapply for bail if the trial was delayed. This decision highlights the importance of protecting citizens' liberty and ensuring fair trials without prolonged pre-trial imprisonment, especially when trials are delayed.

The Role of State and Private Sector in Elite Sports

Context- Recent news about Vinesh Phogat's Olympic disqualification and the Ambani family's push to improve India's sports performance has sparked a debate. It focuses on whether private wealth or state funds are better for supporting elite sports versus addressing public welfare.

What are the arguments against state funding of elite sports?

- 1) **Public Welfare vs. Elite Sports-** Promoting general physical activity improves public health and well-being, whereas sponsoring elite sports typically seeks private benefits and national recognition rather than directly aiding the public.
- 2) **Lack of evidence for public welfare effects:** -State funding for elite sports rarely enhances public health or benefits the general population, particularly in poorer countries. With fewer than 45 Olympic medals, India's experience suggests that these investments do not produce significant returns.
- 3) **Politicization of Sports-** Political patronage in sports harms administration quality. Appointees often prioritize political goals over developing talent. This leads to ineffective state-sponsored sports programs.

What are the arguments to support private funding of elite sports?

- 1) **Business Incentives and Efficiency-** Private investment in sports aims for profits, with companies expecting improved public image, branding, and more medals. Unlike the state, private investments face strict scrutiny and performance metrics.

2) **Advantages Over State Funding-** Unlike state funding, private sector investments are closely monitored for effectiveness. This oversight can lead to better management and results in sports.

Read More- [India's Paris Olympics Performance- Challenges and Way Forward](#)

Conclusion- The debate about state versus private funding for elite sports highlights larger issues of public welfare and resource use. Private investment often achieves better sports outcomes due to profit motives, but state funds might be better spent on basic societal needs.

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.

Digital Competition Regulation in India

Context- The recent US court ruling on Google's search monopoly has sparked global debates about the power of major tech companies like Google, Meta, and Amazon. This impacts India's draft digital competition law, which seeks to boost user choice and competition by allowing third-party apps on Core Digital Services. Big Tech's dominance, especially through app store policies, is facing more scrutiny and regulation. In India, the Competition Commission has fined Google ₹1,338 crore for issues with Android and ₹936 crore for problems with its Play Store and in-app payments. These fines highlight concerns about Big Tech's impact on competition and consumer choice.

What is the Draft Digital Competition Law?

The draft digital competition law in India sets specific criteria for determining which enterprises qualify as SSDEs. These criteria include:

- 1) **User thresholds** -Core digital services must have at least 1 crore end-users or 10,000 business users.
- 2) **Financial thresholds**- Enterprises must have a turnover of at least ₹4,000 crore in India or \$30 billion globally.

What is the significance of Draft Digital Competition Law?

- 1) **Promoting User Choice and Competition** - The draft digital competition law aims to increase user choice and ensure fair competition. Currently, Big Tech controls app access, limiting options and giving a few companies too much power. The new law would allow users to choose from a broader range of apps and services.
- 2) **Creation of Level Field**- It allows users to add third-party apps to Core Digital Services. This change will encourage innovation by letting external developers build new apps on Big Tech platforms. It helps smaller developers and startups compete fairly, leading to more exciting and diverse app options for users.
- 3) **Interoperability and Data Portability**- Allowing third-party apps on Core Digital Services improves app compatibility, user experience, and competition. It also makes it easier for users to switch services while keeping their data, offering more choices and less reliance on one provider.
- 4) **Data Protection and Accountability**- The DPDP Act (Digital Personal Data Protection Act) sets strong rules for data protection, including measures for data empowerment, consent management, and penalties for privacy breaches. These rules are integrated into the draft digital competition law to ensure user data stays protected, even with third-party apps.

Read More- [India's Digital Personal Data Protection Act](#)

Conclusion- As India regulates Big Tech, ensuring users have choices is essential for a fair digital market. For India, this focus on user options is important, even if it differs from the views of tech giants.

Indian Criminal Law in the Digital Age

Context-The article points out that new criminal codes in India do not adequately address emerging digital crimes. As technology advances rapidly, legislation has struggled to keep up. After almost 25 years, there is still no updated legal framework to handle these changes in criminal behavior.

What are the issues with the Bhartiya Nyaya Samhita?

9 PM Compilation August 2024

The BNS mostly preserves the IPC, adding 19 new offences from other laws. The BNSS and BSA introduce minimal new sections—nine and two, respectively. Overall, the updates do not address modern societal needs or behaviors.

1) Addressing Modern Cybercrimes and Data Theft-

A) The National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal of India covers modern crimes like cyberbullying and phishing. However, BNS doesn't address these issues and rarely mentions terms like "data," "virtual," or "digital".

B) The term "cyber" in Section 111 refers to organized crimes but does not define cybercrimes, while "electronic" only relates to records, documents, and signatures. Additionally, data theft is not considered a crime in the BNS because data is not classified as "property."

C) Complainants find it hard to decide if threatening emails are covered by Sections 354 and 509 of the IPC, and companies struggle to classify data theft—whether it's intellectual property or confidential information—under Section 378.

2) **Lack of Clarity and Precision-** The BNS includes terrorism and organized crimes from the UAPA and MCOCA but lacks safeguards from the original laws. Decisions to label actions as terrorism under the BNS are left to the discretion of a Superintendent of Police or higher, which can lead to arbitrariness and potential misuse.

A detailed article on **Bhartiya Nyaya Sanhita** can be [read here](#).

3) **Misuse of Vague Terms** -The BNS uses vague terms like "economic security" and "economic offences," which could be misapplied to both fraud and legitimate business. The authority given to local police raises concerns about potential misuse.

4) **Lack of Gender Neutrality-** The BNS aims to make many offences gender-neutral, but "rape" is still gender-specific. Also, bestiality is no longer considered a crime, and Section 377 IPC hasn't been reinstated.

5) **Misuse Against Political Protests and Hunger Strikes** -The BNS introduces a new offence for attempting suicide to compel or restrain, which could be misused against political protests and hunger strikes. This can potentially infringe on the right to protest.

Topic- Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Education, Human Resource

Significance of ITIs in India

Context: The article discusses the focus on enhancing Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) in India, highlighted in Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's recent Union Budget. She put "employment and skilling" second on her list of nine Budget priorities, just after agriculture. The article addresses issues like outdated courses and poor placement rates, while noting improvements and initiatives in some states to boost ITI effectiveness and job placements for graduates.

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

What are the significances of ITIs for India?

1. Skill Development and Capacity: ITIs provide critical skills to a large number of students, with around 14,993 government ITIs and 2.5 million available seats as of 2021-22.

2. Improving Enrollment: Enrollment has been increasing, from 946,000 in 2014 to 1.24 million in 2022,

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showing growing demand and relevance.

3. Curriculum Relevance: New courses on emerging technologies like electric vehicles align ITIs with modern industry needs, ensuring graduates are industry ready.

4. Strategic Importance: Established to meet post-independence industrial needs, ITIs are pivotal as India approaches 100 years of independence, aiming to create a skilled workforce for a developed economy by 2047.

What Challenges Do ITIs Face?

Despite their pivotal role, ITIs struggle with several issues:

1. Skilled Trainers: There is a shortage of skilled trainers across states.

2. Resource Crunch: Many institutes lack the necessary resources.

3. Outdated Curriculum: The courses often do not meet current industry requirements.

4. Poorly Equipped Labs: Many labs are not adequately equipped.

5. Ineffective Placement Methods: There is a need for better placement strategies, as suggested by a Parliamentary Committee which called for mandatory reporting on graduate employment status.

What are the success stories from ITIs?

1. Delhi's Placement Rates: Delhi's ITIs achieved a 72.3% placement rate in the latest academic year, with some institutes reaching as high as 94 to 97%.

2. Tamil Nadu's Improvement: Tamil Nadu saw an increase in placement rates to 80% in 2023, up from 77.4% the previous year.

3. International Opportunities: In Maharashtra, ITI students secured jobs overseas in countries like Germany, Japan, Saudi Arabia, and Israel. Germany recruited 4,000 professionals from Kerala institutions, including ITIs.

4. Corporate Collaborations: Hyundai announced new job opportunities for ITI students across nine states. The Telangana government partnered with Tata Technologies to upgrade 65 ITIs into centers of excellence.

5. Innovative Courses: ITI Shikohabad in Uttar Pradesh introduced new courses on electric vehicles, adapting to industry needs.

What should be done?

1. Enhance Placement Methods: Set up effective placement cells and make employment data reporting mandatory, as suggested by the Parliamentary Committee.

2. Adopt NITI Aayog's Recommendations: Implement a seven-pronged strategy, including setting up a central board for vocational education recognition, to overhaul the ITI ecosystem.

3. Learn from Success Stories: Emulate successful models like Delhi's 72.3% placement rate and Tamil Nadu's 80% rate.

4. Update Curriculum: Align courses with industry requirements, focusing on areas like data analytics and AI.

5. Promote Collaborations: Encourage partnerships like Hyundai's job opportunities and Tata Technologies' upgrade of ITIs.

How telemedicine helped manage chronic diseases

Context: The article discusses how telemedicine helped manage chronic diseases like diabetes during the COVID-19 pandemic. It highlights a software from AIIMS, Delhi, aiding rural healthcare centers. Emphasis is on combining digital tools with quality medical care while ensuring data confidentiality.

For detailed information on **Digital health: leveraging technology for transforming health care** [read this article here](#)

How Does Software Improve Diabetes Care?

- 1. Support for Local Doctors:** The software aids general physicians in PHCs by processing patient data on risk factors like blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar.
- 2. Specialized Consultation:** Developed by AIIMS, Delhi, it extends specialized diabetes consultation to rural areas where specialists are scarce.
- 3. Early Diagnosis:** Helps address the issue that nearly 50% of diabetes cases in India are underreported due to lack of awareness.
- 4. Improved Treatment:** Suggests treatment plans based on data input, enhancing the doctor's ability to manage diabetes effectively.
- 5. Integration Potential:** Can sync with the National Health Programme's electronic records, promoting seamless expert interaction.

What Are the Benefits and Limitations of Software?

A. Benefits of the Software:

- 1. Improves Diagnosis:** Helps PHC doctors diagnose diabetes by processing patient data like blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar.
- 2. Supports Rural Healthcare:** Extends specialized diabetes consultation to rural areas where specialists are scarce.
- 3. Enhances Treatment Outcomes:** Promotes a digitally connected healthcare ecosystem, improving treatment outcomes, especially in rural India.

B. Limitations of the Software:

- 1. Dependent on Doctors:** Requires doctors to adapt the software's advice based on patients' lifestyles.
- 2. Data Privacy Concerns:** Needs protection against data confidentiality breaches.
- 3. Integration Needed:** More effective when synced with the National Health Programme's electronic records.

Declining affordability of health insurances

Context: The article discusses how the increase in health and life insurance premiums, coupled with an 18% GST, has made insurance less affordable. It highlights concerns against this tax and debates on whether reducing GST would benefit policyholders and insurance industry growth.

For detailed information on **All-in-one policy plan to spread insurance in India** [read this article here](#)

What is the GST on Health and Life Insurance Premiums?

1. GST on health and life insurance policies is fixed at 18%.
2. GST replaced indirect taxes like service tax and cess on July 1, 2017.
3. Before GST, life insurance premiums had a 15% tax, including Basic Service Tax, Swachh Bharat cess, and Krishi Kalyan cess.
4. The increase from 15% to 18% raised premiums for policyholders.
5. In the last three financial years, GST on insurance policies generated Rs 21,256 crore.
6. Reissuance of health policies added another Rs 3,274 crore.
7. The rise in premiums, coupled with GST, has made insurance less affordable.

What Are the Arguments for Reducing GST on Insurance?

- 1. High Premium Costs:** Health insurance premiums have increased significantly, with some public sector insurers raising premiums by 50%.
- 2. Medical Inflation:** Medical inflation was estimated at 14% at the end of last year, adding to the cost burden on policyholders.
- 3. High GST Rate:** India's GST on insurance is 18%, the highest globally, deterring people from buying policies. Markets like Singapore and Hong Kong have no GST or VAT on insurance, making policies more affordable.
- 4. Industry Growth Restriction:** Union Minister Nitin Gadkari stated that the GST on premiums restricts the industry's growth.
- 5. Revenue Data:** GST on insurance policies generated Rs 21,256 crore in the last three years, indicating the substantial financial burden on policyholders.

How Significant are the Insurance Markets in India?

1. The general insurance industry collected Rs 1,09,000 crore in health premiums in 2023-24.
2. Life insurance companies collected Rs 3,77,960 crore in premiums, with LIC contributing Rs 2,22,522 crore.
3. Five states (Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, and Delhi) contributed 64% of total health insurance premiums in 2022-23.
4. Insurance penetration in the life sector dropped to 3% in 2022-23 from 3.2% in 2021-22.
5. Non-life insurance sector penetration remained at 1%.
6. Overall insurance penetration decreased to 4% in 2022-23 from 4.2% in 2021-22.

Present status of nutritional poverty in India

Context: The article assesses nutritional poverty in India based on the National Sample Survey Office's Household Consumption Expenditure Survey (HCES) for 2022-23.

HCES 2022-23 report provides detailed data on the consumption of various food and non-food items by households and calculates the per capita daily calorie intake.

It compares the estimated calorie intake of households in lower expenditure classes with the average per capita daily calorie requirement for a healthy life.

To calculate the monthly per capita consumer expenditure (MPCE) threshold, the food expenditure is combined with the average non-food expenditure for the poorest 5%.

What are the key Findings of the report?

Rural and Urban expenditure thresholds: For rural India, the all-India threshold total MPCE is ₹2,197 (₹1,569 for food and ₹628 for non-food). For urban India, it is ₹3,077 (₹2,098 for food and ₹979 for non-food). These thresholds indicate the minimum expenditure needed for adequate nourishment and essential non-food items.

Proportion of Poor/Deprived: The proportion of poor is estimated at 17.1% for rural areas and 14% for urban areas based on these thresholds.

Threshold based on poorest 10% Population: If the non-food expenditure of the poorest 10% is considered, the thresholds increase to ₹2,395 for rural and ₹3,416 for urban areas. Increases the proportion of deprived to 23.2% for rural and 19.4% for urban areas.

Calorie Intake of the Poorest: The average PCCI for the poorest 5% in rural areas is 1,564 kcal, and for the next poorest 5%, it is 1,764 kcal. In urban areas, the figures are 1,607 kcal and 1,773 kcal, respectively. These figures are significantly lower than the PCCR of 2,172 kcal for rural and 2,135 kcal for urban areas.

What are the Recommendations for tackling nutrition deficiency?

The government has several welfare programs aimed at improving the conditions of the poor. However, there is a need for specific nutritional schemes targeted at the poorest sections to raise their level of nourishment and ensure a healthy life.

These schemes should focus on providing adequate calories and essential nutrients to address the significant nutritional deficiencies identified in the survey.

Judicial Views on Killing Stray Dogs

Context: The article discusses a Supreme Court ruling that prohibits indiscriminate killing of stray dogs by municipalities. Instead, the court mandates sterilisation as the humane and effective solution, aligning with the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act and new Animal Birth Control Rules.

For detailed information on **the Issue of Stray dogs in India** [read this article here](#)

What Was the Case About?

1. The case was between the Animal Welfare Board of India and People for Elimination of Stray Troubles.
2. It focused on whether local authorities could kill stray dogs to reduce their population, prevent rabies, and avoid conflicts.
3. State and Municipal laws allowed the killing of stray dogs, while Central law (Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960) prohibited it.

What Are the Judicial Views on Killing Stray Dogs?

1. **High Court Rulings:** The High Courts of Bombay, Karnataka, and Himachal Pradesh allowed local authorities to kill stray dogs. The Kerala High Court opposed this, supporting the Central law.
2. **Supreme Court Rulings:** The Supreme Court ruled that municipalities cannot kill stray dogs indiscriminately. They must follow the **Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960**, and the new **Animal Birth Control Rules, 2023**, which advocate for sterilization over killing. This decision was uploaded on July 12, following the final hearing on May 9.

What Does Science Say?

The WHO's 2004 report and a 2014 report by the Bombay Municipal Corporation supported sterilisation as effective. Killing 4.5 lakh dogs between 1984-1994 in Bombay did not reduce the population.

What Does This Mean for the Future?

1. The ruling emphasizes compassion and responsibility towards living beings as mandated by Article 51A(g) of the Constitution.
2. It reflects a shift towards more humane treatment of animals, advocating for sterilization as the only scientific and humane method to control the stray dog population.
3. The court suggests that those opposing the ruling can challenge the new rules in the High Courts.

Puja Khedkar's fraudulent methods to manipulate the UPSC recruitment process

Context: The article discusses Puja Khedkar's fraudulent methods to manipulate the UPSC recruitment process, including fake certificates and misuse of privileges. It highlights the flaws in the examination system and calls for an overhaul to prevent such frauds and improve disability certification processes.

For detailed information on **Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Bill 2024** [read this article here](#)

What Did Puja Khedkar Do?

1. Puja Khedkar allegedly committed multiple frauds in the UPSC recruitment process. As per the reports, she faked mental illness, visual impairment, and community certificates. She also used a disability certificate to gain advantages she otherwise wouldn't have had. The Pune hospital that issued her disability certificate confirmed it was only for a 7% locomotor disability, which was insufficient for benefits.
2. Khedkar used her father's position in the civil services to gain benefits. She also fabricated her OBC certificate and falsely claimed her parents were divorced to bypass exclusion criteria. Additionally, she used multiple identities to write tests.

What Is the Bigger Issue?

- 1. Widespread Fraud:** Puja Khedkar's case reveals severe loopholes in the UPSC recruitment process. She used fake certificates and multiple identities to gain undue advantages.
- 2. Examination System Flaws:** The UPSC failed to detect her fraud despite numerous red flags.
- 3. Other Controversies:** Qualification exams like NEET UG, NEET PG, and CUET have faced similar issues, indicating systemic problems.
- 4. Disability Certification:** Genuine applicants struggle to get certifications, while Khedkar easily faked one.
- 5. Need for Overhaul:** The government must revamp the competitive examination and disability certification systems to prevent future frauds.

New Regulations for Drug Approvals in India

Context - The Drug Controller General of India (DCGI) has introduced a new rule that streamlines the drug approval process. Now, if a drug is approved by leading regulators in the United States, United Kingdom, Japan, Australia, Canada, or the European Union, it will not need to undergo additional clinical trials in India.

What is the difference between Current Vs New Approval Process?

Current Process - Companies must still conduct clinical trials in India for drugs approved elsewhere. These trials need approval from a committee under the drug regulator.

New Process - Clinical trials can be waived if a drug shows a major improvement over existing treatments and is approved by top foreign regulators.

A detailed article on **Issues with the drug regulatory system** in India can be [read here](#).

What are the Criteria for Waiver?

According to the New Drugs and Clinical Trial Rules 2019, local trials may be waived if:

- A) The drug is approved in specified markets.
- B) No major adverse events have been reported.
- C) A global trial with Indian sites is ongoing.
- D) There is no evidence that Indian enzymes or genes affect the drug's safety and efficacy.
- E) The applicant commits to conducting Phase IV trials.

What are the safeguards put in place by the new regulation for drug approval?

A) Post-Marketing Surveillance Requirements - Even though local clinical trials are waived, drugs approved under this new mechanism must still undergo "Phase IV post-marketing surveillance". This monitoring tracks serious side effects and ensures drug safety, while allowing faster access to new treatments.

B) Authority for Local Trials - If there is evidence that a drug could have different effects in the Indian population, the DCGI's Subject Expert Committee can still mandate local clinical trials to address any specific responses.

What is the significance of New Regulations for Drug Approvals?

1) **Waiver for Ongoing Trials** - Drugs in clinical trials in India but approved internationally can now apply for a waiver, streamlining their approval process.

2) **Faster Access to Treatments** - The new rules will speed up access to treatments for rare diseases and specific cancers. Popular drugs for diabetes, obesity, Alzheimer's, and cancer will be available sooner. This update is important for treatments of rare diseases, gene therapies, pandemic needs, and special defense purposes.

3) **Benefits for Drug Manufacturers** - The new regulations will lower costs for local trials, benefiting both international and Indian drug manufacturers. Indian companies may offer drugs at lower prices, improving patient access and reducing financial strain on pharmaceutical firms.

Importance of precision nutrition in sports

Context: The article discusses the disqualification of Vinesh Phogat from the Paris Olympics due to being slightly overweight. It emphasizes the need for precision nutrition in sports, highlighting how tailored dietary plans and continuous monitoring can improve athlete performance and prevent such issues.

What Happened to Vinesh Phogat?

1. Vinesh Phogat, an Indian wrestler, was disqualified from the women's 50kg wrestling final at the Paris Olympics 2024. She was found to be 100 grams over the permissible weight limit.
2. This incident highlighted a gap in the Indian sports support system.
3. Vinesh reportedly spent an entire night trying to shed the extra weight.
4. Similar extreme measures were taken by another Indian wrestler, Antim Panghal, who starved herself for two days to make weight.
5. This situation underscores the importance of precision nutrition and continuous monitoring to avoid such setbacks.

Why is Precision Nutrition Important in Sports?

1. **Tailored Dietary Plans:** Precision nutrition creates dietary plans based on an athlete's specific needs, avoiding a one-size-fits-all approach.
2. **Data-Driven Approach:** It uses systems biology and multi-omics (genomics, proteomics, metabolomics) combined with bioinformatics to make personalized recommendations.
3. **Continuous Monitoring:** Wearable sensors and **Continuous Glucose Monitors (CGMs)** help track athletes' responses to food and adjust diets accordingly.
4. **Preventive Measures:** Athletes in weight-based sports, like wrestling, struggle to maintain weight; precision nutrition helps avoid extreme weight-loss methods like starvation and dehydration.
5. **Real-World Examples:** Olympian Eliud Kipchoge uses CGMs to enhance his performance, demonstrating how precision nutrition provides a competitive edge.
6. **Health and Performance:** It ensures athletes maintain peak condition, preventing disqualifications, as seen with Vinesh Phogat at the Paris Olympics 2024.

How Can Technology Help?

1. **Glucose Monitoring:** Continuous Glucose Monitors (CGMs) track blood glucose responses to food in real-time. For instance, Olympic swimmer Chelsea Hodges used CGMs to manage energy levels during training.
2. **Data-Driven Decisions:** The use of systems biology and multi-omics approaches provides evidence-based nutrition recommendations, enhancing athlete performance and health.

What Role Do Sports Nutritionists Play?

1. **Expertise in Precision Nutrition:** Nutritionists trained in precision nutrition use data-driven approaches, integrating genomics and metabolomics, to provide evidence-based recommendations.
2. **Support in Weight-Based Sports:** Nutritionists ensure athletes stay within weight categories without compromising performance, using safe and effective methods.

Conclusion: -The disqualification of Vinesh Phogat at the Paris Olympics underscores the need for better nutrition strategies in sports. Precision nutrition, supported by technology like continuous glucose monitors (CGM), can significantly improve athletes' performance. Although the **Union Cycliste Internationale** bans

CGM use in competitions, their potential in training shows promising benefits. As this technology is still developing, further exploration could enhance its effectiveness and integration in sports.

Risks associated with Zika virus

Context: The article discusses the rise in Zika virus cases in Maharashtra, particularly in Pune. It highlights the risks for pregnant women, including microcephaly in babies. It criticizes delays in testing and emphasizes the need for quick, decentralized virus testing and sequencing.

For detailed information on **Zika virus** [read this article here](#)

What is the current situation of Zika virus in India?

1. Since June 20, Maharashtra has seen 88 confirmed cases of Zika virus, with Pune city being the epicenter, accounting for 73 of these cases.
2. Pregnant women are significantly affected, making up half of the confirmed cases. They face risks such as giving birth to babies with microcephaly and other neurological issues.

What are the risks associated with Zika virus?

- 1. Microcephaly in Babies:** Pregnant women with Zika virus face a 6.6% risk of giving birth to babies with microcephaly, a condition where the baby has a smaller than average head size.
- 2. Neurological Abnormalities:** Babies born to infected mothers have an 18.7% chance of developing functional neurological issues.
- 3. Premature Birth and Low Birth Weight:** There is a 10.5% risk of premature birth and a 16.2% risk of low birth weight or being small for gestational age.
- 4. Guillain-Barré Syndrome:** Zika can lead to this neurological disorder, where the immune system attacks nerves.
- 5. Sexual Transmission:** Infected men can transmit the virus sexually for up to three months.

What are the Challenges with Testing?

- 1. Delayed Testing Response:** Testing for the Zika virus was ramped up only after media coverage highlighted delays, showing a reactive approach rather than a proactive one.
- 2. Impact of Delayed Testing:** When testing is delayed, as seen in the Zika virus situation in Pune, it hampers the ability to quickly respond to outbreaks. Kerala's quick action during the Nipah virus outbreak shows how important it is to test early, while Gujarat's challenges with the Chandipura virus show the risks of delays.
- 3. Need for Decentralization:** The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the benefits of decentralized testing. Similar strategies should be adopted for all deadly pathogens to ensure timely public health responses.
- 4. Importance of Lead Time Reduction:** Reducing the lead time for test results is crucial in controlling virus spread.

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

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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.

