

9 PM Current Affairs Weekly Compilation

For UPSC CSE mains examination



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Features :

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

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Issues with borrowing powers of States

Source: The post Issues with borrowing powers of States has been created, based on the article “**States and the Centre’s fetter of ‘net borrowing ceiling’**” published in “**The Hindu**” on 11th November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2- Polity-issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure, devolution of powers and finances up to local levels and challenges therein.

Context: The article discusses Article 293 of the Indian Constitution, focusing on borrowing powers of States. It highlights Kerala's challenge to borrowing restrictions imposed by the Centre, arguing that these limits affect fiscal autonomy, cooperative federalism, and balanced financial management.

What is the issue with Kerala's borrowing limits?

1. In 2023, the central government imposed a **Net Borrowing Ceiling (NBC)** on Kerala, capping borrowing at **3% of the projected GSDP for FY 2023-24**. This limit covers loans from the open market, financial institutions, and State-owned enterprises.
2. Kerala claims this restriction harms its financial position, reducing its ability to fund developmental and welfare activities.
3. The State challenged the NBC in the Supreme Court, arguing that it infringes on its fiscal autonomy under **Article 293** of the Constitution.

For detailed information on **Kerala’s Protest Against Net Borrowing Ceiling (NBC)** [read this article here](#)

What are the constitutional provisions related to borrowing?

A. Historical Context:

1. Article 293 is derived from **Section 163 of the Government of India Act, 1935**.
2. **Section 163(4):** Prevented the Federation from unreasonably refusing, delaying, or imposing arbitrary conditions on loans.
3. This safeguard was not adopted in the Indian Constitution post-Independence, as a national government replaced the colonial administration.

B. Present Provisions:

Article 292: Allows the Centre to borrow on the security of the Consolidated Fund of India.

Article 293(1): States can borrow within India on the security of their Consolidated Fund.

Article 293(3): Requires Centre’s consent for State borrowings if past loans from the Centre are outstanding.

Article 293(4): Empowers the Centre to impose conditions on States' borrowing.

For detailed information on **Article 292 and 293 of Indian Constitution** read [Article 1](#), [Article 2](#)

How has fiscal discipline evolved in India?

- 1. FRBM Act, 2003:** Established to reinforce financial restraint, setting targets like eliminating revenue shortfall and reducing the fiscal deficit.
- 2. Fiscal Deficit Targets:** Set a cap of **3% of GDP** for the Centre's annual fiscal deficit, aiming to maintain economic stability.
- 3. State Compliance:** States developed their own legislation to align with the Centre's fiscal deficit limits.
- 4. FRBM Amendment Act, 2018:** Tightened regulations by requiring the central government to keep the fiscal deficit under **3% of GDP** and public debt below **60% of GDP**, fiscal deficit to below **4.5% of GDP by 2025-26**.

What are Kerala's main arguments in the Supreme Court?

- 1. Violation of Fiscal Autonomy:** Kerala claims the Centre's borrowing cap of **3% of projected GSDP for FY2023-24** restricts its constitutional right under **Article 293** to manage finances.
- 2. Impact on Development:** The restrictions hinder Kerala's ability to fund developmental and welfare projects, worsening its financial position.
- 3. Arbitrary Conditions:** Kerala argues that **Article 293(4)** grants the Centre excessive powers to impose borrowing conditions without adequate safeguards.

What should be done?

- 1. Form a Borrowing Commission:** Create a commission akin to the Finance Commission, as suggested by Ananthasayanam Ayyangar (in constituent Assembly debate), to address disputes and assess borrowing needs of States and the Centre's fiscal goals.
- 2. Adopt Transparency and Consultation:** Implement guidelines ensuring transparency in decision-making, equity, and consultations with States before imposing borrowing restrictions, as highlighted in the article.
- 3. Revisit Historical Safeguards:** Consider provisions from Section 163(4) of the **Government of India Act, 1935**, which discouraged unreasonable delays, conditions, or refusals in borrowing approvals.
- 4. Strengthen Fiscal Autonomy:** Balance borrowing restrictions with developmental needs, as Kerala faces financial challenges under the **3% GSDP borrowing cap** for FY2023-24.
- 5. Ensure Uniform Treatment:** Apply borrowing rules equally across all States to uphold cooperative federalism and avoid favoritism.

Question for practice:

Discuss the constitutional provisions and challenges related to the borrowing powers of States in India, with a focus on Kerala's stance against the Net Borrowing Ceiling (NBC).