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.

New-age gateway devices are causing a public health crisis

Context: The article discusses how devices like e-cigarettes and vapes, once marketed as safer alternatives to smoking, are now causing a public health crisis. They are particularly harmful to children, leading to addiction, physical harm, and mental health issues.

For detailed information on **Electronic Cigarettes Act, 2019** [read this article here](#)

What are the new-age gateway devices?

1. New-age gateway devices like e-cigarettes, vaping pens, and heated tobacco products (HTPs) were marketed as healthier alternatives to smoking.
2. However, they have instead caused a public health crisis. These devices are harming both the physical and mental health of children, making the problem worse.

What are the Impacts of such devices?

- 1. Increased Youth Addiction:** A survey published by JAMA Network Open in November 2022 found that adolescent e-cigarette users are highly addicted, often using their first tobacco product within five minutes of waking. E-cigarettes deliver nicotine more efficiently than traditional cigarettes, increasing addiction.
- 2. Targeted Marketing:** Manufacturers target children with flavors like strawberry and cotton candy. These flavors, combined with appealing ads, make vaping attractive to young users. Children, especially those aged 10 to 20, are vulnerable due to peer pressure and the desire to fit in.
- 3. Psychological Harm:** Vaping is linked to loneliness, depression, anxiety, and suicidal behaviors among adolescents. The Australian Institute of Family Studies reports that these devices contribute to significant mental health challenges in young users.
- 4. Physical Health Risks:** Users face physical health risks, including lung damage and conditions like EVALI. The use of benzoic acid in newer e-cigarettes enhances nicotine delivery, increasing addiction and potential health consequences.
- 5. Gateway to Harder Substances:** Vaping is often mistakenly perceived as harmless. However, it can lead to experimenting with more dangerous substances like cannabis, cocaine, and heroin, raising long-term substance abuse concerns.

Vaccine-derived Polio in Meghalaya

Context: The article discusses a case of vaccine-derived polio in Meghalaya. It explains that while the oral polio vaccine (OPV) can occasionally cause polio, it doesn't threaten India's polio-free status. It also highlights the use of both OPV and IPV in India.

For detailed information on **Vaccine-derived poliovirus** [read this article here](#)

What is Vaccine-Derived Polio?

Vaccine-derived polio occurs when the weakened virus in OPV regains the ability to cause infection. This can happen in two ways:

1. In some cases, the weakened virus can continue circulating from child to child, gaining back its ability to transmit quickly, and then cause severe infection every time it spreads.
2. The virus in the vaccine can also cause chronic infection in children with weakened immune systems, replicating in their gut for years and slowly gaining its ability to cause severe infection. This is what seems to have happened in the Meghalaya case.

Have Vaccine-Derived Polio Cases Occurred in India Before?

1. India was declared polio-free in 2014 after the last wild poliovirus case was detected in 2011 in West Bengal's Howrah district.
2. Despite this, vaccine-derived polio cases have been reported in the country.
3. In 2013, an 11-month-old child from Maharashtra's Beed district died due to vaccine-derived polio.
4. Multiple other cases have surfaced across India, with the most recent before the Meghalaya case reported in Kerala.
5. These vaccine-derived cases do not affect India's polio-free status, as only wild poliovirus detection would change that.

How Can Vaccine-Derived Polio Be Prevented?

1. **Use of IPV:** Switching to the injectable polio vaccine (IPV) can prevent vaccine-derived polio, as it contains no live virus. This eliminates the risk of the virus regaining strength and causing infection.
2. **IPV Limitations:** IPV requires trained personnel to administer, which may reduce immunization rates. It also doesn't prevent virus transmission between individuals.
3. **Current Practice in India:** India uses both IPV and OPV. However, IPV is underused, with only one shot given instead of the three shots and one booster used in countries like the US and Canada.

Need to address corruption in India's health system comprehensively

Context: The article discusses the issue of medical corruption in India, especially following the death of a resident doctor. It highlights that improving hospital security and laws is not enough. It argues for a national task force to address corruption in the health system comprehensively.

For detailed information on **Violence against healthcare professionals** [read this article here](#)

What triggered the protests by resident doctors?

1. In 2017, Maharashtra witnessed heated protests by resident doctors after a series of violent attacks on medical personnel.
2. These attacks led to demands for better security in public hospitals and stronger legal actions against the perpetrators.
3. However, these solutions were mostly reactive, lacking deeper analysis of the underlying issues.

What sparked recent concerns in Kolkata?

1. A gruesome incident involving the death of a resident doctor in Kolkata has drawn national attention.
2. The Supreme Court of India took notice and initiated proceedings, leading to the formation of a national task force to improve hospital safety. Measures include enhancing infrastructure, installing CCTV cameras, and providing safe transport for night shifts.

How does the West Bengal government address the issue?

1. The West Bengal government launched the 'Rattier Saathi' program to improve the safety of women working night shifts, especially in medical settings.
2. This initiative, while important, risks oversimplifying the issue by equating it with general health worker violence or women's safety concerns.

For detailed information on Addressing Violence Against Women Doctors read this article here

Why are conventional solutions inadequate?

1. Traditional approaches to health worker violence, like improving hospital security and creating new laws, have not effectively solved the problem.
2. One reason is the chronic underfunding of the health sector.
3. Additionally, the role of corruption in deteriorating public health services has been largely overlooked, despite its significant impact.

How significant is corruption in the health sector?

1. The World Health Organization estimates that corruption costs \$455 billion annually worldwide, which is more than the amount needed to provide universal health coverage.
2. In many developing countries, corruption is a major cause of healthcare crises, surpassing even the lack of funds.
3. In India, discussions on medical corruption have mostly focused on private sector issues, ignoring its criminal dimensions in the public sector.

What Should be Done?

1. Solutions should include increasing transparency, accountability, and oversight.
2. Need for better whistle-blower protections, digitalization of public management systems, and minimizing political interference.
3. Aim to modernize the outdated public hospital system in India.

Reimagining Vocational Education in India

Context- The article highlights a major gap between young Indians seeking qualifications for good jobs and employers struggling to find qualified candidates. Despite various initiatives, the mismatch between the demand for skilled professionals and the available skills remains a barrier to unlocking young India's potential.

What are the issues with Skill Development Initiatives?

India's skill development landscape is marked by a variety of overlapping initiatives, each with its own focus and objectives. For ex-

A) **National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) and Skill India:** These bodies focus on "skilling" and fall under the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship.

B) **National Education Policy (NEP):** Operates under the Ministry of Education and emphasizes "vocational education."

Read More- [National Education Policy](#)

C) **Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) and Industrial Training Centres (ITCs):** Concentrate on "industrial training" and "vocational trades."

2) **Low Quality of Education-** Even with more students enrolling in degree courses, poor education quality often leads to low employability. This issue is worse for those pursuing vocational careers, such as nursing or car mechanics, who struggle to find affordable and effective training.

3) **Quality Disparity in Vocational Education-** If vocational courses lack the quality of general education, it may reinforce the belief that vocational training is less valuable.

What should be the way forward?

1) **Need for Simplification and Streamlining-** To fix the fragmented skills development approach, there is a need to streamline efforts and create a unified strategy. A clear national plan and consistent terminology may improve the effectiveness of these programs.

2) **Comprehensive Approach to Education-** Education should be seen as covering all types of training, including vocational and technical skills. There should be focus on offering thorough, formal training to prepare people for lasting careers.

3) **Reimagining College Education-** The National Education Policy (NEP) aims to improve vocational education by integrating it earlier in the educational process. However, this policy risks reinforcing the perception that vocational education is inferior unless it offers high-quality courses alongside general education.

4) **Integrating and Funding Vocational Education-** Vocational courses should be integrated into existing colleges or offered through dedicated vocational institutions. The funding can be provided either directly to public institutions or by encouraging private colleges to offer affordable programs.

5) **Communication and Awareness-** Effective communication with students and their families, especially those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, should be prioritized.

6) **The Role of Government-** The government should lead in building national educational infrastructure and creating opportunities, with the same level of commitment seen in past initiatives like Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Aadhaar integration etc.

Current Global Health Crisis

Context: The article discusses the mpox (monkeypox) outbreak and its designation as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern. It emphasizes the need for global cooperation, equitable vaccine access, and technology transfers. It highlights India's potential role in producing vaccines and expediting their availability.

For detailed information on **Mpox (Monkeypox) outbreak** [read this article here](#)

What is the Current Global Health Crisis?

1. The world faces a new health threat with the mpox outbreak.
2. The World Health Organization (WHO) declared it a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC).
3. The outbreak began in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and spread to other African countries. Cases have now been reported in Sweden, Pakistan, and the Philippines.

Why is This WHO Declaration Significant?

1. This WHO declaration is significant as it is the first PHEIC since the May 2024 amendments to the International Health Regulations (IHR).
2. These amendments introduced equity as a core principle, crucial for fair global health responses.
3. The amendments, effective in 2025, expand WHO's role in facilitating essential medical products during emergencies.

For detailed information on **International Health Regulations (IHR) Amendments** [read this article here](#)

What Lessons Are Being Applied from the COVID-19 Pandemic?

- 1. Vaccine Availability:** Unlike COVID-19, a vaccine (MVA-BN) is already available for mpox. It is approved in regions like the EU, UK, US, Switzerland, and Canada.
- 2. Equity in Access:** The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the need for equitable vaccine distribution. The May 2024 International Health Regulations (IHR) amendments emphasize equity, guiding the global response to mpox.
- 3. Production in the Global South:** The lack of vaccine manufacturing in the Global South during COVID-19 is being addressed. Indian manufacturers, like the Serum Institute, have the potential to produce MVA-BN.
- 4. Technology Transfers:** The pandemic showed the importance of sharing technology. India and global organizations are negotiating for technology transfers to scale up mpox vaccine production.

What Role Can India Play?

- 1. Vaccine Production Expertise:** India has significant experience in vaccine production, particularly with manufacturers like Serum Institute of India, Bharat Biotech, and Zydus Cadila, which use the same technology as the MVA-BN vaccine.
- 2. Critical Role in Global Response:** During the COVID-19 pandemic, India's production of Covishield played a vital role globally.
- 3. Addressing Supply Gaps:** The African CDC estimates a need for 10 million mpox vaccine doses, but only 0.21 million are available now.

4. **Regulatory Support:** India's CDSCO waived clinical trial requirements for vaccines approved abroad, speeding vaccine availability in India.

How Important Are Technology Transfers?

1. Technology transfers are essential for scaling up vaccine production in lower-middle-income countries (LMICs).
2. These transfers should include biological resources, know-how, and patents.
3. The Indian government should collaborate with global organizations like WHO, Gavi, and CEPI to negotiate with the vaccine manufacturer, Bavarian Nordic, for these transfers. This will help produce the vaccine at a lower cost, making it more accessible.
4. Global cooperation can prevent future outbreaks and strengthen global health preparedness.

Need for new, shorter treatment regimens for drug-resistant TB

Context: The article discusses India's struggle with tuberculosis (TB) and emphasizes the need for new, shorter treatment regimens for drug-resistant TB. It highlights the benefits of using the WHO-recommended BPaL/M regimen, improving diagnostics, and targeting at-risk populations to enhance TB detection and treatment.

For detailed information on **Tuberculosis- Role of private sector in Elimination** [read this article here](#)

What is the current TB situation in India?

1. India bears over a quarter of the global tuberculosis (TB) burden.
2. In 2023, efforts to tackle 'missed' TB cases resulted in 25.1 lakh patients being diagnosed.

What are the challenges with current TB treatment regimens?

1. **Lengthy Treatment Duration:** Current regimens require 9 to 24 months of treatment, causing physical and psychological strain on patients.
2. **High Pill Burden:** Patients must take 13-14 tablets daily for shorter regimens and 4-5 tablets for longer regimens.
3. **Severe Side Effects:** Treatment can cause hearing loss, psychosis, and other debilitating side effects.
4. **Economic Impact:** Extended treatment often leads to job loss, driving families into poverty.
5. **Low Success Rates:** The current treatment success rate in India is only 68%, compared to 89% with the new BPaL/M regimen.

What New Treatments Are Available?

1. India is set to introduce the WHO-recommended BPaL/M regimen for drug-resistant TB.
2. The BPaL/M regimen requires only three to four tablets daily for six months.
3. This regimen is more effective, with an 89% success rate, compared to the 68% success rate of current treatments.
4. The BPaL/M regimen reduces severe side effects, such as hearing loss and psychosis.
5. Implementing BPaL/M can save health systems up to \$740 million annually.
6. This regimen is already adopted by about 80 countries, with 20 high-burden countries rolling it out.

How Can TB Diagnosis Be Improved?

- 1. Use GIS Mapping and Health Data:** Identify vulnerable populations like those with malnutrition, diabetes, HIV, and former COVID-19 patients for targeted screening.
- 2. Conduct Multi-Disease Screening:** Focus on at-risk communities, including slum residents, prisoners, and homeless individuals, to detect TB early.
- 3. Leverage Technology:** Portable X-ray machines with AI-driven tools can reduce diagnostic delays, especially in remote areas. For example, chest X-rays detected 42.6% of TB cases in the National TB Prevalence Survey (2019-21).
- 4. Adopt Rapid Molecular Tests:** These tests provide faster and more accurate TB detection than traditional microscopy methods.

Supreme Court of India's actions against misleading advertisements

Context: The article discusses the Supreme Court of India's actions against misleading advertisements for Ayurvedic, Siddha, and Unani products. It highlights the Ministry of AYUSH's attempts to evade quality regulations, urging stronger protections against fake medicines in the market.

For detailed information on **misleading advertisements** read [Article 1](#), [Article 2](#)

What Actions Has the Supreme Court of India Taken Against Misleading Advertisements?

- 1. Intervention Against Patanjali Ayurved:** The Supreme Court concluded a case against Patanjali Ayurved earlier this year for making unverified medicinal claims. The company was ordered to issue public apologies through media advertisements.
- 2. Regulatory Bodies Activated:** Following the Court's intervention, state-level regulatory agencies began taking action against Patanjali Ayurved for its misleading claims.
- 3. Enforcement of Rule 170:** The Court is addressing the Ministry of AYUSH's attempts to evade Rule 170 of the Drugs and Cosmetics Rules of 1945, which penalizes misleading advertisements of Ayurvedic, Siddha, and Unani products.
- 4. Call for Stronger Regulations:** The Court emphasized the need for more robust quality control and regulatory oversight to prevent fake medicines from entering the market.

What Challenges Do Drug Manufacturers and Regulators Face?

- 1. Balancing Quality and Cost:** Manufacturers must ensure high-quality standards, which raises production costs. At the same time, they need to keep drug prices affordable for patients. This balance is often difficult to achieve, leading to compromises in quality.
- 2. Inconsistent Regulation:** There is a lack of uniformity in medicine quality inspections, particularly in the alternative medicines sector, which includes Ayurvedic, Siddha, and Unani products. This inconsistency allows substandard products to enter the market.
- 3. Lax Regulatory Oversight:** The Ministry of AYUSH has allowed products to be registered under misleading categories, like licensing milk as "Ayurvedic proprietary medicine." This contributes to the problem of unregulated and potentially harmful products being sold to consumers.
- 4. Political Influence:** Regulatory bodies face challenges in maintaining independence from political pressures, which can hinder their ability to enforce quality standards effectively.

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.

How companies are trying to balance profits with social responsibility

Context: The article discusses how companies are trying to balance making profits with social responsibility, especially in AI development. It highlights challenges with maintaining public good goals over profit-making, using examples like OpenAI's governance issues.

For detailed information on **AI Governance** read [Article 1](#), [Article 2](#)

What is the Main Focus of Modern Corporate Governance?

- 1. Shareholder Primacy:** The traditional corporate governance model favors shareholder primacy. This means companies focus on generating profits and creating wealth for shareholders. Other business objectives, like public good, often take a back seat.
- 2. Shift Towards Stakeholder Capitalism:** Stakeholder capitalism seeks to benefit all stakeholders, not just shareholders. This approach is gaining attention as companies engage in products and services with broader social goals. Generative AI is an example where profit-making and social responsibility need to be balanced.

How Are Companies Changing Their Governance Structures?

1. Companies like OpenAI and Anthropic are adopting new structures to focus more on public benefits and responsible AI development.
2. Anthropic uses a trust to govern its decisions, while OpenAI initially started as a non-profit before introducing a capped profit model to fund its projects.

What Challenges Do These Companies Face?

- 1. Balancing Profit and Social Responsibility:** Companies like OpenAI face difficulties in aligning profit-making with broader social objectives, especially in AI development.
- 2. Data Privacy Issues:** Meta was forced to halt AI training in Europe due to privacy concerns, highlighting the challenge of balancing data access with protecting user privacy.
- 3. Algorithmic Bias:** Amazon's recruiting algorithm displayed gender bias, and AI research at Princeton showed racial bias, demonstrating the challenge of preventing AI from perpetuating existing inequalities.
- 4. Governance Conflicts:** OpenAI's governance crisis, where the board fired CEO Sam Altman, illustrates the difficulty in maintaining a balance between ethical concerns and commercial interests, as investor pressures can override social objectives.
- 5. Sustainability of Public Benefit Models:** The viability of public benefit corporations is questioned, as profit-driven goals often overshadow social objectives, especially in capital-intensive tech industries.

What Should be Done?

1. Current accountability measures, like independent boards and social benefit goals, are not strong enough.
2. Policymakers need to regulate AI companies better by enhancing long-term profits from social goals, incentivizing compliance, and reducing costs.
3. This requires ethical standards and regulatory reforms in corporate governance.

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?

1. Lateral entry involves bringing professionals from the private sector into government roles, particularly at the mid-level.
2. 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.
3. 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:

- 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.

Sub-classification and Creamy Layer in SC/ST Reservations

Context- The Supreme Court has recently allowed sub-classification of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes to provide separate quotas for the more disadvantaged within these groups.

What are the Key Aspects of Ruling?

- 1) **Sub-classification-** The court permitted the division of SC and ST categories into sub-categories for more targeted reservations.
- 2) **Creamy Layer Concept-** Justice B.R. Gavai emphasized the need for states to develop policies to identify and exclude the creamy layer within SC and ST communities from affirmative action benefits.
- 3) **Implementation-** The Supreme Court has given states the authority to decide on and implement a creamy layer exception. States may need to form committees, like the Justice R.N. Prasad Committee for OBC reservations, to set specific criteria.

Read More- [The problems with sub-caste reservations](#)

What is Creamy Layer?

- 1) **Origin-**The concept emerged from the landmark Indra Sawhney case ruling in 1992.
- 2) **Definition-**The creamy layer refers to the more socially, economically, and educationally advanced members within a backward community. This is done to ensure reservation benefits reach those who need them most.
- 3) **Distinction:** - The creamy layer is different from sub-classification. Sub-classification involves breaking down a reserved category (like SC) into groups based on socio-economic criteria. The creamy layer, on the other hand, identifies the more advantaged individuals within a specific caste or community.

How is creamy layer among the OBC identified?

The creamy layer criteria were set by a committee led by retired Justice Ram Nandan Prasad after the Indra Sawhney judgment. This report led the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) to define six categories of people whose children are classified as part of the creamy layer:-

- A) Constitutional/statutory post holders
- B) Group 'A' and 'B' officers in government, PSUs, universities
- C) Colonels and higher ranks in the armed forces and paramilitary
- D) Professionals like doctors, lawyers, engineers, etc.

- E) Property owners with agricultural or vacant land/buildings
- F) Income/wealth tax assessee

2) **Income Threshold**-The income threshold was raised from Rs 1 lakh to Rs 8 lakh in 2017 but has not been updated since. The NCBC suggested raising it to Rs 15 lakh in 2015, but no action was taken.

3) **Reservations and Review Committee Update** -Children of group-A officers or those with parents in the creamy layer are ineligible for OBC reservations. A committee led by B P Sharma was set up in March 2019 to review these criteria, but no progress has been made.

What could be the potential criteria for determining the SC/ST creamy layer?

1) **Differential Approach**-Justice Gavai suggested that criteria for SC/ST creamy layer exclusion may differ from those applied to OBCs. However, he did not provide a clear criterion for how this determination should be made.

2) **Educational Consideration**-Justice Pankaj Mithal hinted at using educational institutions as a potential criterion, distinguishing between urban and rural educational backgrounds. However, the SC creamy layer issue is complex due to historic caste-based injustices that may not be easily overcome by economic and social mobility.

The challenges transgender individuals face in India

Context: The article discusses the challenges transgender individuals face in India despite the 2014 NALSA judgment. It highlights issues with legal recognition, required medical procedures, and poor implementation of transgender rights laws. It emphasizes the need for sensitization and better enforcement.

For detailed information on **Key Supreme Court verdicts that moved the needle on LGBTQ rights in India** [read this article here](#)

What was the NALSA Judgment of 2014?

In 2014, the Supreme Court of India delivered the NALSA vs Union of India judgment. Justice K.S. Radhakrishnan affirmed transgender persons' right to define their gender identity. He emphasized that no one should be forced to undergo medical procedures for legal recognition of their gender.

For detailed information on **Rights of Sexual Minorities in India** [read this article here](#)

What Are the Implementation Challenges?

1. **Pending Applications:** Over 3,225 out of 24,000 applications for transgender identity certificates were pending in 2023, exceeding the 30-day window mandated by the rules.
2. **Contradictions in Law:** The 2019 Act requires proof of medical intervention for changing gender to "male" or "female," while the 2020 Rules prohibit physical examinations.
3. **Poor Implementation of Measures:** Government initiatives like setting up transgender wards and washrooms in hospitals, and establishing transgender welfare boards in each state, have seen inadequate progress.
4. **Mental Agony and Humiliation:** Transgender individuals face demands for proof of gender affirmation surgery and medical examinations, leading to mental distress and threats of job loss.

What Impact Does Legal Recognition Have on Transgender Individuals?

- 1. Reduced Psychological Distress:** A 2015 Lancet study found that transgender individuals with documents reflecting their self-affirmed gender had 32% less psychological distress and were 22% less likely to have suicidal thoughts.
- 2. Lower Suicide Risk:** The same study found a 22% reduction in suicidal thoughts among transgender individuals with legally recognized gender identity.
- 3. Real-Life Example:** IRS officer M Anukathir Surya successfully changed his name and gender in official records, showcasing positive progress.

What Steps Are Needed for Improvement?

- 1. Sensitization Campaigns:** Educate government employees about transgender rights to foster empathy and understanding, addressing the lack of empathy that hobbles the system.
- 2. Streamline Legal Processes:** Ensure faster processing of transgender identity certificate applications.
- 3. Eliminate Medical Proof Requirements:** Align laws with the NALSA judgment by removing the need for medical procedures for gender recognition.

For detailed information on **healthcare for transgender people** [read this article here](#)

Clarifying Justice: The Supreme Court's Ruling on SC Sub-Quotas

Context: The article discusses the Supreme Court's ruling on sub-quotas for Scheduled Castes. It clarifies misconceptions, emphasizing that the verdict supports social justice. The article also highlights concerns about potential misuse of sub-classification and the need for careful implementation.

For detailed information on **SC verdict allowing for Sub-Classification of SCs and STs** [read this article here](#)

What Specific Criticisms Are Addressed in this Verdict?

- 1. Misconception of Diluting Reservation:** Critics wrongly believe the verdict weakens the existing reservation system. However, the court emphasizes "substantive equality" and strengthens social justice for disadvantaged communities.
- 2. Usurping Parliament's Role:** Some argue the court overstepped by handling sub-quotas. In reality, the court only clarified the legal permissibility, leaving implementation to legislative bodies.
- 3. Lack of Empirical Evidence:** The criticism that the court lacked data is incorrect. The 2011 Census provides detailed socio-economic data for SC communities, highlighting significant disparities in educational attainment among different sub-castes, like the Mazhabi Sikhs and Ravidasi in Punjab.

How Should the Verdict Apply to Scheduled Tribes?

1. The Supreme Court's verdict on sub-quotas for Scheduled Castes (SCs) should be carefully considered before applying it to Scheduled Tribes (STs).
2. The internal differences within STs and the rationale behind their reservations differ from those of SCs.
3. The case was primarily argued based on the social realities of SCs, not STs, making the direct application to STs potentially problematic.
4. There cannot be two different interpretations of Articles 341 and 342 for SCs and STs. However, the

specifics of ST reservations were not thoroughly examined in this case.

5. The substantive application of this verdict to STs should be delayed until the Supreme Court can fully address the unique aspects of ST reservations.

What Are the Real Concerns with the Verdict?

1. There are concerns that the sub-classification allowed by the Supreme Court could be misused for political purposes, such as favoring certain communities aligned with the ruling party.
2. The political parties have previously misused OBC sub-classification for political gain, raising fears of similar tactics with SC sub-quotas.
3. There is a risk that sub-classification could reduce the number of eligible candidates for higher jobs, leading to positions being left vacant or transferred to the unreserved category.
4. The sudden application of the "creamy layer" doctrine to SCs and STs is concerning because it wasn't fully addressed in the court's discussions and could reduce the pool of eligible candidates.

What Should Social Justice Focus on Now?