Why Won't India Travel to Pakistan for the Champions Trophy?

Source: The post Why Won't India Travel to Pakistan for the Champions Trophy has been created, based on the article "**Distant neighbours: India and Pakistan seem incapable of normal sporting ties**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 11th November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2- International relations-India and its neighbourhood- relations

Context: The article discusses India's decision not to travel to Pakistan for the 2025 Champions Trophy. It highlights security concerns, political tensions, and alternative arrangements like playing in the UAE. India-Pakistan cricket remains restricted to neutral venues or ICC events.

Why Won't India Travel to Pakistan for the Champions Trophy?

India has officially told the ICC it cannot travel to Pakistan for the 2025 Champions Trophy. The decision is due to political tensions and security concerns. India has not toured Pakistan since the 2008 Asia Cup.

What Are the Key Issues?

- 1. Security Concerns:** India cites safety fears due to the 2009 Lahore attack on the Sri Lankan team. Despite resumed tours by other teams, India remains cautious.
- 2. Political Tensions:** Relations between India and Pakistan have worsened since the 2008 Mumbai attacks, halting bilateral cricket matches.
- 3. Past Avoidance:** India avoided playing in Pakistan during the 2023 Asia Cup, opting for Sri Lanka.
- 4. Neutral Venue Preference:** India suggests hosting 2025 Champions Trophy matches in the UAE.
- 5. Cricketing Loss:** Players like Virat Kohli have missed playing Tests against Pakistan since bilateral matches stopped in 2008.

Question for practice:

Discuss the reasons why India has decided not to travel to Pakistan for the 2025 Champions Trophy.

Issue with Women Gig Workers in India

Source: The post Issue with Women Gig Workers in India has been created, based on the article "**Calling out exploitative labour dynamics on platforms**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 11th November 2024.

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- Economy-Employment

Context: The article highlights women gig workers' exploitation in India, focusing on their "Black Diwali" digital strike led by GIPSWU. It discusses poor wages, unsafe conditions, digital patriarchy, and calls for better labor rights, security, and fair treatment in platform jobs.

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

What is the Issue with Women Gig Workers in India?

- 1. Exploitation of Wages:** Discounts offered by platform companies during festivals are sourced from workers' reduced wages, resulting in exploitative conditions.
- 2. Patriarchal Job Assignments:** Women gig workers are confined to roles like beauticians, cooks, and housekeepers, perpetuating traditional patriarchal norms.
- 3. Job Insecurity:** Workers' employment depends on ratings and accepting "auto-assigned" jobs. Refusing tasks often leads to blocking or termination, which is equivalent to "illegal termination."
- 4. Lack of Social Security:** Workers face high transportation costs, platform fees, and a lack of essential benefits, leaving many financially strained.
- 5. Economic Contribution:** Informal economy workers contribute over 60% of India's GDP, yet their efforts are undervalued.
- 6. "Black Diwali" Strike:** Women gig workers organized a digital strike under the **Gig and Platform Services Workers Union (GIPSWU), India's first women-centric gig workers' union**. They protested against low wages and harsh working conditions exacerbated by festive season discounts offered by platform companies.
- 7. Digital Patriarchy:** AI-driven platforms exploit women by setting unrealistic targets while claiming to offer "freedom" and flexibility.

What Was the Outcome of the Digital Strike?

1. The strike garnered significant media attention and public support. It empowered workers, showing the strength of grassroots organizing.
2. Women gig workers demanded stricter regulations for platform companies and called for secure employment with living wages.

What Are the Future Goals for GIPSWU?

1. GIPSWU aims to continue its fight for better labor conditions through grassroots organizing and advocating for policies that ensure fair wages, safe working conditions, and job security for gig workers.
2. This approach aims to change how platform companies operate and treat their workers.

Question for practice:

Examine the challenges faced by women gig workers in India and the outcomes of their "Black Diwali" digital strike.

Reforming India's Public Distribution System (PDS)

Source: The post Reforming India's Public Distribution System (PDS) has been created, based on the article "Public Distribution System must be reformed to fix leakage, invest in farming" published in "Indian Express" on 11th November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2 – International Relations – Bilateral, Regional and Global Groupings and Agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

Context: The article discusses the decline of multilateralism, especially with Donald Trump's re-election. It highlights India's need to adapt by focusing on bilateral trade, technology development, and smaller coalitions like the Quad, as global cooperation faces growing challenges and geopolitical divides.