1. Instead of opposing sub-quotas, efforts should focus on improving the current judgment and addressing long-term issues.
2. Adjust reservations based on current population data and remove the 50 percent ceiling on reservations. Thus, ensuring representation matches the actual SC/ST population.
3. Carefully apply the "creamy layer" concept to SCs/STs, avoiding reduction of eligible candidates.

Challenges faced by female refugees

Context: The article discusses the challenges faced by female refugees, particularly regarding mental health issues. It highlights the lack of adequate support and legal protections in India for these women, despite international conventions and India's laws on disability rights.

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

What is the Present Situation of Displacement Worldwide?

1. As of 2023, 11.73 crore people have been forcibly displaced globally due to conflict, persecution, and violence. Among these, 3.76 crore are refugees.
2. Ongoing conflicts, like the Israel-Hamas war and Ukraine-Russia war, continue to increase displacement.
3. Refugees face severe challenges, particularly women who comprise 46% of refugees in India.
4. Women experience heightened risks of mental health issues, such as PTSD and depression. For example, 72% of displaced women in Darfur, Sudan, reported mental health problems due to traumatic events and harsh camp conditions.

What are the Legal Protections for Refugee Women with Disabilities?

1. The UNCRPD recognizes long-term mental impairments as 'psychosocial disabilities' and mandates equal rights for affected women.
2. India's Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, guarantees rights to those with mental illness.

However, refugee women with psychosocial disabilities in India are often excluded from these protections.
3. This exclusion violates their right to life under Article 21, as affirmed by the Supreme Court of India.

What are the challenges faced by female refugees?

- 1. Sole Responsibility:** Female refugees often bear sole responsibility for children and elderly family members, adding to their stress.
- 2. Increased Risk of Abuse:** They are highly vulnerable to gender-based violence, including sexual abuse and exploitation, especially in displacement camps.
- 3. Mental Health Issues:** Women refugees are more likely to suffer from mental health problems like PTSD and depression. For example, 72% of displaced women in Darfur, Sudan, reported PTSD and distress.
- 4. Limited Healthcare Access:** Refugee women in India have restricted access to healthcare, especially mental health services. They are mostly dependent on government hospitals, which are overcrowded and under-resourced.
- 5. Legal Exclusion:** Although India has laws protecting persons with disabilities, refugee women with psychosocial disabilities are often excluded from these protections.
- 6. Social Stigma:** They face social stigma and isolation, especially in patriarchal societies, making it difficult to access necessary services and support.

What Needs to Be Done to Improve the Situation?

1. India should create a uniform legal framework for refugees, addressing their specific needs.
2. This framework must integrate the provisions of international commitments, such as the UNCRPD, to protect the rights of refugees with psychosocial disabilities.
3. Refugee women, who make up 46% of India's refugee population, must be included in mental health policies.
4. Disaggregated data on refugees' health conditions is essential for effective policy-making and service delivery.
5. The current exclusion of refugee women with psychosocial disabilities from India's legal and healthcare systems needs urgent attention.
6. Enhanced identification and registration processes for refugees with disabilities are necessary to ensure they receive appropriate support.

The Supreme Court Ruling on Reservation and Its Implications

Context-The Supreme Court's recent ruling allowing states to sub-classify SCs and STs for reservations has sparked mixed reactions. Political parties are largely non-committal, and many supporters of reservation policies are critical. This reflects a growing discomfort with how caste-based reservations have evolved since the Mandal era.

What is the Historical Context of Mandal Politics?

- 1) Pre-Mandal Phase-** This period focused on fighting caste discrimination, inspired by reformers like Jyotiba Phule, Periyar, and B.R. Ambedkar. Their work laid the foundation for addressing the needs of backward castes in the 1960s.
- 2) Post-Mandal Phase-** The post-Mandal phase, starting with the Mandal Commission Report, focused on reservations and shaped politics from 1967, especially in North India. By the late 1990s, Mandal politics had

reached its height and then faded. Major political parties adopted the reservation approach but focused mainly on numerical representation, ignoring the more complex issues of caste-based injustice.

What is the Essence of Mandal Politics?

A) **Examination of Representation and Power**- Mandal politics revealed the limited diversity of elites and emphasized the need to address power imbalances, not just count castes. It highlighted the importance of fair representation and tackling deeper power inequalities.

B) **Strengthening Reservation and Social Justice**- The Mandal moment advocated for enhancing the reservation system and extending it beyond SCs and STs to include promotions. However, this focus on reservations allowed policymakers to overlook wider social justice concerns resulting in bureaucratic inefficiencies and legal disputes.

C) **Mobilization and Social Blocs**- Mandal politics encouraged the formation of social groups, which helped backward communities participate more in politics and strengthen democracy. However, it also led to single-caste identities, creating competing political factions and neutralized potential gains with short-term tactics.

What are the implications of Supreme Court Ruling?

The Supreme Court ruling has raised critical questions about the future of reservations and social justice:

A) **Adapting Reservation Policies**: - How can policies be changed to better help the most disadvantaged people in these groups?

B) **New Power Dynamics**- As society evolves, how can emerging power imbalances beyond traditional caste distinctions be addressed?

C) **Permanent Caste Blocs**-Are SCs, STs, and OBCs permanent groups, or should politics evolve to reflect new socio-economic and democratic realities?

Conclusion- The current challenges in the reservation system highlight that the old Mandal-era methods and language are no longer effective. There is a need to create new strategies to address the changing issues of social justice and caste-based reservations.

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?

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- 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.

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.

Challenges faced by challenges faced by persons with disabilities (PwDs) in India

Context: The article discusses the challenges faced by persons with disabilities (PwDs) in India, including social stigma, lack of educational and job opportunities, and poor infrastructure. It highlights the need for better inclusion policies in both education and employment to ensure dignity and equality for PwDs.

For detailed information on **persons with disabilities (PwDs) in India** read [Article 1](#), [Article 2](#)

What challenges do persons with disabilities (PwDs) face in India?

1. Social Stigma and Marginalization: PwDs are often seen as objects of pity, helplessness, or ridicule, which erodes their identity and dignity. This negative portrayal contributes to societal attitudes that exclude and discriminate against PwDs.

2. Educational Challenges: Less than 1% of India's educational institutions are disabled-friendly. Only 40% of school buildings have ramps, and approximately 17% have accessible restrooms.

3. Employment Barriers: In 2023, only 5 out of 50 Nifty 50 companies had more than 1% PwDs on their rolls, mostly in public sector companies. Despite legislative mandates, the implementation of inclusive policies is lacking.

4. The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, offers reservations in government jobs and incentives in private jobs, but **implementation is weak**.

5. Lack of Dignity and Representation: PwDs are often portrayed negatively, leading to a lack of dignity and identity. Instances of mockery, such as in a viral video by former cricketers, highlight ongoing societal challenges.

How do other countries and institutions support PwDs?

- 1. Stanford University, USA:** Stanford provides robust support structures, including housing assistance and devices for PwDs. It also has a comprehensive resource center dedicated to supporting students with disabilities.
- 2. Brazil:** Companies with over 100 employees must ensure that 2%-5% of their workforce consists of PwDs. Non-compliance results in fines based on the company size and repeated offenses.
- 3. Japan:** Japan offers subsidies to employers who hire PwDs, encouraging their inclusion in the workforce.

What Can Be Done to Improve the Situation?

1. Shiv Nadar University in India provides a good model by offering personalized support to PwD students based on individual needs and conditions. However, such measures are not widespread.
2. The University Grants Commission has proposed guidelines for accessibility in higher education, but the actual presence of PwDs in educational settings remains low.
3. Encouraging respectful representation can help reduce societal stigma and improve dignity for PwDs.

J.S. Verma Committee recommendations and the government's decision on it

Context: The article discusses the Justice J.S. Verma Committee's recommendations on sexual assault laws. It also includes its opposition to the death penalty for rape, the government's decision to introduce death penalty in certain rape cases, and the committee's stance on gender rights and marital rape.

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

What did the Justice J.S. Verma Committee recommend?

- 1. Enhanced Sentences for Rape:** The committee recommended increasing the punishment for rape to a minimum of 10 years, which could extend up to 20 years or life imprisonment, but explicitly advised against the death penalty.
- 2. Against the Death Penalty:** It argued that the death penalty does not serve as an effective deterrent against crimes, supporting this view with data that showed a consistent decline in murder rates in India over the last 20 years, despite fewer executions since 1980.
- 3. Marital Rape:** The committee advised removing the marital exemption for rape, asserting that marriage should not be considered a defense against the charges of rape.

For detailed information on **The Issue of Marital Rape** [read this article here](#)

4. Gender Rights and Empowerment: The committee emphasized the need for true empowerment of women, which goes beyond political equality to include social, educational, and economic equality. It noted that changing social mindsets and overcoming gender biases require systemic changes in education and societal behavior, supported by leadership in society.

What was the Union Cabinet's decision?

1. Death Penalty Introduction: Contrary to the committee's advice, the Cabinet introduced the death penalty for severe rape cases. For example, under Section 376A of the Indian Penal Code, the death penalty is applied for rape leading to the victim's death or a persistent vegetative state.

2. Further Amendments in 2018: The laws were expanded to include the death penalty for gang rape of a girl under 12 years old (Section 376DB) and life-long imprisonment if the victim is under 16 (Section 376DA).

3. Marital Rape Exemption: The Cabinet did not criminalize marital rape, maintaining the exemption for husbands if the wife is over 18 years old under the new Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita.

Impact of Violence Against Women

Context: The article discusses how women in India live under constant vigilance due to safety concerns. This perpetual alertness affects their freedom and well-being, impacting their daily lives and choices. It argues that this constant state of fear is a form of violence that limits women's potential and freedom.

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

What are the types of violence against women in India?

- 1. Physical Violence:** Includes rape, dowry-related deaths, and domestic violence. The brutal rape and murder of a woman doctor in Kolkata highlight this severe issue.
- 2. Psychological Violence:** Constant vigilance and fear impact women's mental health. This state of alertness becomes normalized, affecting their freedom and choices.

What is the Current Situation of Violence Against Female Caregivers?

1. Female caregivers in India, such as teachers, nurses, doctors, and social workers, are increasingly facing violence. Examples include Rajni Bala, a teacher shot dead in Kashmir, and a trainee doctor in Kolkata who was raped and murdered.
2. This violence is linked to deep-rooted misogyny, sexism, and the expectation that caregivers should be self-sacrificing.
3. Many caregivers work without adequate support systems, making them more vulnerable to aggression.
4. The last 10 years have seen crimes against women and children become more frequent and brutal in India.
5. **Cultural Influence:** Media that glorifies toxic masculinity and the easy availability of pornography contribute to this violence, fostering harmful attitudes and behaviors in society.

What is the Impact of Violence Against Women?

- 1. Psychological Impact:** While physical violence against women is widely recognized, the psychological impact often goes unnoticed.
- 2. Constant Vigilance:** Women live in a state of perpetual alertness due to safety concerns, affecting their mental well-being.
- 3. Restricted Freedom:** This vigilance limits women's freedom, such as declining job opportunities requiring late-night travel or avoiding new places.
- 4. Intergenerational Effects:** Mothers teach daughters to be cautious, reinforcing that women are responsible for their safety.
- 5. Social Disadvantage:** Marginalized women face intensified threats due to caste, class, and religion, with fewer resources for protection.
- 6. Affect Society:** The restrictions on women's freedom to explore and experience life fully not only harm them but also society. Limiting women's experiences restricts their contributions and potential innovations.

What Should Be Done?

- 1. Implement Gender Sensitization Programs:** Educate children, community members, and leaders on gender equality. This should happen in schools, families, and communities, including slums and villages.
- 2. Strengthen Support Systems:** Provide better support for female caregivers like teachers, nurses, and doctors. This reduces their vulnerability to aggression from students, patients, and colleagues.
- 3. Community and Religious Involvement:** Engage local leaders and religious figures to promote peace and respect. Community watch programs, helplines, and reporting mechanisms should be established.
- 4. Leadership and Sensitivity Training:** Train leaders to prioritize these issues and promote empathy and compassion. This helps in creating conscientious adults.
- 5. Media and Cultural Reforms:** Address the harmful impact of media that glorifies toxic masculinity, which contributes to increasing violence against women.

Women Safety in India's Aviation Industry

Context- The article critically evaluates Indigo Airlines' recent decision to introduce women-only seats, which allows female passengers to reserve seats next to other women. Even with many women pilots, passenger safety especially for women remains a major concern. Reports of sexual harassment, like groping and unwanted touching, highlight the need for improved safety measures. Many incidents go unreported, creating a culture of silence around these assaults.

What are the arguments in support of Indigo Airlines' "pink seats" initiative?

- 1) Avoidance of Discomfort** - The initiative lets women choose seats next to other women, reducing conflicts over armrests and space. This can make flights more comfortable for women by avoiding stress from sharing space with men who may be less considerate.
- 2) Space Management**- Male passengers often take up more space, leading women to choose aisle seats to avoid feeling cramped. The "pink seats" option lets women select seats next to other women and reduce space issues.
- 3) Parallels with Existing Measures**- Separating seats by gender in airlines is like ladies-only compartments on public transport. This approach could offer similar benefits in safety and comfort.
- 4) Customer Choice** - The initiative allows women to choose between more leg space or sitting next to other women, giving them flexibility and improving their travel experience.

What are the arguments against Indigo Airlines' "Pink Seats" initiative?

- 1) Does Not Address Safety Directly**- It may not effectively address sexual safety issues, as gender-specific measures used in crowded public transport do not fit the more controlled environment of airplanes.
- 2) Gender-Based Stigmatization**- The initiative might unintentionally create stigma. Women who sit next to men could be judged as more "broadminded," while those who choose "pink seats" might face negative judgments.
- 3) Reinforcing Stereotypes** -It could reinforce stereotypes that women need protection rather than empowerment.
- 4) Limited Impact on Comfort** - Choosing to sit next to other women may not solve broader comfort issues on flights, like men taking up too much personal space.
- 5) Additional Costs**- The "pink seats" option might involve extra fees, which could make it less accessible and

create differences in passenger experiences.

6) **Potential for Misuse**- Men may misuse the gender seat data, leading to unwanted interactions or comments. The feature may not effectively solve the problems it aims to address.

A detailed article on women safety can be [read here](#).

What should be the way forward?

- 1) The branding and implementation of the initiative could be refined to better align with modern values of gender equality.
- 2) Indigo should focus on improving safety protocols and training for staff rather than asking women to isolate themselves.

Subject: International Relations

Topic- India and its Neighborhood.

Strengthening China-India Relations

Context- The 17th Chinese Ambassador to India recently arrived in New Delhi and presented his credentials to Indian President. During his first three months, he met with Indian leaders, visited two states, and witnessed India's vibrant culture and strong public support for China-India relations. China and India, with their rich history of cultural exchange and shared aspirations, now have one of the world's most important relationships. President Xi Jinping and Prime Minister Modi agree that the two nations are partners, not rivals. Xi believes their united voice will be powerful globally, and Indian PM sees them as "two bodies with one spirit."

What are the "Five Mutuels" Framework for enhancing bilateral relations between India and China?

The "Five Mutuels," an extension of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence that aligns with India's principles of "mutual respect, mutual sensitivity, and mutual interests".

- 1) **Mutual Respect**- Acknowledging cultural differences and respecting each other's development paths, social systems, and global role are important for fostering mutual understanding and cooperation.
- 2) **Mutual Understanding**- Both nations have supported each other's struggles for independence and share common goals. China supports India's strategic autonomy and recognizes the effort required for national development.
- 3) **Mutual Trust** -Approaching our relations from a strategic perspective, avoiding mutual suspicion and conflict, and committing to peaceful coexistence and dispute resolution are essential for fostering a strong partnership.
- 4) **Mutual Accommodation** -It's important to address differences through dialogue and find mutually acceptable solutions. Our relationship is broad and should not be defined by individual disputes, nor should our cooperation be disrupted by isolated incidents.

Read More- [India's Strategic Challenges in the Face of China's Rise](#)

- 5) **Mutual Accomplishment** - Recognizing our shared goals as emerging economies, China's reform efforts, and support for India's "Viksit Bharat 2047" vision highlight our mutual desire for development and global cooperation.

Current political crisis in Bangladesh

Context: The article discusses the 2009 Bangladesh Rifles mutiny, the challenges faced by Sheikh Hasina's government, and the current political crisis in Bangladesh. It highlights the army's involvement, student protests, Muhammad Yunus's role, and India's strategic concerns.

For detailed information on **Sheikh Hasina's Exit and India Bangladesh Relations** [read this article here](#)

How the current political situation is in Bangladesh different from 2009 Bangladesh rifle mutiny?

- 1. Leadership Stability:** In 2009, Sheikh Hasina had just taken power after "clean" elections, with strong support from women and youth, which helped her manage the crisis. In 2024, her popularity has waned due to declining democratic practices and economic struggles.
- 2. Army's Role:** In 2009, the military was not directly involved, but in 2024, the army, led by General Waker-uz-Zaman, ousted Hasina and is seen as supporting public will.
- 3. Public Unrest:** In 2009, unrest was confined to mutiny, whereas in 2024, widespread student protests and opposition actions reflect broader discontent.
- 4. Interim Government:** The 2024 crisis led to the appointment of Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus as interim leader, a move reflecting the army's responsiveness to public opinion, unlike 2009.

What Challenges Does the Interim Government Face?

- 1. Student Protests:** The Anti-Discrimination Student Movement has sparked widespread unrest, challenging the interim government's ability to restore order, as the protests are fueled by high youth unemployment and declining democratic space.
- 2. Opposition Forces:** The Bangladesh Nationalist Party and other opposition groups, who boycotted the 2024 elections, are attempting to capitalize on the unrest, potentially destabilizing the interim government.
- 3. Islamic Extremism:** The banned Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami, known for jihadist violence in 2006-07, is now involved, targeting Awami League supporters and symbols of Bangladesh's liberation.
- 4. Minority Attacks:** Violence against the Hindu minority community is rising, adding to the interim government's challenges in maintaining social harmony.
- 5. India's Concerns:** The interim government must manage the influence of anti-India forces, as India has raised concerns about rising religious violence in Bangladesh.

What Are India's Concerns?

- 1. Rising Religious Violence:** India is concerned about increasing attacks on the Hindu minority in Bangladesh, reflecting growing religiophobia, which India highlighted at the UN in 2021 and 2022.
- 2. Anti-India Sentiments:** The involvement of banned groups like Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami, known for anti-India actions, raises concerns about growing anti-India forces in the region.
- 3. Political Instability:** The ousting of Sheikh Hasina and the appointment of Muhammad Yunus as interim leader in 2024 creates uncertainty. India worries about the potential weakening of the army and its impact on regional stability.
- 4. Strategic Interests:** India fears losing its influence if polarizing forces gain power, as seen in similar situations in the Maldives and Myanmar, where India's support to specific leaders faced backlash.

How Should India Respond to the Present Bangladesh's Political Crisis?

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- 1. Support New Leadership:** India should explicitly support Muhammad Yunus and the interim government to help restore order and protect citizens' rights, including minorities, in Bangladesh.
- 2. Balanced Focus on Minorities:** India should continue advocating for minority rights but avoid focusing exclusively on the Hindu minority. This approach will prevent complicating the situation and maintain healthy relations with the new regime.
- 3. Engage with Student Movement:** India must reach out to the student leaders who are driving the revolution. Understanding their goals is crucial for fostering a positive relationship with future leadership.
- 4. Internal Policy Review:** India should conduct an internal review to understand why it failed to anticipate the political upheaval in Bangladesh. This will help prevent similar oversights in the future.
- 5. Long-Term Strategy:** India should adopt a patient and empathetic approach. Supporting the aspirations of Bangladeshi student leaders can help stabilize the region and strengthen India-Bangladesh ties.

Setbacks in Indian Foreign and Security Interests

Context- In the past three years, India has experienced major setbacks with three neighboring countries. These issues raise questions about whether they stem from errors by policymakers or reveal deeper problems in the policy-making structures.

What are the recent setbacks in the Region?

- 1) Bangladesh:** On August 5, 2023, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina of Bangladesh resigned amid violent protests and sought refuge abroad. This sudden change complicates India's strategic relations with Bangladesh, an important partner in its regional policy.
- 2) Maldives New Leadership:** On November 2023, Mohammed Muizzu became President of the Maldives, replacing Ibrahim Solih, who had built strong ties with India. Muizzu may change Maldives' focus from India to China. This can alter the strategic landscape in the Indian Ocean.

Read More- [India-Maldives Relations- Explained Pointwise](#)

- 3) Afghanistan Taliban Takeover-** In August 2021, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, who was a key focus of India's diplomatic efforts, fled as the Taliban took over. This sudden change disrupted India's interests and investments in Afghanistan, complicating its regional strategy.

What are the Structures of Policymaking in India?

- 1) Ministry of External Affairs (MEA)-** The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), managed by the Indian Foreign Service (IFS), handles India's foreign policy. Its diplomats are experts in regional and global issues and offer insights into the political, social, and economic trends of their countries.
- 2) External Intelligence Service-** Founded in 1968, India's external intelligence service is important for gathering information that affects national interests. It helps monitor developments in neighboring countries and ensures coordinated responses.
- 3) National Security Structure:**
 - A) Evolution:** After India's 1998 nuclear tests, the national security framework was updated with the creation of the National Security Council (NSC), the Strategic Policy Group, and the role of the National Security Advisor (NSA).
 - B) Current Structure:** The National Security Council (NSC) and the National Security Advisor (NSA), supported by the National Security Council Secretariat (NSCS), coordinate strategic and security tasks. The NSCS has expanded to include several Deputy NSAs and an Additional NSA, showing its growing importance.

What are the issues in India's foreign policy?

- 1) **Turf Issues:** Even with sophisticated security and intelligence frameworks, problems related to jurisdiction and coordination, often referred to as "turf" issues, can result in policy failures.
- 2) **Surprise and Preparedness-** The sudden political changes in Afghanistan, Maldives, and Bangladesh highlight concerns about India's readiness. Even with extensive systems in place, India struggled to predict and respond quickly to these rapid changes.

What should be the way forward?

- 1) **Improving Strategic Capabilities** -To address these issues and improve India's strategic capabilities, it's essential to thoroughly examine policy-making structures and internal coordination mechanisms.
- 2) **Collaboration**-There should be a focus on improving collaboration between various agencies and refining strategies to better manage regional and global dynamics.
- 3) **Political Reflection**- India's political and security sectors need to reflect seriously on these issues without engaging in political blame. Given the seriousness of the challenges, it is essential to focus on constructive discussions and improvements in policymaking.

What lessons should India learn from shocks in its neighborhood?

Context: The article discusses how India's foreign policy in South Asia has faced challenges due to recent political upheavals in neighboring countries. It emphasizes the importance of engaging with all political factions, avoiding one-sided approaches, and revitalizing regional cooperation.

For detailed information on **the neighbourhood in turmoil, lessons for India** [read this article here](#)

What Recent Events Have Affected India's Neighbourhood?

1. Since 2021, India has faced several shocks in its neighborhood. The coup in Myanmar and the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan in 2021 were major events.
2. In 2022, Imran Khan was ousted as Pakistan's Prime Minister, and Gotabaya Rajapaksa was pushed out of Sri Lanka.
3. More recently, elections in the Maldives replaced the India-friendly Solih government, and coalition issues in Nepal brought the less India-friendly Oli government to power.
4. In Bangladesh, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's departure has left India scrambling to engage with her successors.

What Lessons Should India Learn from These Events?

1. **Avoid One-Sided Engagement:** India often aligned with specific governments, like Sheikh Hasina's in Bangladesh, ignoring the opposition. This narrow approach backfired as political tides changed. India should engage with all political factions to maintain balance.
2. **Retain Loyalty to Allies:** India's refusal to help Afghan officials after the Taliban takeover harmed its reputation as a reliable partner. However, by allowing Sheikh Hasina to stay in India, it showed loyalty. This should be a consistent approach.
3. **Avoid Communal Lenses:** Ties in South Asia should not be reduced to religious affiliations. The assumption that good relations are based on religious majorities is flawed. For example, Nepal, a Hindu-majority country, has been a difficult partner, while Bhutan (Buddhist-majority) and Maldives (Muslim-

majority) have been strong allies.

4. **Revive Regional Cooperation:** India must strengthen its role as the leading power in South Asia, independent of global power plays like those between the U.S. and China. India should work on reviving regional mechanisms like SAARC and BIMSTEC to enhance cooperation.

What Common Challenges Exist in South Asia?

1. **Political Instability:** Frequent changes in government, such as in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka, have created uncertainty and affected regional stability.
2. **Economic Inequality and Joblessness:** High unemployment rates and unequal economic growth have fueled public anger, as seen in protests and unrest in several countries.
3. **Democratic Backsliding:** The shift towards authoritarianism, as witnessed in Bangladesh under Sheikh Hasina, undermines long-term stability and can lead to political backlash.
4. **External Influence:** Rivalries between global powers like the U.S. and China often overshadow regional cooperation, weakening South Asian unity and self-reliance.

China's advancements in drone and hypersonic technology and their effects on India.

Context: The article discusses China's advancements in drone and hypersonic technology, highlighting its potential military edge in a new Cold War. It warns that India may face challenges in maintaining neutrality and must balance defense spending with economic priorities.

What is China's New Technological Edge?