For detailed information on **Trump's Re-election and India US Relations** [read this article here](#)

What challenges do multilateral institutions face today?

Multilateral institutions are struggling due to **rising geopolitical tensions and declining trust. Donald Trump's re-election has further weakened their relevance.** For example, Trump's "America First" policy prioritized unilateralism, withdrawing the US from key agreements like the Paris Climate Accord and WHO.

How Does Trump's Presidency Impact Global Agreements?

1. Withdrawal from Multilateral Agreements: Trump withdrew the US from key agreements like the Paris Agreement on climate change, the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), UNESCO, WHO, and the UN Human Rights Council during his first term (2017-2021).

2. Impact on Climate Cooperation: He plans to leave the Paris Agreement again and remove restrictions on energy production, prioritizing hydrocarbon development. This undermines global climate efforts and could inspire other nations to reduce commitments.

3. Weakened Trade Frameworks: Trump's administration weakened the World Trade Organization (WTO) and intensified the US-China trade war with proposed 60% tariffs on Chinese imports. This challenges global trade norms.

4. Strain on Economic Forums: Forums like APEC and G20 face heightened tensions. For example, Trump's earlier withdrawal from TPP disrupted economic integration across the Asia-Pacific region.

5. Focus on National Interests: Trump's "America First" policy prioritizes national over global interests, reducing US leadership in global governance and creating a crisis in multilateralism.

How is India adapting to the decline of multilateralism?

1. Bilateral Trade Agreements: India is focusing on new bilateral trade deals to strengthen its economic ties, reducing dependence on multilateral trade systems.

2. Minilateral Groups: India is actively participating in smaller coalitions like: **The Quad** (focusing on regional security and technology), **Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence** (for AI innovation), **Mineral Security Partnership** (ensuring resource security), **Artemis Accords** (collaboration in space exploration).

3. National Energy Solutions: India has invested significantly in renewable energy to address climate challenges independently, as global cooperation weakens.

4. Technology Leadership: India is working with like-minded countries to develop new technologies and establish global norms for their use.

Question for practice:

Evaluate how Donald Trump's re-election could impact India's strategy in global diplomacy and trade?

Women's representation in politics

Source: The post women's representation in politics has been created, based on the article “**It's 2024 — we need more women in politics**” published in “**Indian Express**” on 13th November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper1-Society-Social empowerment

Context: The article discusses women's representation in politics, emphasizing their growing influence in shaping policies and elections. It highlights India's progress, including the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, and advocates for women's active participation to advance democracy and gender equality.

For detailed information on **Political Empowerment of Women** [read this article here](#)

What is the Significance of Women's Representation in Politics?

1. Women's participation in politics is **crucial for a vibrant democracy**.
2. It ensures that the interests and issues of half the population are represented and addressed.

Why Do Symbolic Gestures Fail to Gain Voter Support?

1. Symbolic actions often lack substantive outcomes, leading voters to prioritize value-based decisions over superficial gestures.
2. In the U.S., Kamala Harris's historic nomination symbolized diversity but failed to resonate with all voters; many African Americans and White women voted for Donald Trump.
3. In India, voters focus on impactful policies like Sukanya Samridhi Yojana and Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, showing a preference for meaningful change over mere representation.
4. Voter behavior reflects a demand for action-oriented politics.

How Are Women Transforming Electoral Politics in India?

1. Women in India have moved beyond symbolic representation to actively shape electoral politics and policies.
2. Programs like **Sukanya Samridhi Yojana, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, and Jan Dhan Yojana** have empowered women and made them key contributors to policy formulation.
3. Women-centric policies have enhanced skills, employability, and empowerment, driving social and electoral change.
4. The **Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam Bill**, passed in a special session of Parliament, demonstrates India's commitment to increasing women's participation in governance.

5. Women leaders in the past, like **Uda Devi Pasi** and **Dakshayani Velayudhan**, played critical roles in India's independence and constitution-making.

Question for practice:

Discuss the significance of women's representation in politics and how it has transformed electoral politics in India.

Challenges of delimitation in India

Source: The post challenges of delimitation in India has been created, based on the article "**The perfect cocktail of layered discrimination**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 14th November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS paper2- polity- issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure.