1. China recently test-flew a large drone with a 2-tonne payload capacity, bigger than a four-seater Cessna-172, showcasing its advancements in unmanned aircraft technology.
2. Developed by Sichuan Tengden Sci-Tech Innovation Company, this drone is part of China's growing focus on pilotless aircraft.
3. China's hypersonic glide vehicles (HGVs), like the DF-ZF, are difficult to detect and track, alarming the US.
4. Drones and HGVs are considered revolutionary in warfare due to their digital guidance via live data-feed, making China a leader in this emerging military technology.

Why Are These Developments Concerning?

1. China's advancements in drones and hypersonic glide vehicles (HGVs) represent a significant shift in military technology.
2. The DF-ZF, a Chinese HGV, is difficult to detect and track, posing a challenge to the US and its allies.
3. Drones, guided by live data-feed, were effectively used in recent conflicts like the Ukraine and Gaza wars.
4. The mix of missiles and drones used by Iran against Israel highlights the growing threat of these technologies.
5. China's lead in these technologies could disrupt global military balance, making these developments a significant concern.

How Does This Affect India?

1. China's advancements in drone and hypersonic technology could challenge India's strategic autonomy as the US-China rivalry intensifies.
2. India recently tested the Agni-5 missile with multiple warheads, joining an elite group of powers, but still

needs to catch up with China's AI-enabled drones and HGVs.

3. Balancing defense spending with economic stability is crucial to avoid the middle-income trap, a risk both India and China face.

4. India must focus on advancing its defense capabilities without compromising sound economic policies to maintain its global position.

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.

9 PM Compilation August 2024

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.

Democratic Backlash in South Asia

Context: The article discusses a "silent democratic backlash" in South Asia, comparing India and Pakistan. It explains how India, once a strong democracy, is now showing authoritarian tendencies, while in Pakistan, public protests challenge military influence in politics.

What is the Democratic Backlash in South Asia?

- 1. Rise of Authoritarianism in India:** Since 2014, India's democratic structure has shifted towards authoritarianism, with the BJP promoting an "Opposition-free" democracy and centralizing power.
- 2. Public Pushback in Pakistan:** In Pakistan, despite a history of military influence, recent elections and public protests indicate a growing rejection of military-political collusion.
- 3. Middle-Class Sentiments:** Both India and Pakistan's middle classes have historically supported authoritarian governance, but younger generations are increasingly critical.
- 4. Digital Advocacy:** Citizens in both countries are using digital platforms to demand democratic reforms and resist authoritarian tendencies.

How Has Democracy Evolved in India?

1. India was initially known for its strong democratic foundations, free elections, and separation of powers.
2. Except for the 1975 Emergency, India maintained civilian dominance over the military.
3. BJP's rise in 2014 marked a shift towards authoritarianism with increased executive overreach. The BJP's push for a "Congress-mukt Bharat" exemplified a move toward a one-party state.
4. Universities became centers of nationalist symbolism, curbing student protests.

What is Happening in Pakistan?

1. Pakistan has a history of military and bureaucratic control, leading to authoritarian rule.
2. Since 2008, Pakistan has held four general elections, indicating a shift towards democracy.
3. However, military influence remains strong, as seen in the 2018 and 2024 elections where political elites allied with the military to gain power.
4. Public protests, like the lawyers' movement, and mass dissatisfaction with military rule continue to challenge this authoritarianism.
5. Despite military influence, citizens increasingly advocate for democracy, as seen in the rise of the PTI in the 2024 election.

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

The growing partnership between India and the U.K.

Context: The article discusses the recent electoral victories of Modi in India and Starmer in the UK. It highlights the importance of the UK-India partnership, emphasizing trade, security, technology, and education. The article calls for a new roadmap to deepen this collaboration further.

For detailed information on **Successes and challenges in the India-U.S. relationship** [read this article here](#)

Why is India important globally?

- 1. Successful G-20 Presidency:** India had a highly successful G-20 Presidency in 2023, showcasing its leadership on the global stage.
- 2. Moon Landing:** India achieved a remarkable moon landing, highlighting its advancements in space technology.
- 3. Digital Public Infrastructure:** India is a leader in digital public infrastructure, setting examples for other nations.
- 4. Economic Growth:** India is soon to become the world's third-largest economy, indicating its significant economic power.
- 5. Best ROI on R&D:** India offers the best return on investment per dollar on R&D, as demonstrated by the Indian Space Research Organisation's achievements.

What is the current state of UK-India trade?

1. The current state of UK-India trade is robust, with bilateral trade reaching £39 billion in 2023.
2. These investments support employment, with about eight lakh (800,000) people employed between the two countries due to this economic relationship.
3. The UK-India partnership, guided by the '2030 Roadmap,' has successfully enhanced trade and investment flows, demonstrating a strong and growing economic bond.
4. The ongoing negotiations for a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) indicate a commitment to further increase trade and economic collaboration.

How can the UK and India strengthen their partnership?

- 1. Finalize the UK-India Free Trade Agreement (FTA):** This will lay the foundation for a robust partnership, enhancing trade and investment.
- 2. Enhance technology and R&D collaboration:** India offers the best ROI per dollar on R&D, evidenced by the achievements of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO). UK companies should partner with Indian firms and universities.
- 3. Expand healthcare cooperation:** Both nations successfully developed malaria vaccines. The UK should increase clinical trials and healthcare research in India.
- 4. Boost climate financing and sustainability tech:** British banks already provide billions in climate financing to India. Continue supporting innovative sustainability projects.
- 5. Implement business environment reforms in India:** Facilitative tariff and standards regimes, better IP protection, and transparent government processes will attract more British investment.

What are key areas of alignment?

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- 1. Science and Innovation:** The landmark G2G agreement in 2023 highlights collaboration potential.
- 2. Defence and Security:** The UK once provided most of India's defence equipment. Now, the UK has only a 2.5% market share. India aims to indigenize and build reliable defence technology supply chains. India's Defence Minister visited the UK in January 2024, indicating rising momentum.
- 3. Education:** UK universities collaborate with Indian industry to develop talent. Transnational Education routes enhance higher education in India.

China's plans for modernization

Context: The article discusses China's plans for modernization, including reforms, development, opening up, peace initiatives, education, and ecological efforts. It emphasizes cooperation with India and highlights shared opportunities and mutual growth potential between the two countries.

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

What are the major outcomes of the Third Plenary Session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) for China's modernization?

1. Comprehensive Reforms:

- a) The session introduced over 300 reforms across various sectors like the economy, politics, culture, society, and ecology.
- b) These reforms aim to build a high-standard socialist market economy and promote a fair and dynamic market environment.

2. Economic Growth:

- a) China's economy showed a positive recovery, with a 5% GDP growth in the first half of 2024.
- b) Focus on competitive industries such as high-end equipment, new-energy vehicles, and photovoltaics.
- c) Over 140,000 specialized small and medium-sized enterprises are producing unique products.

3. Opening Up:

- a) China will continue to open its economy, aligning with high-standard international economic and trade rules.
- b) Nearly 500 billion yuan in foreign investment was attracted in the first half of 2024.
- c) Implementation of visa-free policies for several countries to facilitate foreign travel and investment.

4. Peace Initiatives:

- a) Promotion of the Global Development Initiative, Global Security Initiative, and Global Civilization Initiative.
- b) Commitment to peaceful development and safeguarding sovereignty.

5. Education and Innovation:

- a) Emphasis on science, technology, education, and talent development.
- b) China has the world's largest education system, with new labor market entrants averaging over 14 years of education.

c) Population with higher education reached 250 million, supporting major breakthroughs in core technologies.

6. Ecological Harmony:

- a) Focus on harmony between humanity and nature.
- b) China's clean power generation system is the largest globally, with leading capacities in hydropower, wind power, and solar power.
- c) Commitment to reducing carbon emissions and pursuing green development.

How is China Collaborating with India?

- 1. China and India are seen as cooperation partners, not threats.
- 2. Both countries aim to implement the consensus that they are development opportunities for each other.
- 3. There are mutual benefits in education and other sectors, with China inviting more Indian students to study in China.
- 4. The shared goal is development and revitalization for both nations.

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.

Prime Minister Modi's Historic Visit to Ukraine

Context -The Indian Prime Minister's recent visit to Ukraine was a major milestone in India's foreign policy, being the first visit by an Indian head of government since diplomatic relations began in 1992. He visited Kyiv as Ukraine was making significant gains into Russian territory, which may have violated Western aid terms. This suggests the peace process could have shifted from India's initial understanding.

What are the highlights of the visit?

- 1) **Breaking Tradition-** Indian Prime Ministers used to avoid former Warsaw Pact countries to respect ties with Russia. Modi's visit to Poland and Ukraine, traveling by train, now demonstrates India's role as a credible mediator and its strategic independence.
- 2) **Balancing Act-** Six weeks after Modi's visit to Moscow, his trip to Ukraine was seen as an effort to ease U.S. concerns.

A detailed article on India-Ukraine relations can be [read here](#).

What has the global reaction been?

- 1) **Limited Impact-**The U.S. State Department described Modi's visit as "potentially helpful," signaling limited geopolitical impact.
- 2) **Mixed Signals from Kyiv-** Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy called Modi's visit a "historical moment" and praised the economic agreements made between India and Ukraine. He agreed in principle to visit India but stressed that New Delhi couldn't remain neutral in the conflict and needed to support peace.

What is India's Current Position on Russia-Ukraine conflict?

- 1) India has been distancing itself from what External Affairs Minister referred to as "Europe's war."
- 2) Non-involvement in peace processes that don't directly bring Russia and Ukraine to the negotiating table
- 3) Disassociation from the Swiss peace summit.

A detailed article on India-Ukraine relations can be [read here](#).

What are the Obstacles to the Peace Process?

- 1) **Competing Demands** -The situation is complicated by the firm positions of both sides: President Zelenskyy demands a complete Russian withdrawal from Ukraine, while President Putin requires Ukraine to pull back from occupied regions and drop its NATO membership bid.
- 2) **Persistent Power Struggles** -Both sides are focused on military gains, as shown by Russia's attacks on Ukraine before Modi's Moscow visit and Ukraine's operations in Kursk Oblast before his Kyiv visit. These

actions highlight the ongoing power struggles and both sides' commitment to their goals despite diplomatic pressure.

What should be approach for India?

- 1) **Effective Conflict Mediation** -India should approach conflict resolution carefully if it wants to join global efforts. Effective mediation has been rare and often involves clear goals, like the Black Sea Grain Initiative and recent prisoner exchanges. India needs to define its own principles for a ceasefire and lasting peace.
- 2) **Learning from Historical Mediation Successes** -The government may find it useful to look at India's own history. In the 1950s, India Prime Minister mediated between Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev and Austria for the withdrawal of troops in exchange for Austria's neutrality.
- 3) **Overcoming Perceptions of Partiality** -To effectively mediate the conflict, India should overcome perceptions of partiality towards Moscow.

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

U.S. court ruling against Google's monopoly

Context: The article discusses a U.S. court ruling against Google for violating antitrust laws by maintaining its monopoly in search services. It also examines how this ruling might affect ongoing similar cases in India, considering different market conditions and proposed regulations.

What Was the U.S. Court's Ruling Against Google?

1. U.S. court ruled that Google violated antitrust laws to maintain its monopoly over general search services and search ads.
2. The judge highlighted Google's strategy of making itself the "default" search engine, especially on smartphones and web browsers, by paying companies like Apple and Samsung billions of dollars.
3. This "default" status gives Google a significant, unseen advantage over its competitors, as most users stick to the pre-set search engine.

How Does This Ruling Impact Google in India?

1. **Impact of U.S. Ruling in India:** The U.S. court ruling against Google for antitrust violations primarily targets the American market but has implications for Google's operations in India, where it faces similar legal challenges.
2. **CCI Action:** In 2022, the Competition Commission of India fined Google Rs 1337.76 Crores for forcing pre-installation of its apps on Android devices, illustrating Google's dominant position and similar anti-competitive issues as those identified in the U.S. ruling.

For detailed information on **Antitrust cases against Google** [read this article here](#)

3. **Choice for Users:** Following the CCI verdict, Google altered its practices in India, allowing users to select their default search engine, showing a direct response to regulatory pressures that mirror actions likely influenced by global legal challenges.

What Are the Differences in Market Conditions Between the U.S. and India?

- 1. Default Search Engine Impact:** In the U.S., Google dominates as the default search engine on many devices. In India, Xiaomi, holding a 19.3% market share, uses the Opera browser, not Google, as the default on its phones.
- 2. Regulatory Actions:** The Competition Commission of India (CCI) fined Google Rs 1337.76 Crores in 2022 for mandatory pre-installation of Google apps on Android devices. Following this, Google allowed Indian users to choose their default search engine, showing a regulatory difference.
- 3. Browser Preferences:** Indian consumers experience different pre-installed search options, unlike the more uniform Google default in the U.S., impacting user choices differently in both markets.

What Does the Proposed Indian Competition Bill Say About Big Tech?

1. The Draft Competition Bill, 2024, aims to regulate large tech companies in India, referred to as Systemically Significant Digital Enterprises (SSDEs).
2. It imposes restrictions on SSDEs to prevent anti-competitive practices.
3. Key provisions include barring these companies from favoring their products and services over others.
4. The Bill also prohibits SSDEs from using or sharing users' personal data without explicit consent.
5. Big tech companies argue that these regulations would create significant compliance burdens. They claim it could shift their focus away from innovation and research.

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?

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

Challenges in Adopting Global Pandemic Agreement

Context- Intellectual property protections, hoarding by wealthy nations, export restrictions, and manufacturing limits worsened vaccine inequity during COVID-19. Despite two years of negotiations, 194 WHO member states failed to finalize the Pandemic Agreement, which was designed to enhance pandemic preparedness and address inequities revealed by COVID-19.

Recently, 77th World Health Assembly (May 27-June 1, 2024) took place in Geneva where two significant advancements in global health governance were made.

What were the key developments at the 77th World Health Assembly?

- 1) **Amendments to the International Health Regulations** -The Assembly approved amendments to the 2005 International Health Regulations (IHR). These changes aim to boost preparedness for health emergencies, add a new "Pandemic Emergency" category, ensure fair access to health products, support developing countries, and establish a National IHR Authority for improved coordination.
- 2) **Completion of WHO Pandemic Agreement** -The mandate of the intergovernmental negotiating body (INB) for the Pandemic Treaty was extended, requiring the WHO Pandemic Agreement to be finished quickly.

What are the challenges in adopting the Pandemic Agreement?

- 1) **Pathogen Access and Benefit Sharing (PABS):** The proposal aims to address inequities in treatment access and vaccine distribution by requiring manufacturers to donate a portion of their products to WHO for global distribution. However, there is disagreement on donation percentages, with LMICs (Low- and middle-income countries) pushing for at least 20% and high-income countries not agreeing to it.
- 2) **Technology Transfer and Intellectual Property-** Disagreements over production governance,

technology transfer, and intellectual property rights, particularly around TRIPS flexibilities and the 'peace clause,' have stalled negotiations.

3) One Health Approach: This approach, which integrates human, animal, and environmental health, is supported by high-income countries but seen by low- and middle-income countries as an additional burden without sufficient funding.

4) Enforcement and Implementation- The lack of a robust compliance mechanism and accountability in the International Health Regulations (IHR) raises significant concerns about the implementation of the Pandemic Agreement.

Read More- [WHO Pandemic Agreement: The countdown to a pandemic treaty](#)

What should be the way forward?

1) **Collaboration for Global Health Security** -Diplomats and leaders should recognize that working together and supporting each other benefits global health security.

2) **Technology Transfer and IP Waivers** -Technology transfer and intellectual property waivers should be implemented to build diverse global manufacturing capabilities. This will allow LMICs to achieve self-sufficiency and reduce dependence on aid from high-income countries.

GS Paper 3

Subject: Indian Economy

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

Framework for evaluating wealth and spending

Context: The article discusses a framework for evaluating wealth and spending based on how the wealth was earned. It ranks five types of wealth creation from most to least desirable, highlighting the economic impact and fairness of each type.

What is the Framework for Evaluating Wealth?

The framework for evaluating wealth considers how it was earned and how it should be spent. This framework is based on economic fairness and the alignment of rewards with efforts. Understanding the source of wealth is crucial for judging economic fairness and the health of an economy.

How is Wealth Categorized?

Wealth is ranked in five categories:

1. Talent and Effort: Wealth from personal skills and hard work, like a successful retail chain or a popular jewelry designer.

2. Innovation: Money made from creating something new, like an invention which benefits society.

3. Externalities: Profits that impose costs on society, like pollution from cars.

4. Monopolistic Advantages: Earnings from industries with little competition, such as utilities or large tech platforms.

5. Influence Rents: Wealth gained from manipulating rules and institutions, often unfairly benefiting the wealthy.

What are the Desirable and Less Desirable Sources of Wealth?

1. Wealth from talent, effort, and innovation is highly desirable because it results from honest work and creativity, benefiting both individuals and society.
2. Less desirable sources include wealth generated from externalities, monopolistic advantages, and influence rents. These methods impose costs on society, restrict competition, and manipulate rules for profit.

How Does This Relate to the USA and USSR?

1. The framework highlights differences in economic systems. The USA's system, during the Cold War, promoted fair competition and innovation, leading to economic growth.
2. In contrast, the USSR struggled economically due to a lack of fair competition and influence rents. This economic inefficiency contributed to the USSR's collapse, despite its military strength.
3. This comparison shows how a strong institutional framework and fair competition can drive economic success.

Reasons for the slowdown in private investment in agricultural technologies in India

Context: The article discusses how private investment in agricultural technologies has slowed in India. However, a joint venture by RiceTec and Mahyco aims to improve rice and wheat farming with new technologies, making it more sustainable and efficient.

For detailed information on **Agricultural Technology** [read this article here](#)

Why Has Private Investment in Agricultural Technologies Slowed in India?

- 1. Extended Period of Low Farm Prices:** After the global commodity boom ended in 2013-14, farm prices dropped, reducing profits and discouraging investment.
- 2. Restrictive Policies:** India's focus on promoting organic farming (paramparagat krishi) and blocking new GM crop trials has hindered technological advancements.

What Are the Recent Developments in Rice and Wheat Farming Technologies?

- 1. Joint Venture:** RiceTec and Mahyco have formed a joint venture to focus on rice and wheat farming technologies.
- 2. Direct Seeding and Zero Tillage:** They aim to grow rice by direct seeding and wheat through zero tillage, reducing the need for burning stubble and field preparation.
- 3. Gene Mutation Technology:** They have developed rice and wheat varieties with a mutated gene that allows the use of the herbicide Imazethapyr, which effectively controls weeds.

4. Public Sector Involvement: The Indian Agricultural Research Institute has also released similar rice varieties, using mutation breeding instead of GM technology.

What Are the Benefits of the New Technologies?

1. Water and Labor Savings: The new rice and wheat varieties allow farmers to save water and labor. Direct seeding of rice avoids the need for field flooding, while zero tillage for wheat eliminates extensive land preparation.

2. Cost Reduction: Using the herbicide Imazethapyr reduces fuel costs and time spent in field preparation. This makes farming more cost-effective.

3. Stubble Management: Farmers do not need to burn stubble from the previous crop, reducing environmental pollution.

4. Effective Weed Control: The mutated gene in the new varieties tolerates Imazethapyr, effectively controlling a wide range of weeds. This makes weed management easier and more efficient.

5. Public Sector Competition: The Indian Agricultural Research Institute's release of similar rice varieties introduces healthy competition, potentially lowering costs and increasing adoption.

For detailed information on **Significance of factors of Technology for agriculture** [read this article here](#)

Efforts to simplify India's Income Tax Act

Context: The article discusses efforts to simplify India's Income Tax Act, focusing on recent changes like reduced corporate tax rates and streamlined personal income tax slabs. It also mentions initiatives to increase tax compliance and reduce disputes, alongside proposed reforms to further improve the tax system.

For detailed information on **Concerns related to India's income tax system** [read this article here](#)

What Efforts Have Been Made to Simplify India's Income Tax Act?

1. Historical Context: In 1958, the Law Commission of India aimed to simplify the Income Tax Act of 1922.

2. Corporate Tax Reforms: The corporate tax rates were reduced, and incentives are being phased out under the new tax regime. For example, 58% of corporate taxpayers chose the new tax regime, lowering the effective tax rate from 29.49% in 2017-18 to 23.26% in 2021-22.

3. Personal Income Tax Slabs: The number of personal income tax slabs was reduced, and compliance was simplified, increasing taxpayers from 89.8 million in 2019-20 to 93.7 million in 2022-23.

4. Foreign Investment: The corporate tax rate on foreign companies was reduced to 35%, and the angel tax was abolished.

5. Dispute Resolution: The Vivad Se Vishwas scheme offers a way to settle long-standing disputes. Shortening reassessment periods and setting higher monetary thresholds for disputes also help reduce confrontations between taxpayers and the income tax department.

What Impact Have Tax Reforms Had on Revenue and GDP?

1. Direct Tax to GDP Ratio: Increased despite lower tax rates.

2. Corporate Tax Revenue: Effective tax rate reduced from 29.49% in 2017-18 to 23.26% in 2021-22.

3. Personal Income Tax: Simplification increased taxpayers from 89.8 million in 2019-20 to 93.7 million in 2022-23.

- 4. Capital Gains Tax:** In the assessment year 2022-23, capital gains made up 11% of gross incomes reported in tax returns. Around 60% of long-term capital gains were above Rs 500 crore, and 40% were reported by corporates. A higher exemption limit of Rs 1.25 lakh on long-term gains benefits lower-income taxpayers.
- 5. Revenue Loss:** Proposed direct tax changes cost Rs 29,000 crore, less than current exemptions and deductions.
- 6. Economic Growth:** Nifty 50 delivered a 26.8% return, reflecting strong capital market performance.

What Are the Future Plans for the Income Tax Act?

- 1. Government's Intent:** The government has announced its intent to review the Income Tax Act.
- 2. Previous Simplification Efforts:** Simplification has been attempted in the past but has not fully resolved the issues.
- 3. Redrafting Contentious Sections:** To fundamentally resolve disputes, contentious sections of the Act need careful redrafting.
- 4. Six-Month Focus:** It is hoped that the work over the next six months will help meet the stated objectives of the tax system review.

Incorporating Sustainability in Competition Laws

Context: The article discusses how market regulations are adapting to include sustainability goals. It mentions different countries and organizations updating their competition laws to support environmental sustainability, highlighting actions like issuing guidelines and adjusting competition policies to encourage greener practices in businesses.

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

What is the Impact of Climate Change on Markets?

Climate change affects the supply side of markets, causing supply-demand mismatches and impacting prices and consumer demand.

How Are Countries Incorporating Sustainability in Competition Laws?

- 1. India:** The Securities and Exchange Board of India mandated companies to report their environmental impacts in 2023. The Competition Commission of India is exploring sustainability policies, as India aims for net-zero emissions by 2070.
- 2. Japan:** Japan's Anti Monopoly Act provides guidelines that support businesses in collaborating on environmental sustainability efforts without restricting competition.
- 3. European Union:** The European Commission's revised guidelines on horizontal agreements now include a section on sustainability. This allows companies to work together on environmental goals unless they significantly restrict competition or contravene Article 101(1) of the Treaty.

What Actions Have Been Taken During Crises?

- 1. COVID-19 Pandemic Response by CCI:** During the COVID-19 crisis, the Competition Commission of India (CCI) issued advisories acknowledging supply chain disruptions. The advisories recognized the necessity for businesses to share information to manage and distribute essential products and services effectively.

2. Built-in Safeguards: The Competition Act, 2002 includes safeguards that protect businesses from sanctions for certain collaborations that address urgent public needs, specifically those arising during the pandemic.

3. Consideration for Exemptions: The advisory also highlighted that the CCI would consider exemptions for collaborations if they were necessary and proportionate to address concerns directly arising from COVID-19. This approach aimed to facilitate necessary cooperation among competitors while ensuring compliance with competition laws.

What are the benefits of incorporating sustainability in competition law?

1. Enhanced Transparency: The Securities and Exchange Board of India's framework for sustainability reporting increases transparency and combats greenwashing.

2. Encouragement of Green Innovations: Guidelines like Japan's Anti Monopoly Act help businesses collaborate on environmental goals, fostering green innovations.

3. Regulatory Support: The European Commission's guidelines support sustainability without harming competition.

4. Crisis Management: During COVID-19, the CCI's advisory allowed information sharing to ensure fair distribution, showing how collaboration can meet emergency needs.

What Should be Done?

1. Promote Studies: Conduct market studies on green initiatives, akin to the UK's study on electric vehicle charging, to foster competition and innovation.

2. Policy Integration: Incorporate sustainability practices in national policies, like TRAI's recommendations for the telecom sector, ensuring all economic sectors contribute to greener production methods.

3. Advocate and Educate: Utilize Section 49(3) of the Competition Act to promote competition advocacy and awareness, focusing on the benefits of sustainable business practices

Inflation Targeting in India

Context- The article argues that focusing solely on core inflation is inadequate and could negatively impact certain groups. Unstable inflation can unfairly benefit borrowers over lenders and savers. This highlights the need for a central bank that controls inflation effectively.

Inflation targeting works well in America, but India's economic structure requires a different approach. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) focuses on overall retail inflation instead of core inflation or labor market conditions

What is the difference in inflation targeting between India and the United States?