Context: The article discusses the challenges of delimitation in India. It highlights how reallocating Lok Sabha seats based on population growth could harm non-Hindi states. Solutions include freezing delimitation, decentralizing power, or balancing representation to preserve federalism and unity.

For detailed information on **Delimitation Exercise** [read this article here](#)

What is Delimitation?

Delimitation is the process of redrawing the boundaries of electoral constituencies based on population. Article 82 of the Constitution mandates this after every Census. However, the process was frozen in 1976 and 2001 to avoid penalizing states that controlled population growth. This freeze ends in 2026 unless extended.

Why is Delimitation Controversial?

1. Disparity in Population Growth: States with lower Total Fertility Rates (TFR), such as Kerala and Tamil Nadu (1.6-1.8), have successfully controlled population growth. In contrast, Hindi-speaking states like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar have TFRs around 3.5, leading to potential shifts in representation.

2. Reduction in Representation: If delimitation occurs, the proportion of Lok Sabha seats from southern states may drop from 25% to 17%, while Hindi-speaking states' representation may rise from 40% to 60%.

3. Economic Contribution vs Representation: States like Karnataka, Maharashtra, and Tamil Nadu contribute far more to direct taxes but receive only 30% of their contributions in return. In contrast, states like Bihar and Uttar Pradesh receive 250%-350% of their contributions.

4. Imbalance in Political Power: Southern states would lose influence, while Hindi-speaking states, dominated by the BJP, would gain electoral dominance, leading to skewed policymaking at the Union level.

5. Ethno-Linguistic Shift: Since 1947, Hindi speakers' population proportion has risen from 36% to 43%, nearing a majority. This could threaten India's federal structure, designed to balance diverse ethno-linguistic groups.

For detailed information on **Revised delimitation exercise** [read this article here](#)

What are Possible Solutions?

- 1. Extend the freeze on delimitation:** Continue the approach of Indira Gandhi and Atal Bihari Vajpayee by postponing delimitation for another 25 years to maintain current political stability.
 - 2. Permanently freeze seat redistribution:** Avoid inter-state redistribution of Lok Sabha seats to prevent political imbalances.
 - 3. Balance delimitation with decentralization:** Implement delimitation but expand the State List, abolish the Concurrent List, and transfer more powers from the Union to the States.
 - 4. Increase the number of seats in each state:** Preserve current proportions while increasing total seats to address population growth, reducing representational disparities.
- These solutions aim to preserve federalism and prevent regional dominance.**

Question for practice:

Evaluate the potential impact of the delimitation exercise on India's federal structure and regional representation.

Sustainability challenges in India's agricultural exports

Source: The post sustainability challenges in India's agricultural exports has been created, based on the article "India's tea, sugar exports raise sustainability concerns at home" published in "The Hindu" on 14th November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS paper3-Agriculture – Marketing of agricultural produce.

Context: The article discusses the sustainability challenges in India's agricultural exports, focusing on tea, sugar, and millets. It highlights ecological, social, and economic issues, emphasizing the need for better practices to balance exports, resource use, and worker welfare.

For detailed information on **Challenges facing agriculture exports from India** [read this article here](#)

What is the importance of agricultural exports in India?

1. India's agricultural exports were valued at \$53.1 billion in 2022-2023, up from \$8.7 billion in 2004-2005.
2. Exports strengthen the economy by increasing revenue, foreign exchange, and transaction options.
3. The rapid growth of exports raises sustainability concerns in production, processing, and distribution.

When is an agricultural commodity sustainable?

1. Sustainability depends on **three pillars:** ecological, economic, and social factors.
2. Good governance and policies are necessary for sustainable systems.
3. Sustainability extends across all stages: pre-sowing, on-farm production, and post-harvest.

4. Tea and sugar illustrate these challenges well.

What are the sustainability challenges in tea production?

1. Human-wildlife conflicts: 70% of tea plantations are near forests, leading to frequent interactions with elephants.

2. Chemical pesticide use:

- 85% of pesticides used are synthetic, increasing chemical residues like DDT and Endosulfan in tea.
- These chemicals pose risks of cancer, diabetes, and neurotoxicity.

3. Labour issues:

- Over 50% of workers are women, often underpaid and working in hazardous conditions.
- Regulations under the **Plantations Labour Act (1951)** are poorly enforced.

What are the sustainability challenges in sugar production?

A. Water consumption:

- Producing 1 kg of sugar requires 1,500–2,000 kg of water.
- Sugarcane occupies 25% of India's cropped area but uses 60% of irrigation water.
- Increased cultivation in Maharashtra and Karnataka has stressed groundwater and ecosystems.
- Drip irrigation could reduce water use by 40-50%.

B. Labour concerns:

- Workers face poor conditions, long hours, and rising temperatures, harming their physical and mental health.
- Many workers are trapped in debt cycles.

How can millets contribute to sustainable agriculture?

1. Millets are seen as a sustainable alternative because they require fewer resources and are resilient to harsh conditions.
2. They also help in maintaining soil health and ensuring nutritional security.
3. Millet exports have been growing, with \$75.45 million worth exported in 2022-2023, showing their potential in sustainable agriculture.

What is needed to improve sustainability in agriculture?

1. There is a need for better management practices, stricter regulations, and a focus on reducing the environmental impact of agriculture.
2. This includes enhancing water management, reducing pesticide use, and improving labor conditions to create a more sustainable and inclusive agricultural system in India.

Question for practice:

Examine the sustainability challenges faced by India's agricultural exports, with specific reference to tea, sugar, and millets.

CoP 29's agreement on carbon markets under Article 6 of the Paris Pact

Source: The post CoP 29's agreement on carbon markets under Article 6 of the Paris Pact has been created, based on the article "CoP's hasty decision on carbon credits could do more harm than good" published in "Indian Express" on 14th November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS paper3- Environment

Context: The article discusses CoP 29's agreement on carbon markets under Article 6 of the Paris Pact. It sets rules for emissions trading but faces criticism for ignoring double accounting, project risks, and community impacts, risking a repeat of Kyoto Protocol failures.

For detailed information on **India's Opportunities and Challenges in Carbon Markets** [read this article here](#)

What is Article 6 of the Paris Pact?

1. Article 6 enables carbon markets where polluting entities can offset emissions by purchasing credits from less polluting ones.
2. The aim is to reduce the cost of implementing Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) by \$250 billion annually, according to Azerbaijan at CoP 29.

For detailed information on **Article 6 of the Paris Agreement** [read this article here](#)

What was agreed at CoP 29 in Baku?

1. Countries reached a consensus on methodologies for carbon market standards, resolving transparency concerns.
2. The agreement seeks to streamline emissions trading and clarify operational mechanisms.

What criticisms does the agreement face?

1. Experts say the decision was rushed, with inadequate deliberation on key issues.
2. It does not address "double accounting," where emissions reductions are counted by multiple parties.

3. It ignores risks like carbon reversal in natural sinks (e.g., forests) and displaced community livelihoods from green projects.

Why are carbon markets controversial?

1. Historically, carbon markets like the Clean Development Mechanism under the Kyoto Protocol failed due to a lack of trust among parties.
2. Critics fear developed countries may use offsets to avoid genuine decarbonization, shifting the burden to developing nations.

Question for practice:

Discuss the criticisms faced by the agreement on carbon markets under Article 6 of the Paris Pact reached at CoP 29 in Baku.

India's need for an equitable energy transition to meet rising power demand

Source: The post India's need for an equitable energy transition to meet rising power demand has been created, based on the article "**The green transition India needs**" published in "**Indian Express**" on 14th November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS paper3-infrastructure-energy

Context: The article highlights India's need for an equitable energy transition to meet rising power demand. It highlights seven shifts, including decentralizing energy, focusing on operational costs, investing in climate resilience, and integrating digital technologies and circular economy practices, with people at the core.

For detailed information on **Energy Transition: Challenges and Solutions** [read this article here](#)

What Are the Key Shifts Needed for India's Energy Transition?

1. Shift to Decentralized Energy Systems:

- a. India aims to solarize 10 million households, adding 30 GW of clean energy through rooftop solar installations.
- b. However, rooftop solar remains expensive for low-income groups. A **Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW)** study found that ~30% of India's rooftop solar potential lies in the 0-1 kW category, which is still costly even after subsidies.
- c. Community solar models or partnerships can make solar energy more accessible.

2. Adopt Operational Expenditure Models:

- a. Transitioning from capital expenditure (capex) to operational expenditure (opex) can lower barriers for clean energy adoption.
- b. Examples include utilities setting up solar systems and charging pay-as-you-go, district cooling services, and sustainable mobility models like per-kilometer payments for clean transportation.