1) **RBI's Monetary Policy Approach-** The RBI's monetary policy panel is unlikely to consider labor market data, like the Mint+Shine study that shows 95% of formal-sector employees looking for new jobs in early 2024. This differs from the US Federal Reserve, which closely tracks labor market conditions along with inflation.

2) **Sources of Inflation in India-** Unlike in the US, where a tight labor market can drive inflation, India's inflation mainly comes from unstable farm supplies. Therefore, Indian policymakers need to focus more on commodity data than on labor market statistics.

3) **Data Reliability** - India's informal economy makes it difficult to collect reliable data, while the US's formal economy offers clearer insights into how employment affects inflation.

Read More- [Inflation In India- Reasons and Solutions](#)

What are the arguments against focusing only on core inflation, which excludes volatile items like food and energy prices?

- 1) **Social and Economic Inequality**- Focusing only on core inflation could harm the poor disproportionately by ignoring price stability for essential goods.
- 2) **Agriculture and Food Security**- Retail inflation in India is closely tied to agricultural output, showing how much food prices affect overall inflation.
- 3) **International Economic Relations**- Oil import costs add to inflation uncertainty in India, showing the country's vulnerability to global commodity price changes.

Way ahead-The central government should exercise fiscal restraint to support the RBI's efforts in controlling inflation. It warns that excessive state spending could increase inflation.

Social implications of capital gains

Context: The article explains that raising taxes on stock market profits is based on the belief that such gains are like gambling. However, it argues that stock market speculation helps efficiently allocate capital and manage risks, benefiting the overall economy.

For detailed information on **Changes in India's tax regime for capital gains** [read this article here](#)

Why did the government raise taxes?

1. The government raised taxes on capital gains to reduce speculative activities in the stock market, which are seen as similar to gambling.
2. The Economic Survey suggested that developing countries like India should not waste limited savings on speculation.
3. Finance Secretary T.V. Somanathan noted capital gains are the fastest-growing income class, justifying higher taxes.
4. The budget also removed indexation benefits for real estate investors to address perceived easy profits.
5. These measures aim to encourage long-term investments and ensure better allocation of capital towards productive sectors, rather than speculative activities.

How do capital gains occur?

1. Capital gains happen when an investor buys an asset at a lower price and sells it at a higher price. In a perfect world, with accurate future forecasts, there would be no capital gains.
2. However, due to uncertainty, some businesses are undervalued or overvalued. Efficient investors earn capital gains by investing in undervalued businesses.
3. For example, if a business is expected to yield ₹110 in a year and investors want a 10% return, they would pay ₹100 for it. If an investor buys it for ₹50 and sells it at ₹100, they gain 100%.

What are the social implications of capital gains?

- 1. Efficient Resource Allocation:** Capital gains occur when investors correctly identify undervalued businesses, leading to better allocation of resources.
- 2. Economic Growth:** Proper capital allocation results in overall economic growth, as seen when investors prioritize sectors in high demand, such as healthcare during the COVID-19 pandemic, over less critical sectors.
- 3. Liquidity and Market Functioning:** Speculative activities provide liquidity, enabling long-term investors to buy and sell shares easily, which aids in the efficient functioning of the stock market.
- 4. Risk Management:** Derivatives trading helps manage risk by allowing investors to lock in prices for future transactions, crucial for sectors like agriculture. Without such tools, farmers may be discouraged from producing due to price uncertainty.
- 5. Potential Misallocation:** High taxes on capital gains and derivatives may deter efficient investment, leading to potential misallocation of resources and hindering economic growth.

Way forward for India's Economic Growth path

Context: Article focusses on India's present growth trajectory and the challenges it faces in sustaining its present economic momentum.

India's impressive 7%-plus GDP growth rate and status as the world's fastest-growing large economy inspire optimism. But several countries have failed on this stage before, where India stands today and could not become a developed country. Out of 101 middle-income economies in 1960, only 23 had attained high-income status by 2018.

Therefore, there is a need for a strategy backed by rapid economic growth built on liberal economic policies that harness the private sector.

Significance of Economic Growth for Poverty Alleviation

Poverty: Economic growth is the most effective tool for poverty alleviation and improving living standards. For Example, till 1991, poverty level in India stayed at approx. 50%, However, after liberalisation, poverty fell to approximately 20%.

Inequality although has not reduced but the Indians, who are at the bottom of the income pyramid are well-off compared to before.

What are the challenges for India's Economic Growth path?

Agricultural Sector: Nearly 46% of India's labor force remains in agriculture, contributing only 18% of the GDP. This sector is marked by low productivity and underemployment, which hampers overall economic efficiency.

Female Labor Force Participation Rate (FLFPR): India's FLFPR stands at 37%. It is significantly lower compared to countries like China, Vietnam, and Japan, where it ranges between 60%-70%. Improving this rate is crucial for maximizing the potential of India's working-age population.

What are the strategies for India's Economic Growth path?

Export-Oriented Industrialization: India needs to focus on low-skilled, employment-intensive manufacturing with an emphasis on exports. This approach was followed by 'Asian Tigers' (South Korea, Taiwan, Japan, and Vietnam) in 1960-90. This involves increasing exports by capitalizing on competitive advantages and maintaining openness to imports.

Reducing tariff: India must avoid protectionist policies like high import tariffs that can lead to Growth of inefficient industries. It leads economies towards losing their advantage in low skilled areas, while staying uncompetitive against advanced economies in high tech sectors.

Market-Led Economy: The government should ensure minimum interference with private sector while providing maximum governance, continuing reforms to enhance the ease of doing business.

Cluster-Led Industrial Development: Building industrial clusters with world-class infrastructure and ancillary ecosystems for education, healthcare, and entertainment can attract employers and workers. Relaxing stringent regulations in designated areas can help create a favourable environment for manufacturing.

Leverage Private Sector Strengths: The government should harness the strengths of the private sector to focus on low-skilled manufacturing sectors, such as electronics assembly and apparel. Which can employ large numbers of people.

A Critical Analysis of Employment Generation Measures in Budget 2024-25

Context -The recent budget acknowledges the urgent need for job creation in India, but the proposed measures are insufficient to effectively address the problem.

What are the employment schemes announced in the budget?

The budget announced a ₹2 trillion package aimed at creating 41 million jobs over the next five years, including:

1) Employment and Skilling Schemes:

A) **Scheme 1:-** New employees receive ₹15,000 in three instalments, with the condition that they must complete an online financial literacy program to get the second month's payment, and employers must return the subsidy if the employee leaves within a year.

B) **Scheme 2:-** Incentives for the manufacturing sector include graded payments over four years, with eligibility requiring enterprises to hire at least 50 new workers or 25% of their existing workforce and to have a three-year track record of EPFO contributions.

C) **Scheme 3:-** A government subsidy of ₹3,000 per month towards the employer's provident fund contribution applies to enterprises with a track record of EPFO contributions, following similar criteria as Scheme 2.

2) Additional Schemes:

A) **One scheme for internships-** Targets youth aged 21-24 who are unemployed and not pursuing education

B) One scheme for upgrading ITIs (Industrial Training Institutes).

A detailed article on Budget 2024-25 can be [read here](#).

What are the issues with these schemes and the government's approach to addressing the unemployment crisis?

1) **Eligibility-**All three schemes are for enterprises registered with the Employees' Provident Fund Organization (EPFO), thus targeting only the organized sector.

2) **Administrative Burdens:** - Requirements like financial literacy programs and the need for a three-year track record of EPFO contributions may place undue financial and administrative burdens on employers, this may undermine the schemes' effectiveness.

3) **Internship Scheme:** - The scheme excludes students from top institutions or those with professional qualifications and bars those with family members who are taxpayers or government employees. These strict conditions may limit the schemes' effectiveness and impact.

4) **Over-Reliance on the Private Sector** -The main issue with the budget is its heavy reliance on the private sector for job creation. Despite substantial tax subsidies in 2019, these funds mostly boosted corporate profits instead of creating jobs.

5) **Misalignment of Job Creation with Economic Growth** -The budget wrongly separates job creation from economic growth. Jobs are mainly created through growth and investment. In times of low demand and stagnant incomes, it's unrealistic to expect the private sector to create jobs without broader economic stimulus.

What should be the way forward?

1) The government should focus on creating decent, well-paid jobs, not just increasing job numbers. By boosting public spending in rural areas and the informal sector, it can raise incomes and create more labor-intensive jobs.

2) Investing in education, health, and public services will fix key gaps, boost worker productivity, and help marginalized groups who may not benefit from existing budget schemes.

RBI's Monetary Policy Amid Global Economic Uncertainty

Context- Recent US employment data showed slower hiring and the highest unemployment rate in nearly three years, causing global stock markets to fall and raising fears that the Federal Reserve had delayed rate cuts too long. This increased concerns about a US recession led to expectations of a change in RBI policy or a softer tone. However, RBI decided to keep their current policy unchanged.

What were the reasons for the RBI's decision to keep the policy rate unchanged?

1) **Policy Focused on Domestic Inflation Target**- RBI Governor decided to keep the current policy. He stressed that the RBI's decisions are based mainly on domestic factors, not global market conditions. The RBI's main goal is to keep headline inflation at India's 4% target.

2) **US Recession Predictions and Inflation Control**- RBI Governor stated that it is premature to predict a US recession and highlighted that the RBI remains dedicated to controlling inflation while monitoring all relevant data.

3) **Core Inflation and Food Exclusion Debates** -The RBI will not be influenced by low core inflation rates or discussions about excluding food from inflation targets. Although core inflation dropped to 3.1% in May-June, overall retail inflation increased to 5.1% in June. This suggests that inflation may decline more slowly than anticipated.

4) **Inflation Expectations** -High food inflation, which constitutes 46% of consumer spending, presents serious risks. It can increase other prices, impact core inflation, and influence public perceptions and future inflation expectations, resulting in more enduring inflation.

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

5) **Persistent High Food Inflation**- According to the RBI Governor, the MPC cannot overlook ongoing high food inflation, even if it appears temporary. The RBI is committed to not repeating past mistakes of underestimating inflation.

Deposit-Lending Gap in Indian Banks

Context- Indian regulators are urging banks to increase deposits because they are currently falling behind in comparison to lending growth. If this gap continues, banks may face higher costs for funding or may reduce lending, which could slow down economic growth.

The Finance Minister, RBI Governor, and the Economic Survey have all expressed concerns. For instance, in 2023, credit grew by 16%, but deposits increased by only 13%. This gap has been larger in recent years, with a brief exception during the pandemic when deposit growth surged.

Banks heavily rely on current and savings accounts (CASA) as a primary source of funding. These accounts are low-cost and represent a stable portion of total deposits. Presently, CASA deposits account for 41% of total bank deposits, a slight decrease from 43% the previous year.

What are the factors contributing to the decline in bank deposits?

- 1) **Low Interest Rates-** Long periods of low deposit rates discouraged savers as they began to focus on 'real' returns after inflation. Frustrated by these low rates, many households shifted their savings to the stock market. This was driven by a strong bull market and user-friendly mobile trading apps.
- 2) **Tax Regime-** Previously, the tax system favored debt funds over bank deposits with benefits like indexation and lower taxes on long-term gains. In 2023, this was fixed by taxing debt fund earnings at the same rate as bank deposit interest. However, no new measures have been introduced to make bank deposits more attractive.
- 3) **Changing Saver Demographics-** Experienced savers are pursuing higher returns through investments, but the growth in new savers is insufficient to satisfy banks' requirements.
- 4) **Diminished Role of Banks-** The growth of capital markets, which allow direct funding through bonds and shares, may be diminishing the traditional role of banks as financial intermediaries.

Read More- [Status of Non-Performing Assets \(NPAs\) – Explained, pointwise](#)

What should be the way forward?

- 1) **Tax Relief on Bank Deposits** -Eliminating the tax on interest from bank deposits could motivate people to save in traditional bank accounts by providing better returns and more favorable terms.
- 2) **Centralizing Deposits to Enhance Bank Stability** -Centralizing public deposits with the RBI would allow banks to focus on lending and risk management. Depositors could keep their money with the RBI, which would offer slightly lower interest rates for greater security. The RBI could then lend these funds to banks at special rates, supporting their lending and ensuring financial stability.

What are the economic implications of deposit crunch?

- 1) Core deposits are crucial as they provide a stable funding base, shielding banks from fluctuations in market rates. A reduced share of core deposits means banks must turn to more expensive sources of funding, impacting their profit margins.
- 2) The deposit shortage can affect the wider economy, as banks may become less able or willing to provide loans due to higher liquidity risks.
- 3) Borrowers who rely on bank financing may struggle to get funds or face higher borrowing costs. This could limit their ability to invest, which may negatively impact the overall economy.

4) The deposit crunch could affect credit flow to NBFCs, microfinance institutions, and smaller lenders. This can harm both consumer spending and investment activities.

What are the Key Questions and Considerations?

1) **Impact on Loan Growth**- The link between deposit growth and loan growth is complex. Banks usually need new deposits to boost loan growth and look for lending opportunities as their deposits increase. Evidence shows that these two factors are closely connected.

2) **Extent of Deposit Decline**- The decline in deposit growth affects all banks, including major public and private sector institutions. This is evident from their financial results and management discussions.

3) **Variation Across Loan Portfolios**- The effect of slower deposit growth differs by loan type. Retail loan demand is still strong, but industrial demand hasn't increased much. If industry demand grows beyond short-term needs, the deposit shortage could hurt economic activity.

Impact of Chinese FDI on India's Manufacturing and Economy

Context-The Economic Survey 2024 proposed welcoming Chinese foreign direct investment (FDI) to enhance India's manufacturing sector, boost exports, reduce imports from China, and strengthen India's role in global value chains (GVC). This article examines the potential outcomes of such a policy. Foreign direct investment (FDI) has not significantly boosted India's manufacturing. In FY24, FDI was just \$41 billion, under 1% of GDP, and less than 20% of it went into manufacturing, mostly for simple assembly. High costs and complex regulations have deterred foreign investment in this sector.

What will be the likely impact of Chinese Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) Benefit India's Manufacturing, Exports, Imports, and Global Value Chains (GVC)?

1) **Manufacturing**-Manufacturing solar modules in India is 40% more expensive than in China. Costs are lower with imported polysilicon wafers (25%) and solar cells (3%). Without additional support like affordable land and capital, production will stay costly, forcing India to rely on imports. High costs in India are due to expensive inputs and less support compared to China's generous subsidies.

2) **Exports**- The Economic Survey 2024 suggested that Chinese FDI could boost India's manufacturing and exports. However, this may be challenging. The US recently imposed high tariffs on solar panels from Chinese firms in various countries and may target the Chinese auto industry next. India's situation may face similar trade barriers.

3) **Imports**- India imports 30% of its industrial goods from China, including electronics and machinery. Even with more domestic production, imports from China, especially for electronics and EV batteries, have risen. Chinese firms may continue importing key components from China to reduce costs, so overall imports could still increase.

4) **India's GVC integration struggles**-Despite free trade agreements with ASEAN, Japan, and South Korea allowing tariff-free trade on most industrial products, India has struggled to integrate into global value chains (GVCs).

5) **Experience of Neighbours**-Many ASEAN countries are seeing a rise in imports from China and negative impacts from local Chinese manufacturing. For example, when Chinese EV companies started producing in Thailand, local auto parts orders dropped by 40%, leading many local manufacturers to cut back. India, with similar EV policies, is likely to face the same issues.

6) **Geopolitical strategy changes**-India is working with the US and other partners to reduce dependence on Chinese supply chains through the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework and the Supply Chain Resilience Initiative. Allowing more Chinese FDI would undermine these efforts to diversify away from China.

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

What should be the way forward?

A) **Need for Structural Changes**- There is a need to reduce business costs, improve infrastructure, and streamline the ease of doing business from start to finish.

B) **Policy Recommendation** -There should be a clear and consistent policy on China that outlines India's long-term strategy for security, economic, and trade matters.

Challenges faced by Regional Rural Banks (RRBs)

Context: The article discusses the challenges faced by Regional Rural Banks (RRBs) in India. It highlights how outdated technology and poor infrastructure are driving customers like Lalit Singh to private banks. It also mentions the debate on whether RRBs should merge with sponsor banks.

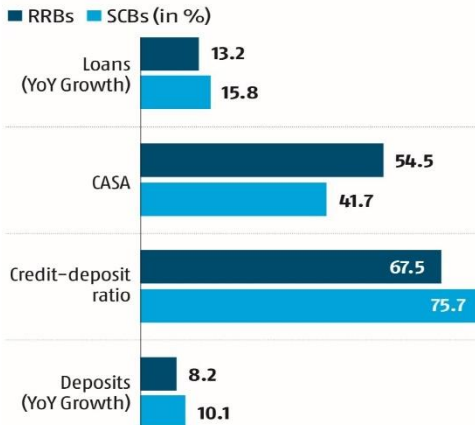
What Challenges Are RRBs Facing?

- 1. Outdated Technology:** RRBs are lagging in digital services, making it difficult to compete with private and small finance banks.
- 2. Poor Infrastructure:** Many RRB branches lack basic facilities. In western Uttar Pradesh, branches often have no security guards, poorly maintained cash rooms, and inadequate air conditioning.
- 3. Slow Service Delivery:** Customers expect quick services like ATM cards and cheque books, but RRBs struggle to provide these promptly. This leads to customer dissatisfaction and migration to other banks.
- 4. Financial Struggles:** Despite a ₹10,890 crore capital infusion during FY22 and FY23, RRBs continue to grapple with non-performing assets and mismanagement, hindering their growth and competitiveness.

How Important Are RRBs?

- 1. Foundation and Purpose:** RRBs were established in 1975 to provide banking and credit facilities in rural areas, combining local familiarity with commercial professionalism.
- 2. Wide Reach:** As of March 31, 2023, RRBs manage over 305 million deposit accounts and 29 million loan accounts across 43 RRBs with 21,995 branches. Ninety-two percent of RRB branches are in rural or semi-urban areas, showing their importance in reaching underserved regions.
- 3. Support for Government Schemes:** RRBs play a crucial role in expanding government schemes, disbursing wages under rural job guarantee schemes, and distributing pensions.
- 4. Vital for Rural Economy:** RRBs help support agriculture and rural finance, which are vital for India's rural economy.

RRBs VS SCHEDULED COMMERCIAL BANKS (FY23)



Source: NABARD

■ **Inception:** RRBs were established in September 1975

■ **Purpose:** To provide sufficient banking and credit facilities for agriculture and other rural sectors

■ **How:** Low-cost institutions combining local feel of cooperatives with professionalism of commercial banks

■ **Other purposes:** Proliferating govt schemes and helping in disbursement of wages to workers under rural job guarantee schemes and distribution of pensions

■ **RRB universe:** As of March 31, 2023, there are 43 RRBs sponsored by 12 scheduled commercial banks

■ **Network:** 21,995 branches in 26 states and 3 Union territories; 92% of RRB branches are in rural or semi-urban areas

■ **Reach:** 305.3 million deposit accounts and 29 million loan accounts

■ **Sponsors:** All public sector banks, except Punjab & Sind Bank, sponsor one or more RRBs; J&K Bank is the only private sector bank that sponsors an RRB

TECHNOLOGY ADOPTION BY RRBs (FY23)

31 Number of RRBs that have acquired a mobile banking licence

17 Number of RRBs that have acquired an internet banking licence (transaction facility)

26 Number of RRBs that have onboarded to BHIM-UPI

Source: Business Standards

What Is Being Done to Improve RRBs?

- Capital Infusion:** The government infused ₹10,890 crore into RRBs during FY22 and FY23, significantly more than the total ₹28,393 crore infused from 1975 to FY21.
- Technology Upgrades:** Efforts are being made to upgrade technology, with support from sponsor banks like Punjab National Bank, which helps reduce costs by sharing technology vendors.
- Policy Enhancements:** The Finance Minister emphasized the need to enhance digital capabilities and increase the penetration of schemes like the Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana, targeting micro, small, and medium enterprises.

Should RRBs Merge with Sponsor Banks?

A. Argument Against Merging:

9 PM Compilation August 2024

1. RRBs were created to focus on agriculture and rural finance, serving 305.3 million deposit accounts in rural and semi-urban areas.
2. Merging might shift their focus away from rural areas, as sponsor banks have broader commercial interests.
3. Upgrading technology without merging could help RRBs maintain their rural focus while improving services.

B. Argument For Merging:

1. Merging could address staff shortages and update the skills of RRB employees.
2. The All India Bank Officers' Confederation and Employees Association support merging to reduce competition and financial waste between RRBs and sponsor banks.
3. Some customers have moved to private banks due to RRBs' outdated services, which merging might resolve.

Way Forward-Experts suggest that RRBs should receive an immediate technology upgrade. While merging with sponsor banks is one option, many believe that keeping RRBs independent and improving their technology would be better for maintaining their focus on rural development.

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.

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?

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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.

India Inc.'s Bright Outlook

Context- India's corporate sector is thriving due to strong economic growth and smart financial management. S&P Global Ratings reports that one-third of Indian companies have positive outlooks, the highest in Asia-Pacific. EBITDA (Earnings before interest, tax, depreciation, and amortization) for these companies is expected to grow 10% in 2024, driven by telecoms, airports, commodities, and chemicals.

What are the Factors Driving Corporate Growth?

- 1) Rising cash flows, careful balance sheets, and reduced debt are improving financial health, even with higher spending on capital projects and energy transitions.
- 2) Supportive financial policies and asset sales by companies like Vedanta, Tata Motors, Glenmark, and Reliance Industries are helping reduce debt.
- 3) Credit quality is improving thanks to better industry conditions, stronger earnings, healthier balance sheets, and disciplined finances.

What is the Sector-Specific Trends?

- 1) **Transportation Infrastructure**- Traffic growth and higher tariffs are boosting revenues. Ports gain from more cargo and better operations, while airports see improved credit quality from increased traffic and tariffs.
- 2) **Utilities**- In the utilities sector, rising demand and new capacity are increasing earnings. Despite higher spending on energy transitions, strong earnings are keeping debt under control.
- 3) **Commodities**- The commodities sector is thriving due to favorable prices, lower input costs, and controlled capital expenditure.
- 4) **Telecommunications**- The sector benefits from higher average revenue per user (ARPU), increased tariffs, more subscribers, and moderate capital spending, along with notable debt reduction after the 2023 5G auctions.
- 5) **Automobiles**- After addressing major supply chain problems from 2022, the auto sector's performance and volumes have now stabilized.
- 6) **Chemicals**- The chemicals sector is expected to see strong earnings rebound because input costs are dropping, and product prices are stabilizing.

What are the Risks and Challenges?

- 1) **Policy and Regulatory Risks**-Unexpected changes in regulations or government policies could impact the corporate sector. For ex-recent court rulings on mining taxes might raise production costs for industries such as steel, aluminum, cement, oil, gas, and coal.

Read More- [Corporate Governance in India](#)

- 2) **Financing Conditions**- Changes in financing conditions could affect companies with high debt, particularly in the renewables sector.
- 3) **External Factors**- It's important to keep track of geopolitical tensions, deteriorating global economic conditions, and falling commodity prices.

Financial Inclusion and the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY)

Context- The article highlights the success of PMJDY. Financial inclusion is a key strategy used globally to reduce economic inequality, improve livelihoods, and boost growth. Launched on August 28, 2014, PMJDY is an Indian government initiative designed to bring all unbanked households into the financial system. Using the JAM trinity (Jan Dhan, Aadhaar, and Mobile), PMJDY aimed to cover 7.5 crore unbanked households. Today, over 80% of Indian adults have formal financial accounts, up from about 50% in 2011.

What are the Achievements and Current Status of PMJDY?

- 1) **Expansion of PMJDY Accounts**- Banks have opened about 53 crore PMJDY accounts with total deposits of Rs 2.31 lakh crore. This is a big rise from 14.7 crore accounts and Rs 15,670 crore in deposits in March 2015.

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2) **Public Sector Dominance:** - Public sector banks hold about 78% of all PMJDY accounts. The average balance in these accounts has increased more than four times, reaching Rs 4,352 in August 2024, up from Rs 1,065 in March 2015.

3) **Operational Accounts-** Out of all PMJDY accounts, 81.2% are active. Of these, 55.6% are owned by women, and 66.6% are in rural and semi-urban areas.

4) **Geographical Distribution-** Uttar Pradesh has the most PMJDY accounts with 9.4 crore, followed by Bihar with 6 crores.

Read More- [7 years of PM Jan Dhan Yojana](#)

What is the significance of PMJDY?

1) **Benefits-** It offers benefits such as insurance coverage, overdraft facilities, and has positively influenced saving habits.

2) **Social Implications:** Research shows that states with more PMJDY accounts have seen fewer thefts and reduced alcohol and tobacco use.

3) **Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) System-** In the past decade, the Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) system has transferred Rs 38.49 lakh crore and prevented leakages of Rs 3.48 lakh crore. It has also boosted digitalization and e-commerce.

What steps can be taken to strengthen the ecosystem for Financial Inclusion?

1) **Promoting Private-Sector Involvement-** Partnering with the private sector boosts innovation and expands financial services. There is a need to improve skills through incubation and financial literacy and ensure gender-inclusive financial services for fair access.

2) **Increasing Access to Financial Products-** Expanding access to affordable financial products like micro-insurance and credit is crucial. The new Unified Lending Interface will make lending more efficient, cost-effective, and quicker.

3) **Strengthening Consumer Protection-** To ensure trust in new digital products, there is a need to strengthen consumer protection. Creating regulations that balance consumer safety with innovation is essential.

4) **Designing Customer-Centric Products-** PMJDY account holders often have irregular incomes and different needs compared to regular consumers. Therefore, financial products must be tailored to their specific needs and financial stages.

Unified Lending Interface (ULI) Initiative

Context- Following a successful pilot, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is set to launch the Unified Lending Interface (ULI) nationwide. This platform aims to revolutionize lending for agriculture and MSMEs, like how UPI transformed digital payments.

Credit penetration in India is low: MSME credit is at 14%, retail credit at 11%, and credit cards at 4%.

However, demand is growing, with 66 million new credit customers added in 2021 and 2022, 67% of whom are from rural and semi-urban areas.

What are the Constraints in Credit Availability?

A) **High Risk:** Borrowers often have high-risk profiles.

B) **Insufficient Data:** There is a lack of traditional data for assessing risk.

C) **Lack of Collateral:** Many borrowers do not have adequate assets to pledge.

D) **High Costs:** Service costs are particularly high for rural areas and small-value loans.

What are Key Features of Unified Lending Interface (ULI) Initiative?

- 1) Digital access to information from diverse sources
- 2) Accurate creditworthiness assessment of potential borrowers
- 3) Reduced time for loan approval and disbursement
- 4) Seamless credit delivery without extensive documentation.

What is the significance of the Unified Lending Interface (ULI) Initiative?

- 1) **Streamlined Digital Data Transfer** -This platform will allow for a smooth transfer of digital information from different data sources to lenders, with proper consent.
- 2) **Enhanced Loan Processing** -The ULI will give lenders accurate information on creditworthiness by pulling data from various sources. It will speed up loan approvals and disbursements by reducing paperwork, making the process more efficient for both borrowers and lenders.

Read More- [Key Challenges MSMEs Face in India](#)

- 3) **Building on India's Digital Success** -India has successfully used its digital tools like JAM (Jan Dhan, Aadhaar, and mobile phones) and UPI. The ULI will build on this progress and further strengthen India's digital infrastructure.
- 4) **Enhancing Credit Assessment** -The ULI will bridge credit gaps by providing lenders with a full view of customers' financial and non-financial data. This will enhance digital lending by using additional details like asset ownership, land records, geolocation, and digital footprints for risk assessment.

What should be the way forward?

- 1) **Digital Lending and the Need for Deposit Growth** -The digital lending sector is expected to grow quickly, with digital channels becoming the main way loans are distributed. To fully utilize the ULI, banks must address the current issue where deposit growth is lagging behind lending growth.
- 2) **Regulatory Considerations**- The RBI needs to carefully oversee lending practices by banks and NBFCs. To manage loan growth and mitigate risks, it increased the risk weightings for certain loan categories last year.

Increase women's participation in the workforce

Context: The article discusses the need to increase women's participation in the workforce by addressing their caregiving responsibilities. It calls for a comprehensive policy that supports care services, ensures worker rights, and recognizes the care economy's broader societal impact.

For detailed information on **Care Economy** [read this article here](#)

What is the Current State of Female Labor Force Participation in India?

1. The Female Labor Force Participation Rate (FLFPR) in India was 37% in 2022-23, which is below the global average of 47.8%.
2. Despite an increase from 23.3% in 2017-18, a significant portion (37.5%) of this participation consists of women working as unpaid helpers in household enterprises.

Why is Women's Economic Participation Low?

1. **High Burden of Care:** Women in India shoulder a disproportionately high burden of care within families, including childcare, and caring for the elderly, sick, and disabled.
2. **Time Spent on Unpaid Work:** Women aged 15-64 spend three times more time on unpaid domestic work compared to men.
3. **Lack of Support Systems:** Insufficient childcare and care infrastructure further limit women's ability to engage in paid employment.

How is Childcare Being Addressed?

1. State governments are enhancing childcare services using the Anganwadi network.
2. The 2024-25 budget allocated a 3% increase for the Ministry of Women and Child Development, focusing on integrated childcare and nutrition programs.
3. Community-based crèches are operational in some states through partnerships between government and non-government bodies.
4. These models are being evaluated for their replicability, financial sustainability, and scalability.
5. Beyond childcare, women also provide care across the family's life span. The demand for hired caregivers is growing, especially in urban areas, but there is a lack of standardized employment practices and protections for these workers.

How is the Care Economy Viewed Globally?

1. The **World Economic Forum** highlights the care economy as an essential driver of **economic productivity** globally.
2. The care economy is also seen as a **business opportunity** for organizations to invest in and employ skilled care workers.
3. From a **human rights perspective**, it is crucial for advancing **gender equality** and **disability inclusion**.
4. In India, the care economy is underdeveloped, with significant gaps in **training, skilling, and certification** of care workers, despite increasing demand for caregiving services across families' life courses.

What Should be Done?

1. Creating an ecosystem that meets household care needs while protecting care workers' rights is essential.
2. This includes ensuring safe, quality, and affordable care from well-trained workers. A needs-based assessment of care services and a mapping of care providers can help develop this ecosystem.
3. There is a need for a comprehensive policy that defines the care ecosystem and is supported by multiple ministries.

India's Inflation Targeting Framework

Context- In September 2016, India set a 4% inflation target with a 2% to 6% range, reviewed every five years. The six-member Monetary Policy Committee (MPC), made up of three RBI members and three external experts, oversees this framework. The approach has successfully reduced inflation, minimized CPI volatility, and improved the effectiveness of monetary policy.

What are the arguments for modifying the approach to inflation targeting?

- 1) **Broadening the mandate-**

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A) Critics suggest that the RBI's mandate to ensure price stability and support economic growth needs to be broadened. Some propose giving the growth objective equal weight to price stability, similar to the US Federal Reserve's dual mandate.

B) Others recommend including additional responsibilities, such as fostering the corporate bond market and advancing green finance.

2) **Headline CPI** -Headline inflation is problematic because volatile food prices can skew policy decisions. They recommend that the RBI ignore fluctuations in food price inflation.

3) **Weight in the Inflation Basket**- The current inflation basket gives food and beverages a 45.8% weight, unchanged since 2011-12, despite a near doubling of per capita incomes. As incomes rise, the share spent on food decreases: Bangladesh spends 45%, Vietnam 33%, Brazil 24%, and South Korea 14%.

4) **Inflation Tolerance Band** -The RBI's $\pm 2\%$ tolerance band for inflation is broader than in many emerging markets. This wide band may weaken inflation control and increase expectation volatility.

What are the arguments against modifying the approach to inflation targeting?

1) **Risks of Overloading the Central Bank** -Assigning too many responsibilities to the central bank can distract from its primary role of maintaining price stability, complicate interest rate policy, destabilize inflation expectations, and reduce its accountability.

2) **Impact of Food-Price Inflation on Core Inflation**- Food-price inflation can affect core inflation as producers raise prices on other goods. The central bank shouldn't react to every food price change, but consistently ignoring deviations from the target can have negative effects.

3) **Suitability of India's 4% Inflation Target**- India's 4% inflation target is higher than in other emerging countries but fits its fast-growing economy. Raising it to 6% or 8% could harm investment confidence, raise inflation expectations, and damage the RBI's credibility.

4) **Challenges of a Narrower Inflation Tolerance Band** -Food prices are a major and volatile part of Indian inflation, so a narrower tolerance band isn't practical. During global economic uncertainty, such a band could cause frequent interest rate changes, making investments unpredictable and slowing growth.

Read More- [Inflation in India- Reasons and Solutions](#)

What should be the way forward?

1) **Optimizing Food Weight** -Reducing the food weight in India's inflation basket to 40%, and potentially to 30% over the next decade as incomes increase, would improve alignment with the inflation target and address concerns about food price changes.

2) **Clear Inflation Target**- India should maintain a clear anchor such as an inflation target, which has a proven track record of success. Avoiding radical changes, like broadening the RBI's mandate or adopting a more discretionary approach, will help ensure stability and effectiveness.

Women-Led Development and Budget Allocations

Context- This year's Budget emphasizes women-led development with increased funding for women-focused programs. The Gender Budget Statement (GBS) for 2024-25 has reached a record 1% of GDP, exceeding ₹3 lakh crore. Previously averaging around 5% of the total budget, allocations for pro-women schemes have now risen to about 6.8% of total budget.

What are the Reasons for Increased Allocations?

A) **Introduction of Part 'C' in GBS**- This new section reports on schemes where less than 30% of the budget is allocated to women. For ex- the PM Kisan scheme, with ₹15,000 crore allocated (25% of its total), is now

included in Part C.

B) Increase in Part A Allocations- Part A of the GBS, which includes schemes with 100% women-specific funding, saw a major increase. Previously, Part A accounted for 15-17% of total allocations until BE 2022-23. From BE 2023-24, it increased to nearly 40%, largely due to the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) now being fully included in Part A.

What are the Issues with Reporting in the Gender Budget Statement (GBS)?

1) **Over-Reporting-** Over-reporting is seen in programs like the PM Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP), which helps entrepreneurs start non-farm micro businesses. The GBS lists ₹920 crore for PMEGP, showing 40% of its total budget, but does not clarify this allocation.
2) **Under-Reporting-** It affects the visibility of funds dedicated to women's needs. For ex-

A) The full budget for the National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM) is now correctly listed in Part A of the GBS, showing that all its funds are for women and girls. Before, only half of the NRLM budget was reported in Part B.

B) The GBS shows more funding for the Ministry of Electronics & IT but misses reporting on pro-women allocations in schemes like PM Vishwakarma, SVANidhi, and Stand-Up India.

A detailed article on Budget 2024-25 can be [read here](#).

What steps can be taken to address these issues?

1) **Improving the Gender Budget Statement-** To reduce inaccuracies, the GBS should include clear explanations for each entry. This will ensure accurate accounting, aid in gender audits, and enhance outcomes for women in government programs.

2) **Effective Reporting and Spending-** Detailed reporting should not only show higher allocations for women's development but also ensure that funds are spent on well-designed programs that meet women's needs.

Need to raise India's tax-to-GDP ratio

Context: The article discusses the need to raise India's tax-to-GDP ratio for economic growth. It highlights challenges in taxing agricultural income and personal income, and the need to reform property taxes and land revenue for sustainable revenue generation.

What is the Importance of Raising the Tax-to-GDP Ratio?

1. Raising the tax-to-GDP ratio is crucial for India to achieve its **economic growth and developmental goals**.
2. A higher tax-to-GDP ratio allows the government to **increase spending** on infrastructure, education, and healthcare, driving overall development.
3. Expanding the tax base through reforms in personal income tax and agricultural income taxation can **enhance fiscal sustainability**.
4. Improved property taxation, such as regular updates to property tax rates, can also contribute to a higher tax-to-GDP ratio, **providing more resources for public services**.

What are the Challenges of Raising the Tax-to-GDP Ratio?

A. Challenges in Taxing Agricultural Income

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- 1. Constitutional Assignment:** Taxation of agricultural income is assigned to state governments, many of which have been reluctant to impose these taxes.
- 2. Small Farm Sizes:** The average size of farms and incomes in agriculture are small, leading to arguments that taxing them is not worth the fiscal and compliance costs.
- 3. Tax Complexity:** Agriculture is considered a difficult sector to tax due to the varied income sources and small returns for administrative efforts.

B. Challenges in Reforming Personal Income Tax

- 1. High Exemption Threshold:** The exemption threshold has historically been high, with the effective threshold ranging between 200% and 300% of per capita income.
- 2. Limited Taxpayer Base:** Only 1-2% of citizens are taxpayers, leading to perceptions of an unfair tax burden on a small segment of the population.

C. Challenges in Reforming Property Tax

- 1. Static Rates:** Property tax and stamp duty rates are often fixed and not regularly updated, failing to reflect changes in property values.
- 2. Public Resistance:** Increases in property tax are often resisted due to perceptions of inadequate civic services.
- 3. Land Revenue:** Few states collect significant revenue through land taxes, with less than 2% of their own tax revenue in many cases.

What Should be Done to Raise the Tax-to-GDP Ratio?

- 1. Tax Agricultural Income Above a Threshold:** Implement taxation on agricultural incomes that exceed the exemption threshold, aligning them with other tax-paying sectors. This approach respects the small size of most agricultural holdings while targeting wealthier farmers to broaden the tax base.
- 2. Adjust Personal Income Tax Exemptions:** Maintain the current exemption thresholds without increases to capture more taxpayers as per capita income grows. For example, the effective exemption threshold was 236% of per capita income in 2023-24, indicating a low proportion of taxable individuals.
- 3. Reform Property Taxes:** Regularly update property tax rates and circle rates for stamp duties to reflect actual market values and inflation, ensuring revenue growth aligns with economic realities.
- 4. Digitize Land Records:** Enhance the accuracy and efficiency of property tax collection by digitizing land records, making it easier to identify and tax all potential property owners.

"Right to Disconnect" law Introduced in Australia

Context: The article discusses Australia's new law allowing employees to ignore work communication after hours, protecting their personal time. While some argue this could harm productivity, the law signals the importance of respecting employees' private time to maintain well-being.

What is the "Right to Disconnect" Law in Australia?

1. Australia has enacted a law allowing employees to ignore work-related communication after work hours.
2. This law, known as the "Right to Disconnect," protects employees' personal time.

3. The law makes exceptions for cases where staying unconnected is unreasonable, but the main goal is clear: employees should not be disturbed after their workday ends.

What are the Arguments Related to this Law?

A. Arguments for the Law

- 1. Protection of Personal Time:** The law allows employees to ignore work-related communication after hours, protecting their personal time and reducing stress.
- 2. Pandemic Impact:** Work-from-home blurred boundaries between work and life; this law helps restore that balance.
- 3. Global Trend:** More than a dozen countries in Europe and South America have similar laws, indicating global recognition of the need for such protections. However, in places like India, such regulations are viewed as potentially harmful to productivity.
- 4. Health and Well-being:** Continuous work pressure can harm employees' health and relationships, making this law necessary for their well-being.

B. Arguments Against the Law

- 1. Impact on Productivity:** Critics argue that such laws may reduce productivity, particularly in countries like India where high productivity is essential.
- 2. Free Market Concerns:** It is believed that market forces should naturally regulate work demands without government interference.
- 3. Challenges for Startups:** Startups often require long hours; such laws could hinder their growth by limiting flexibility.

Mismatch between India's GDP growth and employment growth

Context: The article discusses India's economic growth and the mismatch between GDP growth and employment growth. It suggests policies to encourage labor-intensive sectors by adjusting the wage-rental ratio and addressing labor market rigidities to improve employment opportunities.

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

What is the current state of India's economic growth and employment?

1. India's GDP grew by 6.5-7% annually between 2011-12 and 2022-23, but employment only increased by 1.9% per year.
2. Unemployment rose from around 10 million in 2011-12 to over 19 million in 2022-23.
3. Low wages persist, with regular employees earning about ₹1,000 per month and casual laborers ₹4,500.
4. Labor-intensive sectors, like construction and textiles, employ around 240 million people.

How Can We Make Economic Growth More Labor-Intensive?

- 1. Adjust Wage-Rental Ratio:** Lowering this ratio can make labor-intensive sectors like construction and textiles more profitable, encouraging investment. For example, these sectors already employ around 240 million people.

- 2. Employment-Linked Incentives:** Implement a robust employment-linked incentive (ELI) scheme, like the Production-Linked Incentive (PLI), to promote job creation in labor-intensive sectors.
- 3. Address Labor Market Rigidities:** Simplify labor laws and reduce the compliance burden, which currently hinders employment growth, by drawing on comparative evidence from different states.
4. Adjusting exchange rates to make imports more expensive and exports cheaper, though this could lead to accusations of currency manipulation.

What are the Challenges with Wages and Capital Costs?

- 1. Low Wage Levels:** The wages in India are extremely low, with regular employees earning about ₹1,000 monthly, casual laborers earning ₹4,500 monthly, and self-employed individuals making around ₹7,000 monthly in 2022-23. These figures highlight the overall depressed wage scenario across various employment forms.
- 2. Controlled Capital Costs:** Capital costs are indirectly controlled by the government's dominant borrowing and lending practices. For instance, the yield on 10-year government securities has remained stable at 7-7.5%, and the real interest cost of capital is around 2%, which is relatively low and sometimes negative, not reflecting the true scarcity of capital

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 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.

India's Defence Procurement Challenges

Context- The article highlights that international arms procurement decisions are often influenced more by foreign policy and strategic factors than by technology or cost. The AUKUS Alliance (Australia, UK, US) highlights this, as it focuses on providing Australia with nuclear submarine technology to bolster defence against potential Chinese aggression.

What challenges does India face in defence procurement?

1) Impact of Foreign Policy-

A) **Choice of Rafale over Gripen** -India chose the French Rafale over the Swedish Gripen because of France's diplomatic influence, nuclear capabilities, and technological edge, even though the Gripen offered superior combat effectiveness, price, and logistics.

B) **Project 75-India (Submarine Procurement)**- The Indian Navy has struggled for a decade to finalize the purchase of six AIP submarines. German shipbuilder HDW is a strong contender, but Germany's low-key diplomatic approach to arms sales has complicated the decision.

2) **Strategic Dilemma**-India faces a dilemma in balancing its options between supporting Ukraine, backed by NATO and Western democracies, and Russia, supported by China and other less democratic countries. Supporting Russia could indirectly benefit China's military, making India's decision complex.

What are the steps taken by India to push for Self-Reliance?

1) **Innovations for Defence Excellence - Defence Innovation Organisation (iDEX-DIO)**-This supports startups and small businesses in the defense sector. iDEX-DIO has engaged over 400 startups and cleared procurement for 37 items worth around ₹2,000 crore.

2) **Initiatives by DRDO**- DRDO(Defence Research & Development Organisation) is leading military development in platforms, weapon systems, and AI. Key achievements include the Dhanush artillery gun, Tejas fighter jet, and Akash missile system.

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

3) **Indigenization Efforts and Import Reduction** - The Ministry of Defence has banned imports of certain items, listed over 26,000 for indigenization on the SRIJAN portal, and successfully produced 7,031 items locally. Defense imports have decreased from 46% to 36.7% since 2018-19, with ongoing efforts towards self-sufficiency.

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

Small Modular Reactors (SMRs): Potential and Challenges

Context-The Indian government is planning to collaborate with the private sector to study and test Small Modular Reactors (SMRs). This effort is important as nuclear energy helps bridge the gap between fossil fuels and renewable energy technologies.

Nuclear power offers several benefits: it provides high, reliable energy output, adds to a diverse energy mix, and can help cover gaps in renewable energy sources. However, nuclear power also has challenges: high costs for building safe reactors, difficulties in managing spent fuel, and frequent delays and budget overruns in projects.

What is SMR Technology?

1) **Description-**SMRs are compact versions of conventional nuclear reactors, with power outputs ranging from 10 MWe to 300 MWe.

2) Key features of SMRs: -

- A) Higher energy content of nuclear fuel
- B) Modular design for easier assembly and scalability
- C) Smaller operational surface area
- D) Potentially lower capital costs

A detailed article on **Small Modular Reactors (SMRs)** can be [read here](#).

What are the challenges in its adoption of Small Modular Reactors?

- 1) **Nuclear Power Privatisation** -Privatising nuclear power will increase the need for strict safeguards to prevent the misuse of radioactive materials.
- 2) **Proliferation concerns** -First-generation Small Modular Reactors (SMRs) will use low-enriched uranium and be assembled on-site. They are designed to manage waste with current technologies and produce cost-effective power. However, frequent refueling and plutonium production could raise proliferation concerns.
- 3) **Cost Implications for Future SMRs** -The IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency) suggests 'safeguardable' reactor designs, but these might raise capital costs. Future SMRs could need more enriched uranium or advanced systems, increasing operational costs.
- 4) **High Power Rates**- The fixed costs and safety requirements of nuclear reactors mean SMR power rates may not be lower.

Pumped Storage Projects

Context-The Union Budget 2024-25 introduced a policy to boost pumped storage projects to help integrate renewable energy into the power grid. India currently has 3.3GW of pumped storage, with key sites at Nagarjunasagar, Kadana, Kadamparai, Panchet, and Bhira.

What are types of Pumped Storage Projects?

Pump storage comes in two types: on-river and off-river.

- A) On-river projects are hydroelectric plants supplied by rivers.
- B) Off-river projects use two reservoirs at different levels. Water is pumped up from the lower to the upper reservoir when there is surplus power and flows down to generate power when needed.

What is the importance of pumped storage projects?

1) **Solution for Renewable Power Variability** -To tackle the variability and intermittency of renewable power from sources like solar and wind, pumped storage using water has emerged as a globally preferred solution. This method functions like a large natural battery, storing and releasing energy by moving water between reservoirs.

2) **Renewable Energy Goal** -India plans to reach 500GW of non-fossil fuel energy by 2030. To achieve its renewable energy targets, India must greatly increase its pumped storage capacity.

3) **Renewable Power and Stabilizing Supply**- They are important for India's policy of maximizing renewable power use and minimizing curtailment. By storing excess power and releasing it when needed, they provide the flexibility required to stabilize the power supply.

Read More- [Investing in pumped-storage hydropower \(PSH\) helps India's transition to clean energy](#)

How does pumped storage at Kadamparai operate?

1) **Plant Operations and Storage** - The Kadamparai plant in Tamil Nadu has four 100 MW units and uses two reservoirs. Water flows from the upper reservoir to the lower one to generate power, and when there's excess power, it's used to pump water back up for storage. The upper reservoir contains about 1 TMC feet of water, with minor leaks replenished by rainfall.

2) **Solar Energy Use for Pumping**-During peak solar times, usually at noon, excess power is used to pump water. Each unit needs 20% more power to pump water than it generates, but this extra power comes from solar energy, so no fuel is used.

3) **Capacity** -The plant takes about 90 minutes to switch from pumping water to generating power and another 30 minutes to start production. It can produce 400 MW for 3-4 hours during peak evening hours and may operate at a lower capacity late at night.

India's transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy- challenges and solutions

Context: The article discusses India's transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy, highlighting the need for substantial changes in the electricity and financial sectors to meet net zero targets by 2070. It emphasizes market-based approaches and financial reforms for effective climate action.

For detailed information on **Energy Transition in India** read [Article 1](#), [Article 2](#)

What is the current state of renewable energy in India?

1. **Current Share:** Renewable energy (RE) constitutes about 20% of India's electricity generation.
2. **Growth Rate:** The annual increase in RE's share is only 0.3%, far below the needed 3% to meet future targets.
3. **Private Sector Focus:** Private investments are shifting from fossil fuels to RE, especially for commercial and industrial consumers.

How significant is the electricity sector?

1. The electricity sector is immensely significant in India's transition to renewable energy.
2. Projects "under implementation" in the CMIE database show that the total value of private non-electricity projects is similar to that of electricity generation projects alone.
3. To achieve net zero by 2070, India must significantly decarbonize by 2050, with electricity playing a crucial

role.

4. The sector needs to support electric vehicles and GDP growth.

What challenges are being faced by the electricity sector?

1. Government Over-reliance: There's a belief that the government will build all necessary infrastructure in a coal-intensive way. Despite NTPC's large thermal plant investments, public finance and management are inadequate to meet the massive electricity demand. Climate change pressures will further increase costs.

2. Insufficient Private Sector Contribution: There's a misconception that the private sector is building enough renewable energy (RE). The private sector mainly sells electricity to commercial and industrial buyers, avoiding government entities. This limits RE growth and highlights the need for a significant overhaul in grid infrastructure.

3. Complacency and Historical Methods: There's a reliance on past methods of managing the energy sector, which is becoming increasingly unsustainable. Although officials have managed to keep things working, mounting stress from various sources and slower economic growth make this approach less viable.

What are the solutions?

1. Market-Driven Electricity System: Shift from centrally planned to a price-based system to encourage private investment in generation, storage, and distribution. For instance, afternoon low prices can incentivize storage companies to charge batteries.

2. Increase Renewable Energy (RE) Share: Aim to grow RE's share by 3 percentage points annually, significantly higher than the current 0.3%.

3. Adapt the Grid: Invest heavily in reshaping transmission and distribution for RE flexibility, addressing the slow scale of RE commissioning.

4. Engage Private Sector: Encourage private investments in RE targeting commercial and industrial sectors due to their avoidance of government entities.

5. Reform Financial Sector: Develop a market-based financial system to attract global capital for energy projects, learning from the past infrastructure investment wave (1996-2011) that failed due to forced mobilization.

Solutions to Address Power Sector Concerns

Context: The article discusses India's clean energy transition, highlighting achievements in electrification and renewable energy growth. It addresses challenges in decarbonizing the power system, rising electricity demand, and climate impacts. It suggests increasing renewable energy targets, improving grid connectivity, and adopting smart metering.

For detailed information on **India's transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy** [read this article here](#)

What Key Milestones Has India Achieved in the Last Decade?