3. Invest in Climate-Resilient Systems:

- a. Over 80% of India's population resides in climate-vulnerable districts, as highlighted by a CEEW study.
- b. Investments in resilient energy systems and climate-proofing infrastructure are critical to avoid macroeconomic shocks.

4. Integrate into Global Supply Chains:

- a. India should focus on collaborating in solar PV and green hydrogen supply chains instead of adopting protectionist industrial policies.
- b. Participation in global supply chains promotes energy security through interdependence and collaboration.

5. Combine Decarbonization and Digitalization:

- a. With 820 million active internet users, over half from rural areas, India can merge digital and energy systems.
- b. Prepaid smart meters and AI systems optimize energy distribution, making renewable integration more efficient.

6. Promote Circular Economy:

- a. By 2030, India's solar energy waste may reach 600 kilotonnes, equivalent to 720 Olympic-sized swimming pools.
- b. Recycling minerals like silicon and cadmium from this waste supports environmental sustainability and energy security.

7. Center Policies Around People:

- a. Financing small-scale consumer needs, such as electric two-wheelers or rooftop solar, can create aggregated market opportunities.
- b. This approach shifts focus from power developers to end-use consumers.

Question for practice:

Discuss the key shifts needed for India's energy transition to meet its rising power demand, as highlighted in the article.

Significance of India's PM visit to Nigeria

Source: The post significance of India's PM visit to Nigeria has been created, based on the article "**Leverage similarity, complementarity in Nigeria**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 15th November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS paper2- International Relations-Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

Context: The article discusses Prime Minister Modi's visit to Nigeria, highlighting shared challenges, strong bilateral ties, and opportunities. It emphasizes collaboration in hydrocarbons, defense, and trade while addressing Nigeria's economic reforms and India's declining trade engagement.

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

Why is PM Modi's Visit to Nigeria Significant?

1. PM Modi's visit to Nigeria is his first and comes after 17 years.
2. Nigeria is Africa's most populous country and second-largest economy.
3. India and Nigeria share historical ties as Commonwealth members. Both are large, multi-ethnic democracies facing similar challenges like governance, corruption, and terrorism.

What is the Current State of India-Nigeria Relations?

1. India is Nigeria's second-largest trading partner, with bilateral trade at \$7.9 billion, though it is half its peak a decade ago.
2. Over 150 Indian companies operate in Nigeria, investing \$27 billion.
3. The Indian diaspora in Nigeria, numbering nearly 50,000, is the largest non-African group and contributes significantly to the economy.
4. India has no upstream hydrocarbon assets in Nigeria despite being a top buyer of Nigerian crude.
5. India channels its development assistance to Nigeria through the African Union, limiting direct bilateral engagement.
6. The last meeting of the bilateral joint commission took place after 13 years.

How Can India Help Nigeria?

- 1. Defense:** Nigeria faces challenges like Boko Haram, piracy, and oil theft. India can offer defense supplies, training, and remote sensing technology to tackle terrorism (e.g., Boko Haram) and piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. Seven Nigerian Presidents since 1960 were trained in India as defense officers.
- 2. Economic Stabilization:** Nigeria faces foreign exchange shortages and inflation (32%). Strategic initiatives such as partnerships in hydrocarbon sectors and infrastructure development can help stabilize Nigeria's economy. India can offer large financial facilitations and consider barter arrangements to ease Nigeria's foreign exchange shortage.
- 3. Trade Enhancement:** Bilateral trade stands at \$7.9 billion, but India's exports fell 29.7% in 2023-24. India can increase exports to Nigeria, including essential commodities like pharmaceuticals, foodstuffs, and textiles, leveraging the potential for rupee-based trade to boost bilateral trade from the current \$7.9 billion.
- 4. Capacity Building:** Offering expertise in IT, healthcare, and education can support Nigeria's infrastructure and human resource development.

What Lessons Can Be Drawn from History?

1. Historical links date back to the 1500s with Baba Ghor, a gem merchant from Kano, Nigeria, settling in Gujarat, India.
2. This shared history can inspire modern India-Nigeria relations to become stronger and mutually beneficial.

Way forward

India should enhance bilateral ties with Nigeria by leveraging its \$27 billion investments and \$7.9 billion trade relationship. Frequent high-level engagements, diaspora empowerment, and strategic initiatives in hydrocarbons, defense, and economic partnerships can boost trade. Supporting Nigeria's reforms and offering rupee-based trade options will strengthen ties.