1. India achieved near-universal electrification through the Saubhagya scheme, with 97% households electrified by 2020.

2. Renewable energy capacity increased five-fold, making India the fourth-largest globally.

3. Power distribution companies' losses dropped by 40% to 15% in 2022-23.

What Challenges Does India Face in Decarbonizing its Power System?

- 1. Rising Electricity Demand:** Annual demand has been growing by 7-9% since the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 2. Peak Demand Increase:** Peak demand is rising faster than overall demand.
- 3. Climate Impact:** Weather extremes, induced by climate change, exacerbate challenges.
- 4. Renewable Energy Share:** Despite efforts, renewables constitute just 13% of the power generation mix.
- 5. Coal Dependency:** Coal generated 80% of power during non-solar hours in FY24, but 40 GW of coal capacity was often unavailable due to maintenance issues.
- 6. Power Outages:** Unplanned surges and inadequate network capacity cause power outages.

What are the Solutions to Address Power Sector Concerns?

- 1. Raising Renewable Energy Targets:** India should aim for over 500 GW of renewable energy and storage by 2030. Currently, renewables make up just 13% of India's power generation mix. Increasing renewables and storage can support peak demand and are cost-competitive.
- 2. Deploying Diverse Clean Energy Resources:** As of March, India's renewable capacity stood at 144 GW, with another 128 GW in the pipeline. Tapping renewable potential in more states and ensuring faster grid connectivity is crucial. Diversifying from solar to other clean technologies helps meet evolving demand.
- 3. Improving Energy Availability:** In FY23, only 6.3% of India's power was procured through power exchanges. Low liquidity leads to price volatility. Innovations in bid designs and long-term contracts attract renewable energy developers.
- 4. Maintaining Coal Fleet Effectively:** Coal generated 80% of power during non-solar hours in FY24. However, 40 GW of coal capacity was unavailable 60% of the time due to maintenance issues. Revising norms for better maintenance is essential.
- 5. Fast-Tracking Digitalization:** Over 11 million smart meters have been installed, with half in Bihar and Assam. Smart meters help discoms forecast demand, plan networks, and integrate renewables. The target is 250 million smart meters. Ensuring consumer privacy and system security is crucial.

Eastern India: A Strategic Pivot for National Development

Context- The 2024 Budget focuses on Eastern India for national development through the Purvodaya initiative. This plan aims to use the region's resources to boost economic growth by addressing disparities and promoting development in states like Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, and West Bengal.

What is Purvodaya initiative, outlined in the 2024 Budget?

- A) Human Resource Development:** Enhancing education and skill-building to better equip the workforce.
- B) Infrastructure Enhancement:** Upgrading infrastructure to support economic activities and improve connectivity.
- C) Economic Opportunities:** Creating jobs and fostering industrial and agricultural development to leverage the region's natural resources and strategic location.
- D) Significance of Initiative-** This regional revival aims to balance inclusive growth with competitive advantage. If done effectively, it could transform the region and boost India's global prominence.

Read More- [Critical Mineral Mission of India- Significance and Challenges](#)

What is the significance of Eastern India?

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- 1) **Mineral Wealth**- Eastern India contains most of the country's natural resources, including 80% of India's iron ore, all of its coking coal, and large reserves of chromite, bauxite, and dolomite.
- 2) **Port Infrastructure**- Major ports such as Paradip, Haldia, Vizag, and Kolkata account for over 30% of India's major port capacity.
- 3) **Connectivity**-The region has three major national waterways and strong road and rail networks, boosting its strategic trade advantages.

What are the challenges faced by Eastern Indian States?

- 1) **Economic Contribution** -In 2022-23, Eastern states contributed only 17.26% to India's GDP and showed slower progress than other regions. With about 350 million people (27% of the country's population), these states face major economic challenges and are not fully utilizing their resources.
- 2) **Stagnant Growth**- In the past 11 years, GDP per capita in these states has barely increased, with growth rates below the national average, except for Odisha and Andhra Pradesh, which grew by 5.5% and 6%, respectively.
- 3) **Income Comparisons**- Bihar has one of the lowest per capita incomes in India, comparable to Somalia and Sudan, while Japan, with a similar population size, has a per capita income of about \$33,000. West Bengal's GDP per capita is around \$967, much lower than Vietnam's \$4,623.

What should be the way forward?

- 1) **Need for Targeted Development** -The stagnation in Eastern India over the past decade shows a clear need for focused development efforts. Strategies should be customized to address the specific economic gaps and unique challenges facing the region.
- 2) **Focus on the Northeast**- The Northeast, contributing about 2.9% to India's GDP, faces challenges like isolation and socio-political issues that hinder development. However, its natural resources, cultural heritage, and strategic location near Southeast Asia offer significant growth opportunities that can help India reach its goal of becoming a developed economy by 2047.
- 3) **Social Progress**- Slow economic growth is tied to lower social progress, so improving education and healthcare is essential for balanced development.

The Multifaceted Challenge of Energy Transition

Context - The article notes that the energy transition is often seen as switching to greener sources, but it's much more complex.

What are the challenges with energy transition?

- 1) **Securing and Integrating Green Energy**- Securing and integrating green energy supplies into current systems is a complex and challenging process.
- 2) **Managing Demand**- Achieving net-zero emissions remains unfeasible if demand continues to outpace the growth of green energy supplies. The minor drop in fossil fuel use, from 78.5% in 2004 to 76.5% in 2023, highlights this ongoing challenge.
- 3) **Bloomberg Report**- High costs and difficulties for both buyers and sellers of alternative energy show that rapidly moving away from fossil fuels is a major challenge.
- 4) **International Monetary Fund (IMF) Report**- The report noted that new demands from AI data centers and crypto mining are worsening energy supply problems and hindering net-zero emissions goals.
- 5) **Neglecting Overconsumption** - The focus on green energy consumption often overlooks the core issue of

overconsumption. Current approaches aim to maintain existing consumption levels with greener alternatives, rather than encouraging changes in consumption habits and lifestyles.

For ex- Electric vehicles need more minerals than traditional cars, which could boost energy use in mining and processing.

6) **Lack of Emphasis on Individual and Collective Action**- Western climate policies often prioritize technological solutions over individual and collective action, neglecting the significant impact that changes in personal behavior.

What are the steps taken by the Indian government?

The Indian government's recent budget announcements include:

- A) Promotion of nuclear energy.
- B) Enhancement of thermal power plant efficiency.
- C) Installation of rooftop solar panels in over 10 million households.
- D) Setting emission targets for the industrial sector.
- E) Development of pumped storage units to integrate more renewable energy and reduce dependence on imported critical minerals for battery storage.

Read More- [Pumped Storage Projects](#)

What should be the way forward?

1) **Incentivizing Sustainable Energy Sources:** Policies should promote energy sources that facilitate a low-carbon future without hindering development.

2) **Individual Contributions:** Small individual actions and awareness can significantly reduce emissions, including:

- A) Adjusting air conditioner temperatures.
- B) Using public transportation more.
- C) Incorporating plant-based foods into diets.
- D) Minimizing water wastage and maintaining cleanliness in local surroundings.

3) **Public Transport** - Public transportation is key to reducing energy consumption and emissions. While over 80% of urban residents in developed countries have easy access to public transport, only 37% do in India. India should invest in integrated, efficient, and accessible public transport systems to reduce energy intensity and achieve energy self-sufficiency.

4) **Demand Management and Resource Efficiency** - Demand-side policies should focus on reducing excessive resource use, like the high water and energy consumption of data centers. For ex-technologies such as AI and crypto mining use a lot of resources and should be taxed according to their consumption to promote responsible use.

Conclusion- India can set a strong example by creating policies that balance energy supply and demand, aligning with its developmental goals. By securing energy supplies and managing consumption, India can lead with strategies rooted in its values.

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

Source-LiveMint

What should be the way forward?

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- 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.
- 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.

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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.

Topic- Issues related to Direct and Indirect Farm Subsidies and Minimum Support Prices; Public Distribution System - Objectives, Functioning, Limitations, Revamping; Issues of Buffer Stocks and Food Security; Technology Missions; Economics of Animal-Rearing

Modern Poultry Farming

Context- The article examines the Contract Farming Model in India's poultry industry, where IB Group/ABIS Exports plays a key role by supplying essential inputs such as chicks, feed, and technical support. This model features a payment system based on growing charges (GC), which measures the efficiency and performance of poultry production.

This approach highlights the ongoing transformation in India's poultry sector, showcasing its shift towards greater commercialization and integration, and establishing it as one of the most organized segments in the agricultural industry.

What is the difference between Environmentally Controlled and Open poultry farming?

EC houses have higher initial costs but provide better control over bird health and faster growth. In contrast, open houses have lower setup costs but face issues like higher mortality rates and slower growth, though they are still a practical choice for some farmers.

What is the significance of India's Broiler Industry?

1) **Transformation in Poultry Farming** -Broiler integration companies have turned poultry farming from small-scale, free-range methods into a large-scale commercial industry. About 40% of the 30,000 farmers working with IB Group now use environmentally controlled (EC) houses for their operations.

Read More- [Horticulture in India](#)

2) **Vertical Integration** -The broiler industry is one of India's most organized agricultural sectors, managing the entire supply chain from breeding to sale. Unlike dairies, which only buy milk from farmers without supplying cows, poultry integrators control every stage of production.

3) **Advanced Hatchery and Feed Operations** -IB/ABIS Exports runs 10 hatcheries across India, processing over 65 crore eggs each year with advanced European technology. Chicks are delivered to farms within 12-15 hours. The company also operates eight feed plants and the largest soybean processing unit in Madhya Pradesh, providing key protein ingredients for poultry feed. Vaccines are administered to the eggs using specialized 'In-Ovo' machines before hatching.

4) **Poultry Breeding and Genetics**- Companies like Suguna, IB/ABIS, and Venkateshwara Hatcheries manage parent and grandparent farms for egg production, using GP chicks from Aviagen's farm in Tamil Nadu. Indian broiler chickens are mostly foreign breeds like Ross, Hubbard, and Cobb, with Suguna also offering its own breed, 'Sunbro.'

Way ahead- The industry needs to move towards branded and packaged poultry products to improve market presence and consumer acceptance. This shift will require substantial efforts to change consumer behavior, like the changes seen in the dairy industry with milk and curd

Topic- Food Processing and Related Industries in India- Scope' and Significance, Location, Upstream and Downstream Requirements, Supply Chain Management.

Investing in Nutritious Food Value Chains

Context- The Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN), a Swiss foundation, has released a report titled "The Case for Investment in Nutritious Foods Value Chains: An Opportunity for Gender Impact." The FAO notes that globally, women make up 38% of agri-food workers, with 66% in sub-Saharan Africa and 71% in South Asia, including India. GAIN's report focuses on six food value chains from a gender perspective: cashew nuts and poultry in Sub-Saharan Africa, aquaculture and quinoa in Latin America, and tomatoes and dairy in South Asia. In Africa, the world's largest cashew producer, only 10% of cashew processing is local, with women mainly handling shelling and sorting manually.

What difficulties do women encounter in the field of agriculture?

- 1) Limited access to key assets, resources, and services, including land, inputs, finance, extension services, and technology.
- 2) Discriminatory social norms and legal frameworks.
- 3) Restricted financial independence.
- 4) Vulnerability to risky employment conditions and gender-based violence.

What is the 2X Criteria?

Updated in June 2024, the '2X Criteria' is a standardized framework for investing with a focus on gender equality. It sets the global standard for evaluating and structuring investments that support women by offering leadership roles, quality jobs, financial services, business support, and products that boost their economic participation and access.

Read More- [Zero-food children](#)

What is the significance of making investment in Nutrition?

- 1) **Nutritious Food Systems-** Investing in nutritious food systems strengthens food value chains and boosts business resilience. It also improves supplier productivity and workforce loyalty by attracting and retaining women, which enhances diversity at all levels in agribusinesses.
- 2) **Improving Women's Access to Resources** - The FAO reports that better access to resources for women can increase farm yields by 20 to 30 percent. This boosts women's economic empowerment, improves global food security, and leads to better household and child nutrition.
- 3) **Closing Gender Gaps in Agriculture** - Fixing gender gaps in farm productivity and wages could boost global GDP by 1 percent, or nearly \$1 trillion, according to last year's Status of Women in Agri-Food Systems report.

Topic- Developments and their Applications and Effects in Everyday Life.Achievements of Indians in Science & Technology; Indigenization of Technology and Developing New Technology.

Rashtriya Vigyan Puraskar (RVP)

Context: The article discusses the Rashtriya Vigyan Puraskar (RVP), a new set of awards replacing the Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar awards. It emphasizes the need for better funding and support for scientists in India, rather than just offering them awards.

What is the Rashtriya Vigyan Puraskar (RVP)?

1. The Rashtriya Vigyan Puraskar (RVP) is a new set of awards introduced by the Indian government to honor scientists.
2. It replaces the **Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar (SSB)** awards, which were previously given to scientists under 45.
3. The RVP includes multiple categories: **Vigyan Yuva-SSB, Vigyan Shri, Vigyan Ratna, and Vigyan Team awards.**
4. The Vigyan Yuva-SSB is for young scientists under 45, while Vigyan Shri and Vigyan Ratna are for those over 45 with distinguished careers.
5. The Vigyan Team award recognizes groups of scientists with exceptional contributions, like the Chandrayaan-3 team.
6. The number of awards is capped at 56, though this year fewer awards were given.
7. The RVP awards aim to consolidate and elevate the prestige of national scientific awards in India.

For detailed information on **Rashtriya Vigyan Puraskar** [read this article here](#)

What are the challenges faced by scientists in India?

1. **Limited Funding:** Many scientists in India operate with minimal financial resources, making it difficult to pursue advanced research.
2. **Substandard Equipment:** Scientists often work with outdated or inadequate equipment, which hampers their ability to conduct cutting-edge research.
3. **Discouraging Research Environment:** The environment for scientific research can be unmotivating, affecting productivity and innovation.
4. **Lack of International Recognition:** Indian scientists rarely win prestigious awards like the Nobel Prize, despite their contributions. This has been a concern for many governments.
5. **Overemphasis on Awards:** The government has focused on awards like the Rashtriya Vigyan Puraskar, but this does not address the root issues such as funding and infrastructure.
6. **Institutional Dominance:** Awardees are predominantly from elite, centrally funded institutions, highlighting the gap between these and other research bodies.

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

High-Quality Data for Safe and Equitable AI Development

Context- The article emphasizes the need for high-quality data, the challenges in acquiring it, and the importance of digitizing cultural heritage.

Data is fundamental to AI development because more data improves AI performance, especially for LLMs (Large Language Models). Larger volumes and diversity of human-generated text enhance LLM capabilities. Data, along with computing power and algorithmic innovations, is a critical driver of AI progress.

What are the Challenges in Data Acquisition?

- 1) **Insufficient Digital Content** -Humans do not produce enough digital content to meet the growing demands of AI models, and current training datasets are already enormous—such as Meta's LLaMA 3, which uses 15 trillion tokens.
- 2) **Data Contamination**-There are concerns about public data contamination by LLMs that could amplify biases and reduce diversity.

Read More- [India's Digital Personal Data Protection Act](#)

- 3) **Ethical Concerns**-It include the use of pirated content, unclear principles in data collection, training on a mix of licensed and publicly available data, and biases due to overrepresentation of English-language and contemporary content.
- 3) **LLM Access to Diverse and Historical Data** -Current LLMs lack access to primary sources, diverse languages, and archival documents. Historical texts are underrepresented, and there is a lot of untapped data in cultural heritage, like Italy's State Archives.

What is the significance of digitizing cultural heritage?

- A) Enrich AI's understanding of humanity's cultural wealth.
- B) Improve accessibility to world knowledge and foster global innovation.
- C) Revolutionize historical understanding.
- D) Safeguard cultural heritage from negligence, war, and climate change.
- E) Provide economic benefits by enabling smaller companies and startups to develop AI applications.

What should be the Way Forward?

- A) Balance regulation with policies promoting high-quality data as a public good.
- B) Prioritize digitization of cultural heritage and diverse languages.
- C) Recognize the cultural, economic, and technological benefits of promoting low-resource languages.
- D) Accelerate the digital transition while preserving and utilizing world cultural heritage.

Extended Stay of Astronauts at the International Space Station

Context- Astronauts Sunita Williams and Butch Wilmore are stuck on the International Space Station (ISS) longer than expected because of problems with their Boeing Starliner spacecraft. NASA now says they might stay in space until February 2025, much longer than their original one-week plan. Although this situation is unusual, there is no immediate danger, as the ISS can comfortably house them for the next six months.

If Starliner's issues aren't fixed soon, they may have to wait until February 2025 to return. A SpaceX mission scheduled for September 2024 could bring them back, but this would mean reducing the returning crew from four to two astronauts.

What are the issues faced by Boeing Starliner?

The Boeing Starliner spacecraft faced multiple issues

- A) A helium leak was discovered in the propulsion system before launch, and two more leaks happened during the trip to the ISS.
- B) After docking, more issues arose, leading to safety concerns about the return journey. Ground engineers are still working to fix these problems.

What is the International Space Station (ISS)?

- 1) **Description**-The ISS orbits Earth about 400 km above the surface and has been continuously inhabited since November 2000. It is managed by space agencies from the United States, Russia, Japan, Canada, and Europe. While it usually hosts seven astronauts, it can hold more if needed.
- 2) **Size and Facilities** -The ISS is larger than a typical six-bedroom apartment, equipped with six sleeping quarters, two bathrooms, and a gym. It can also accommodate up to 8 spacecraft docking at the same time.
- 3) **ISS Operations and Logistics** - Regular cargo missions supply the ISS with essentials and handle maintenance. For instance, Northrop Grumman's Cygnus spacecraft recently delivered over 3,700 kg of supplies and removed waste, which burns when re-entering Earth. However, these cargo spacecrafts cannot transport humans as they lack specialized capsules.

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

What are the Health Implications of Extended Space Stays?

- a) Accelerated bone density and muscle quality deterioration.
- b) Alterations in brain structure due to changes in brain fluids.
- c) Increased risk of heart disease
- d) Vision-related issues
- e) Higher cancer risk due to DNA damage from radiation exposure

Way ahead-This situation highlights the importance of reliable spacecraft for crew transport and the need for contingency planning in space missions.

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.

Emerging field of synthetic biology

Context: The article discusses synthetic biology, which uses genetic engineering to create new biological systems. It impacts industries like fashion, food, and mining by offering innovative solutions. The field relies on data from biodiverse countries and must address equity, transparency, and stakeholder engagement.

For detailed information on **National policy needed for synthetic biology** [read this article here](#)

What is Synthetic Biology?

Synthetic biology is a new field that combines genetic engineering and bio-computing to create biological systems designed for specific purposes. It is projected to contribute nearly \$30 trillion to global output by the end of the decade.

How is Synthetic Biology Applied in Different Industries?

- 1. Fashion:** Brands like Hermes use mycelium to make materials that can replace leather. Other companies engineer yeast to produce stronger, more durable fabrics.
- 2. Food Production:** Techniques are being developed to produce artificial meat and reduce the reliance on traditional animal farming.
- 3. Agriculture:** Engineered microbes can convert nitrogen from the air, reducing the need for artificial

fertilizers.

4. Mining: Genetically engineered microorganisms are used to extract metals like copper and gold more cleanly and efficiently than traditional methods.

What are Challenges and Ethical Considerations?

1. Data access is critical for developing new biological systems. Most of this data comes from 'mega-diverse' countries, which have unique biodiversity but have experienced exploitation.
2. There is a concern that advanced nations and corporations might disproportionately benefit from synthetic biology, potentially harming vulnerable populations.
3. The **Convention on Biological Diversity and Nagoya Protocol** emphasize equitable sharing of benefits from genetic resources.

How Can We Address These Concerns?

- 1. Legal Frameworks:** The Convention on Biological Diversity and the Nagoya Protocol provide guidelines for benefit-sharing from genetic resources.
- 2. Public Engagement:** It's important to keep the public informed and involved in discussions about synthetic biology to ensure transparency and accountability.
- 3. Investment in R&D:** Countries like India, rich in biodiversity, need to invest in research and development to harness their biological resources effectively.

BioE3 Policy Initiative

Context- The Cabinet has approved the BioE3 or Biotechnology for Economy, Environment and Employment proposal, aimed at boosting biotechnology manufacturing. Though the budget is not yet specified, the initiative seeks to harness biotechnology for economic growth and environmental benefits. Since 1986, India's Department of Biotechnology has been key in advancing vaccines, diagnostics, and biological products, helping establish the country as a global leader in vaccine production.

What are the issues with Biotechnology Sectors?

- 1) Biotechnology has not had the same transformative impact as IT. While it encompasses high-value areas such as gene-modification, bioplastics, biomaterials, and advanced medical devices, India has not made significant progress in these fields.
- 2) India has considerable expertise and a skilled workforce, yet only a few biotechnology firms have gained global prominence due to their reliance on imported ingredients and devices for product development.

Read More- [Making of a biotech hub](#)

What are the Strategic Focus Areas of BioE3?

The BioE3 initiative encompasses six strategic verticals:

- A) Bio-Based Chemicals and Enzymes:** Development of sustainable chemicals and enzymes derived from biological sources.
- B) Functional Foods and Smart Proteins:** Creation of foods with enhanced health benefits and proteins with advanced functionalities.
- C) Precision Biotherapeutics:** Innovations in targeted therapies for personalized medicine.
- D) Climate-Resilient Agriculture:** Agricultural practices and technologies designed to withstand climate

change.

E) **Carbon Capture:** Technologies aimed at capturing and reducing carbon emissions.

F) **Futuristic Marine and Space Research:** Exploration of biotechnology applications in marine environments and outer space.

What is the significance of BioE3 Policy Initiative?

1) **Transition to Sustainable Industries-** It will ensure transition from fossil-fuel-based industries to ones that use natural and sustainable resources. This is essential for tackling global issues like non-biodegradable waste and carbon emissions.

2) **Implementation and Collaborative Efforts-** The BioE3 policy aims to create bio-foundries and bio-AI hubs to encourage collaboration among biotechnologists. However, the success of this initiative depends on addressing persistent manufacturing challenges.

3) **Domestic Production and Global Competitiveness** -It will increase domestic production, cut import reliance, and improve global competitiveness.

What should be the way forward?

A) A supportive environment for long-term investment in biotechnology should be advanced.

B) The policy needs cooperation between Central and State governments and must receive financial and infrastructure support to succeed.

Subject: Environment

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

Seasonal conditions and captivity increase parasitic infections in zoo animals

Context: A study found that seasonal conditions and captivity increase parasitic infections in zoo animals. Researchers found infections highest during monsoon and suggested regular deworming, cleaning, and proper waste disposal to control infections.

What was the focus of the study?

The study focused on seasonal climatic conditions and captivity's role in parasitic infections among zoo animals. Researchers aimed to record seasonal worm burden and evaluate deworming protocols in two Pune zoos: Rajiv Gandhi Zoological Park and Nisargakavi Bahinabai Chaudhary Zoo.

What were the major findings of this study?

1. Seasonal Variation: Parasitic infections varied by season, with the highest incidence in the monsoon (29.50% in mammals) and lowest in summer (8.40% in mammals).

2. Bird Infections: Birds had a prevalence rate of 21.80% in monsoon, 20.00% in winter, and 18.80% in summer.

3. Environmental Factors: High humidity and suitable temperatures in the monsoon increased parasite survival.

4. Control Measures: Appropriate control methods, such as regular examination, deworming treatments,

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cleaning premises, and proper waste disposal, can minimize infections.

5. Data Collection: Researchers collected 450 fecal samples from 150 wild animals, including mammals, birds, and reptiles, across three seasons in two Pune zoos.

Impacts of Heat Wave on Ladakh

Context- Ladakh, the cold desert in northern India, is experiencing extreme heat this summer due to a severe lack of rainfall. The reduced humidity from the rain deficit is causing unusually high temperatures.

What is the impact of the heat wave on Ladakh?

- 1) **Impact on Transportation-** Many flights to Ladakh were canceled due to the heat wave. For ex-The Airports Authority of India (AAI) informed airlines that "anticipated bad weather" (extreme heat) was the reason for the cancellations at Leh's Kushok Bakula Rinpoche Airport.
- 2) **Low Agricultural Production-**The extreme heat is drying out the soil, causing vegetables to turn yellow and die, and trees to need much more frequent watering. Both trees and vegetables are growing poorly, and the crops are underdeveloped. As a result, this year's output will be lower than in previous years.
- 3) **Increased Use of Cooling Devices in Ladakh** - The intense heat has made fans and air conditioning necessary in homes, which wasn't needed before.
- 4) **Water Resources-** Drilling more wells in Ladakh is rapidly depleting groundwater levels. With rising temperatures and widespread groundwater extraction, the region may soon face a serious water shortage, causing spring water in villages to dry up.

Read More-[Heat Action Plan](#)

Climate change is severely affecting mountain regions like Ladakh, leading to extreme weather and temperature swings. This unpredictability makes it difficult for people and wildlife to adapt, especially with ongoing unplanned development in these areas.

The concept of "just transition" in a climate case

Context: The article discusses how the Supreme Court of India could use the concept of "just transition" in a climate case to ensure equitable climate action. It suggests including nature as an affected party and highlights the need for more research on just transition litigation in India.

What is Just Transition?

Definition: Just transition ensures that climate action, particularly decarbonization, is fair and inclusive. It aims to distribute the benefits and burdens of climate efforts equitably.

Origins: The concept emerged in the 1970s to protect jobs threatened by environmental regulations. It was later adopted by the international trade union movement and included in the 2015 Paris Agreement.

Focus: Initially, just transition focused on workers in carbon-intensive industries but has since expanded to include vulnerable groups like indigenous communities, women, and minorities.

Current Application: In the M.K. Ranjitsinh case, just transition could protect the endangered Great Indian Bustard while balancing renewable energy development. This approach could also introduce nature as an entity in just transition.

Why is Just Transition Important in This Case?

1. Applying just transition in this case allows the court to consider both the protection of the Great Indian Bustard and the broader goal of environmental conservation without one undermining the other.
2. This approach can lead to more balanced and inclusive decisions in renewable energy development.
3. The concept of just transition to include non-human elements like nature and wildlife, specifically the Great Indian Bustard.
4. This would build on India's existing environmental jurisprudence, which recognizes the rights of nature and sentient animals.

What is the Impact of This Case on Future Litigation?

1. Using just transition in this case could stimulate more research and understanding of just transition litigation in India.
2. This is especially relevant as the country faces numerous disputes over renewable energy projects. Recognizing just transition could help address these conflicts more effectively, promoting fair and sustainable climate action.
3. By framing the case within the context of just transition, the court can set a precedent for future climate litigation that equally considers human and environmental needs.

Challenges faced by towns in the Indian Himalayan Range due to rapid urban growth

Context: The article discusses the challenges faced by towns in the Indian Himalayan Range due to rapid urban growth. These towns struggle with managing civic issues, suffer from poor planning, and face environmental degradation, urging the need for eco-friendly, resilient urban planning.

For detailed information on **Unsustainable development in the Indian Himalayan Region (IHR)** [read this article here](#)

What is Happening in IHR Towns?

1. The Indian Himalayan Range (IHR) towns saw over 40% urban growth from 2011 to 2021.
2. Major towns like Srinagar and Guwahati struggle with sanitation, waste management, and water supply.
3. In Kashmir Valley, excluding Srinagar, only 15 executive officers serve over 40 urban local bodies.
4. Water bodies in Srinagar decreased from 19.36 square kilometers to 14.44 square kilometers.
5. Built-up real estate in Srinagar increased from 34.53 square kilometers to 60.63 square kilometers.
6. Nearly 90% of liquid waste in these towns enters water bodies untreated.
7. This expansion leads to the loss of natural spaces, deforestation, and pollution, worsening environmental degradation in the region.

Why is This Happening?

1. **Rapid Urbanisation:** IHR towns saw over 40% urban growth from 2011 to 2021, straining resources and infrastructure.
2. **Poor Planning:** Cities use unsuitable models from the plains, leading to inefficient management; city governments are understaffed by 75%.
3. **Environmental Degradation:** In Srinagar, built-up areas increased by 75.58%, while water bodies shrank

by 25% from 2000 to 2020.

4. **Tourism Pressure:** Tourism grew at 7.9% annually from 2013 to 2023, leading to unsustainable infrastructure and resource use.

5. **Climate Change:** Altered precipitation and rising temperatures worsen water scarcity, deforestation, and pollution.

What Should be Done?

1. **Map Vulnerabilities:** Towns should be mapped for geological and hydrological risks to prevent infrastructure damage from climate-induced disasters.

2. **Involve Locals in Planning:** Use a bottom-up approach in urban planning, ensuring local participation.

3. **Shift to Climate-Resilient Design:** Replace consultant-driven plans with climate-resilient urban designs tailored for the Himalayas.

4. **Improve Urban Financing:** Increase intergovernmental transfers to urban local bodies from 0.5% to 1% of GDP for infrastructure needs.

5. **Focus on Sustainability:** Prioritize eco-centric planning and involve public discussions on sustainable urban futures.

Climate Change Discourse and India's Economic Survey

Context- The article supports the Economic Survey's balanced approach to climate change, highlighting India's progress in reducing emissions and promoting sustainability. It also critiques global inequalities in climate discussions.

What are the arguments presented to defend the Economic Survey?

1) **Balanced Approach to Climate Action** -The survey shows how India balances development with climate action, highlights a 33% reduction in emission intensity from 2005 to 2019, and critiques developed countries for their overconsumption and high historical emissions.

2) **Livestock Feed and Meat Production** -Livestock use 6 billion tonnes of feed yearly, including one-third of global cereal production, with 86% inedible for humans. Research by Mottet et al. (2017) shows that producing 1 kg of meat requires 2.8-3.2 kg of human-edible feed. Ignoring this issue overlooks its significant environmental impact.

3) **Land Consolidation for Agricultural Productivity**-The survey sees land consolidation as essential for improving agricultural productivity in India, where most farms are very small. Small, fragmented farms hinder modern farming and efficient resource use. The critique's claim that the survey overlooks livelihood needs is incorrect, as the survey links land consolidation to agricultural modernization, economic growth, and job creation.

4) **Focus on Water Management**-Critics argue the survey should emphasize water storage and efficiency more. However, the survey already addresses sustainable water management by combining traditional and modern methods and highlights the urgent need for efficient water use.

5) **India's Energy Preparedness**- The critique says the survey shows India's unpreparedness for relying on a few countries for future energy. This ignores the National Critical Minerals Mission, highlighted in the budget, which addresses the entire supply chain for critical minerals.

Read More- [Critical Mineral Mission of India](#)

6) **Energy Transition Timing**-The critique suggests the survey should justify starting energy transitions in 2024, given India's climate actions in 2008 and 2016. However, since energy transitions usually span three to four generations, the exact starting point is less important.

7) **Response to Extreme Weather Event**-The critique claims that the survey ignores extreme weather events. However, it highlights the need for more adaptation efforts and investments.

Environmental Controversy in the Great Nicobar Island

Context-The article highlights how the Great Nicobar Island port project reflects larger problems in environmental governance and regulatory manipulation. The changes made to legal and administrative rules to allow this project cast doubt on the effectiveness of environmental protection measures. The proposed port site at Galathea Bay is vital for wildlife. It is a key nesting ground for the giant leatherback sea turtle (the world's largest sea turtle) and three other sea turtle species. The area also has important coral reefs, mangroves, and is home to the Nicobar megapode bird. In 1997, Galathea Bay was proposed as a wildlife sanctuary, underscoring its CRZ-1A protection status.

What is Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) Classification?

These are protected coastal regions, including wildlife sanctuaries, mangrove forests, and turtle-nesting sites, where large construction projects are not allowed.

What are the issues?

1) **Denotification**: - In January 2021, Galathea Bay's wildlife sanctuary status was removed, even though turtles still nest there, and important coral and mangrove ecosystems are present. This change allowed the port project to move forward.

2) **Environmental Clearance**: In November 2022, the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC) approved the Rs 42,000 crore port project. This approval was contested because it breached CRZ-1A restrictions.

3) **National Green Tribunal (NGT) Involvement**: The NGT noted that the project site had 20,668 coral colonies and was in a CRZ-1A area where port construction is banned. It set up a high-powered committee to review the project, but concerns were raised about conflicts of interest because some committee members were from agencies that had already approved the project.

Read More- [Importance of Andaman and Nicobar Islands](#)

What steps were taken by the authorities to resolve the issues?

1) **Scientific Records and Reports**- Reports from the Andaman and Nicobar Coastal Zone Management Authority and the NCSCM confirmed that the site was still CRZ-1A, which prohibits port construction. However, a recent NCSCM survey reclassified the area as CRZ-1B, where port construction is permitted, allowing the project to move forward.

2) **Final Ruling and Project Approval**- The High-Powered Committee found that the NCSCM's report reclassified the area as CRZ-1B, which allows construction. This change was used to justify the port project, even though ecological concerns remained.

India's severe air pollution crisis

Context: The article discusses India's severe air pollution crisis, largely caused by road transport, especially heavy vehicles. It highlights existing and proposed measures, like CAFE norms and vehicle scrappage policies, and emphasizes the need for stricter enforcement and promotion of mass transit.

For detailed information on **A Detailed Air Quality Management Plan in India** [read this article here](#)

How Severe is Air Pollution in India?

1. India has 83 of the 100 most polluted cities in the world, showing a widespread air pollution problem.
2. Air pollution caused 2.1 million deaths in India, the second highest after China, according to the British Medical Journal.
3. Over 99% of the population breathes air that is below the World Health Organization (WHO) recommended standards.
4. Road transport accounts for 12% of India's CO₂ emissions, with heavy vehicles being major contributors.
5. Heavy vehicles are responsible for 60-70% of particulate matter (PM) 2.5 emissions and 40-50% of Nitrogen Oxide (NO_x) emissions in urban areas.
6. PM_{2.5} can deeply penetrate the lungs and bloodstream, leading to severe respiratory and cardiovascular issues.
7. NO_x emissions contribute to ground-level ozone, worsening air quality and heat, especially in cities.

What Measures Are Being Taken to Combat Air Pollution?

- 1. Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) Norms:** The Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) introduced CAFE III and CAFE IV norms, to be implemented from 2027 to 2037, aiming to reduce CO₂ emissions from cars to 91.7g CO₂/km and 70g CO₂/km respectively.
- 2. Adoption of WLTP:** India plans to shift to the World Light Duty Vehicle Testing Procedure (WLTP) by 2027, which provides a more accurate measure of fuel consumption and emissions.
- 3. Vehicle Scrappage Policy:** Introduced in 2022, this policy aims to phase out old, polluting vehicles. It mandates fitness and emissions tests for vehicles older than 15-20 years, though its implementation is slow in states like Karnataka.
- 4. Incentives in Maharashtra:** To encourage vehicle scrapping, Maharashtra offers discounts on road tax and new vehicle purchases, though the impact on air pollution remains limited.

What Should be Done?

- 1. Strengthen Implementation of Policies:** Existing policies like regular vehicle emissions testing, banning open garbage burning, and industrial emission checks should be enforced with strictness to reduce pollution effectively.
- 2. Expand Vehicle Scrappage Program:** The vehicle scrappage policy needs better implementation. In Karnataka, limited scrapyards and the voluntary nature of the program hinder its success. Expanding this policy nationwide with incentives can help phase out old, polluting vehicles.
- 3. Incorporate Heavy Vehicles in CAFE Norms:** The CAFE norms currently exclude heavy vehicles. Including them can significantly reduce CO₂, PM_{2.5}, and NO_x emissions since heavy vehicles are major contributors to urban air pollution.

4. Promote Mass Transit: Encouraging the use of mass transit systems is essential to sustainably reduce pollution from road transport.

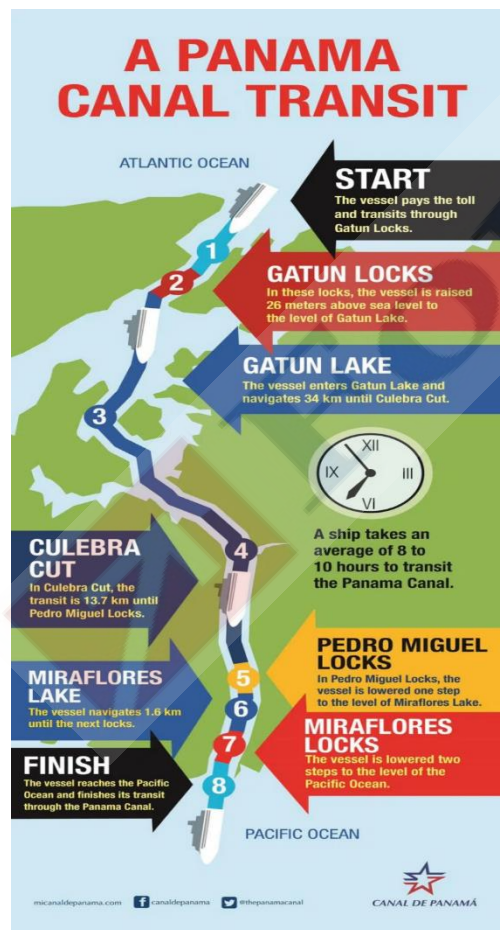
Climate Change Challenges Faced by The Panama Canal

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:**



Source-The Indian Express

- 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.

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

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

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.

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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.

Shift in India's Climate Policy

Context: The article discusses India's transition from energy efficiency targets in polluting industries like iron and steel to emission targets. It explains the shift from the PAT scheme to a carbon market approach, aligning climate change efforts with socioeconomic priorities.

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

What is the Shift in India's Climate Policy?

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1. The finance minister announced that industries with high pollution levels, such as iron, steel, and aluminium, will need to meet specific emission targets instead of just focusing on energy efficiency.
2. This means that instead of just using energy more efficiently, these industries must limit their overall pollution.
3. India aims to tackle climate change while also meeting its development needs, such as industrial growth and housing.
4. The move towards a carbon market approach is seen as a step to better manage and reduce overall emissions, especially from industries that contribute significantly to pollution.

How Do PAT and Emissions Trading Work?

- 1. Perform, Achieve, and Trade (PAT):** PAT is a regulatory tool aimed at reducing specific energy consumption in energy-intensive industries. It focuses on enhancing cost-effectiveness through energy efficiency. Industries that surpass their energy-saving targets generate certificates which they can trade.
- 2. Emissions Trading (Cap and Trade):** This system assigns absolute emission caps to polluters, encouraging them to stay within these limits. Unlike PAT, it deals with total emissions rather than energy efficiency. Companies must reduce their emissions to meet these caps or buy allowances from those who have excess credit, thus incentivizing reductions in overall emissions.

What Does the Carbon Market Mode Entail?

- 1. Phased Implementation:** The carbon market in India will begin with a voluntary phase, supported by a domestic project-based offset scheme. Later, it will evolve into a compliance market with mandatory participation for regulated entities.
- 2. Sector Inclusion:** From 2026, the carbon credits trading scheme will include high-polluting sectors like iron, steel, petrochemicals, chemicals, and aluminum.
- 3. NDC Alignment:** This market aligns with India's Nationally Determined Contributions, aiming to reduce GDP emissions intensity by 45% and achieve 50% power capacity from non-fossil fuels by 2030.

How Does This Align with Global Efforts?

1. While India has not committed to specific emission cuts like those outlined in the European Union Emissions Trading System, it is working within its own development framework to find suitable ways to reduce emissions.
2. By transitioning to a carbon market, India adheres to its Nationally Determined Contributions under the 2015 Paris Agreement.
3. The approach balances India's development priorities with environmental sustainability, recognizing the unique challenges and needs of a developing economy

Subject: Internal Security

Topic- Challenges to Internal Security through Communication Networks, Role of Media and Social Networking Sites in Internal Security Challenges, Basics of Cyber Security; Money-Laundering and its prevention.

Rising security threats in 2024, particularly from AI and cyberattacks

Context: The article discusses the rising security threats in 2024, particularly from AI and cyberattacks. It highlights concerns about digital and disinformation threats, using recent examples like the CrowdStrike outage and past cyberattacks. The need for heightened vigilance and better security measures is emphasized.

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

What are the main security threats in 2024?

1. In 2024, security threats are increasingly coming from AI, including Generative AI and Artificial General Intelligence (AGI).
2. AI has made it easier to create and spread deep fakes, which are manipulated videos, images, or audio.
3. These deep fakes caused confusion, especially during the Taiwan elections in January 2024.
4. AI-generated disinformation has also been used in the Ukraine conflict, disrupting critical infrastructure.
5. Security experts feared digital attacks on the 2024 Summer Olympics in France, held in July-August. They were concerned about cyberattacks and AI-enabled disruptions. However, the games ended without any major incidents, showing the effectiveness of security measures.

What was the significance of the CrowdStrike outage?

1. The CrowdStrike outage, caused by a software glitch in Microsoft Windows, had a global impact.
2. Over eight million Windows devices were affected, disrupting flight operations, air traffic, and stock exchanges.
3. It initially affected parts of the United States but quickly spread to other countries, including India.
4. The Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-IN) rated the incident as "critical."
5. Although not a cyberattack, the incident served as a preview of the kind of widespread disruption that could occur in the event of a large-scale cyberattack.

What are some notable past cyberattacks?

1. **WannaCry (2017):** This ransomware attack infected over 230,000 computers across 150 countries, causing billions of dollars in damage.
2. **Shamoon (2017):** Targeted oil companies like Saudi Aramco and RasGas, leading to significant disruptions and was labeled the "biggest hack in history."
3. **Petya (2017):** This malware attack severely impacted banks and infrastructure in Europe, the U.S., and Australia.
4. **Stuxnet (2010):** A state-sponsored cyberattack targeting Iran's nuclear program, affecting over 200,000 computers, specifically designed to disrupt critical systems.

How are individuals affected by cyber threats today?

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1. Cyber fraud and hacking have become common, with many victims falling prey to phishing, identity theft, and false credit card transactions.
2. Fraudsters often pose as delivery agents or use other tactics to obtain personal information.

What should be done to combat digital threats?

1. Governments and industries need better systems to counter digital threats.
2. Companies should employ chief information and security officers to assess and improve their digital defenses.
3. Awareness and coordinated action are crucial to protecting against these evolving threats.

PMLA's Draconian Provisions

Context- Recent Supreme Court rulings emphasize that "bail is the rule, and jail is the exception" should apply to special laws like UAPA and PMLA. This was highlighted in the case of K Kavitha, where the court noted that undertrial detention should not be punitive.

Recently, the ED's activity has surged, with cases rising from 1,797 (2005-2014) to 5,155 (2014-2023) and asset attachments increasing from Rs 5,086 crore to Rs 1.2 lakh crore. Yet only 25 cases have reached court, with 24 leading to convictions.

How Have the PMLA Provisions Evolved?

- A) **2012 Amendment-** Expanded the definition of money laundering to cover activities related to the concealment, acquisition, possession, and use of criminal proceeds.
- B) **2015 Amendment-** Extended the definition of "proceeds of crime" to include assets located in India, even if laundering occurred abroad.
- C) **2018 Amendment-** Reinforced the twin conditions for bail under Section 45, requiring courts to confirm the commission of a crime or the unlikelihood of the accused fleeing.
- D) **2019 Amendment-** The ED's powers were expanded to include broad authority for summons, arrests, raids, and property seizures. Money laundering was defined as a standalone offense, allowing property searches with just a simple warrant, without needing an FIR or chargesheet.

Read More- [Money Laundering](#)

What are the issues with the Enforcement Directorate?

- 1) **Selective Prosecution-** Politicians constitute only 3% of ED cases, yet over 90% of these cases involve members of the Opposition. Cases often get sidelined when politicians switch to the ruling party.
- 2) **Prolonged Trials and Bail Conditions-** Strict bail conditions and lengthy court processes have caused many accused individuals to remain in detention for extended periods. In over 21 years, only 25 cases have been resolved, partly because wealthy offenders use tactics to delay trials.
- 3) **Capacity and Resource Constraints-** The ED, with a current staff of 2,067, has asked to triple its workforce and open offices in each state capital. It is struggling with over 11,000 foreign exchange violation cases, making it difficult to prioritize and manage them all effectively.
- 4) **Abuse of Law-** The PMLA's strict provisions—such as allowing arrests without an ECIR, using statements made by the accused, and lacking magisterial oversight, raise concerns about potential misuse.

Conclusion - The Supreme Court's upcoming review of PMLA's strict provisions is important. If the Court does not address these issues, it will be up to the public to push for changes in Parliament to ensure the Act is fair and upholds democratic principles.

Topic- Various Security Forces and Agencies and their Mandate.

Challenges of Integrating New Troops into Counter-Terrorism Efforts

Context: The article discusses the recent induction of additional troops and special forces into the Jammu region to counter increased terrorist activities. It highlights the challenges of integrating these new troops and emphasizes the importance of local knowledge and community support for successful counter-terrorism operations.

For detailed information on **The Challenge of Cross-border Terrorism in India** [read this article here](#)

What is the Recent Security Situation in Jammu?

1. The Jammu region has seen increased terrorist activities, including fresh infiltrations supported by Pakistan.
2. Due to a redeployment of troops to the Line of Actual Control (LAC) after the 2020 Galwan incident, the counter-terrorism grid in Jammu has weakened.
3. To address this, around 3,000 Army troops and 500 special forces have been recently added to the region.

How are Troops Being Integrated into the Counter-Terrorism Efforts?

1. The establishment of a counter-terrorism grid involves deploying units in a way that restricts terrorist movements, considering factors like terrain and local population attitudes.
2. The successful integration of new troops requires them to familiarize themselves with the area and win local support to gather intelligence on terrorist activities.

What Challenges Do New Troops Face?

- 1. Familiarization with Terrain:** Newly-inducted troops need to understand the local terrain to effectively operate.
- 2. Winning Local Trust:** Gaining the confidence of the local population is essential for obtaining information on terrorists.
- 3. Integration with Existing Units:** Challenges arise if new troops are not integrated with existing units. Historical success, like Operation Dudhi by Assam Rifles in 1991, shows the importance of integrated operations.
- 4. Time for Orientation:** New troops require time to settle and gain control. Immediate results should not be expected, as this process is deliberate and time-consuming.
- 5. Trusting Commanding Officers:** Commanding officers should be trusted to lead operations, as their control is crucial for effective coordination and success.

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.

Topic- Disaster and Disaster Management.

Climate Risk and Disaster Management

Context- The article highlights how global climate patterns and local factors combine to drive extreme weather. It stresses the need for better climate models, a deeper understanding of local influences, and a thorough approach to disaster management.

What are the limitations of Global Models to predict disasters?

1) **Translating Broad Risk Warnings into Effective Actions-** Early warnings usually start with weather forecasts for the affected areas. However, broad risk warnings are hard to turn into specific actions. For example, declaring the Western Ghats at risk of landslides may prompt protective measures, but it won't eliminate all the risks.

2) **Local Factors on Climate Extremes** - Climate extremes often begin far away but are worsened by local factors. For instance, warmer coastal sea temperatures can intensify rain in areas like Wayanad, 80 km from the coast. Global models often miss these small-scale effects, leading to underestimates of heavy rainfall.

Read More- [Wayanad Landslide- Causes, impact and management of Landslides in India- Explained Pointwise](#)

3) **Inaccurate Weather Predictions** -There is a lack of understanding of local factors that worsen extreme weather. Global models miss these local details, making predictions less accurate.

What should be the way forward?

1) **Coastal Observations** -Enhancing coastal observations and assimilating them into forecast models can improve predictions.

2) **Local Measures to Reduce Risks** -There is a need to adopt local measures, like legal protection for biodiversity, to reduce disaster risks.

3) **Collaboration and Adequate Budgeting** -Effective disaster management requires collaboration between national and local governments, shared responsibilities, and adequate budget provisions to address the complexities of global warming and local impacts.

4) **Early Risk Predictions and Local Data-** Predicting risks a few weeks ahead helps disaster teams prepare for high-risk areas and avoid surprises. Accurate local data and combining long-term forecasts with local assessments are essential for effective crisis management.

6) **Downscaling Techniques-**This technique uses a global model to create more detailed, local forecasts with a higher-resolution regional model, capturing weather details that the global model might miss.

7) **Enhancing Disaster Resilience-** There is a need for more local weather and climate data to improve predictions and strengthen disaster resilience. Creating a detailed data network to track local factors that worsen extreme events is important for effective long-term disaster management.

Impact of Climate-induced Disasters on Mental Health

Context- The July 30 landslides in Wayanad, Kerala, caused by heavy rains, destroyed three villages and led to over 200 deaths in two days. The article highlights the broad impact of climate-induced disasters on mental health and communities, stressing the need for thorough disaster management strategies to address both immediate and long-term psychological effects.

What is the Impact of Climate-induced Disasters on Mental Health?

1) **Post-traumatic Stress Disorder** - PTSD is a mental health condition that affects people who have experienced distressing events. Symptoms include distressing dreams, fear, trauma, and flashbacks, which

can worsen over time and severely disrupt daily life. For example, after the 2021 Chamoli floods, people reported a fear of working at night.

2) **Neurological Impact-** Higher levels of PTSD, depression, and anxiety are linked to stress responses. While neurotransmitters like dopamine and adrenaline are released in short bursts, constant high levels over time can impair stress coping and lead to maladaptive responses.

3) **Cognitive Changes-** A study on the 2018 California fires found that people affected by the fires struggled more with tasks involving selective attention and working memory. They had greater difficulty managing interference, including emotional distractions, compared to those who had not experienced the fires.

What should be the way forward?

1) **Psychological First Aid (PFA)-**This is an initial disaster response intervention aimed at promoting safety and stability through five steps: meeting basic needs, listening, accepting feelings, assisting with recovery, and referring for treatment.

For ex- after the 2004 tsunami, the American Red Cross and Sri Lanka Red Cross Society trained 8,000 people in PFA, focusing on community rebuilding rather than on-site therapy.

2) **Health Vigilance-** The government must monitor both mental and physical health indicators in disaster-affected populations due to the increased risk of metabolic and communicable diseases, as well as mental health conditions.

Read More-[Heat Action Plan](#)

3) **Building Resilience-** Effective disaster management needs detailed individual and community plans, coping skills training, and a shift from emotional to logical responses. Plans should include immediate actions, support resources, and key contacts.

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.