Question for practice:

Examine how India can leverage its historical and economic ties with Nigeria to address shared challenges and enhance bilateral relations.

Reasons and Impacts of the Discontinuation of Canada's SDS Visa

Source: The post reasons and impacts of the discontinuation of Canada's SDS Visa has been created, based on the article “**Will the end of SDS Visa derail Indian students' Canadian dreams?**” published in “**The Hindu**” on 15th November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS paper2-International Relations-Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests, Indian diaspora.

Context: The article explains the discontinuation of Canada's SDS visa, a popular streamlined option for Indian students. It highlights challenges like longer visa processing times, higher fees, and complex procedures, impacting Indian students' education plans and immigration prospects in Canada.

What was the SDS Visa?

1. The Study Direct Stream (SDS) visa was introduced in 2018 to simplify study permit applications for certain countries, including India. It provided faster processing, lower application fees, and required fewer documents.
2. Indian students were the biggest beneficiaries, with over 189,000 using the SDS visa in 2022.
3. The approval rate for SDS applicants was 63%, compared to just 19% for non-SDS applicants.

Why was the SDS Visa discontinued?

Canada discontinued the SDS visa on November 8, 2024, citing several challenges:

1. **System abuse:** Some applicants misused the SDS program to gain permanent residency.
2. **Housing crisis:** A rising number of international students increased the housing shortage, especially in cities like Toronto and Vancouver.

3. Resource strain: Public services like healthcare and education were under pressure due to the growing student population.

4. Policy reassessment: Canada aimed to strengthen immigration integrity and ensure fairness for all applicants. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau noted a 35% reduction in study permits in 2024 and announced a further 10% cut for 2025.

How does this impact Indian students?

The SDS visa's discontinuation has created multiple challenges:

- 1. Longer processing times:** Students now face delays in visa approval, affecting academic schedules.
- 2. Higher costs:** Standard visa application fees are higher than those for SDS.
- 3. Complex process:** Students must provide more documents, like proof of funds and detailed study plans, which can cause errors and delays.
- 4. Uncertain immigration paths:** The SDS visa was a key route to permanent residency, which is now less accessible.

For detailed information on **Causes and impacts of strained India-Canada ties** [read this article here](#)

What alternatives do Indian students have?

1. Indian students can still apply for a traditional student visa.
2. They need proof of funds, language test scores, and admission to a Designated Learning Institution (DLI).
3. Planning early and consulting immigration experts can help navigate the process.

Conclusion

The SDS visa's discontinuation has created obstacles for Indian students, but careful planning can mitigate challenges. As Canada adjusts its immigration policies, Indian students must stay informed and prepared for new opportunities.

Question for practice:

Evaluate the impact of the discontinuation of Canada's SDS visa on Indian students' education and immigration prospects.

Bhagwan Birsa Munda's legacy

Source: The post Bhagwan Birsa Munda's legacy has been created, based on the article "**President Droupadi Murmu writes: Birsa Munda's enduring legacy**" published in "**Indian Express**" on 15th November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS paper1-History-The Freedom Struggle — its various stages and important contributors/contributions from different parts of the country.

Context: The article highlights Bhagwan Birsa Munda's legacy as a tribal leader, freedom fighter, and healer. It emphasizes his fight for justice, tribal rights, and cultural identity. It also discusses government efforts to honor and support tribal communities today.

For detailed information on **Bhagwan Birsa Munda** [read this article here](#)

Who was Bhagwan Birsa Munda?

1. Bhagwan Birsa Munda was a tribal leader born in Ulihatu, Jharkhand, who lived only 25 years (1875–1900).
2. He led the “Ulgulan” or Munda Rebellion in the late 1890s against British exploitation and landlord atrocities.
3. He was called “**Dharti Aba**” (**Father of the Earth**) and fought for tribal justice, land rights, and cultural identity.
4. His ideals of freedom, justice, and dignity inspire not only tribal communities but all youth in India. His legacy reminds the nation to work for the development of Scheduled Tribes.

Why is Bhagwan Birsa Munda remembered?

1. **Leader of Tribal Resistance:** Led the “Ulgulan” (Munda Rebellion) in the 1890s against British exploitation and landlord oppression.
2. “**Dharti Aba**”: Revered as the “Father of the Earth” for championing tribal rights and cultural identity.
3. **Healer and Social Reformer:** Gained fame for his healing touch, helping sick villagers selflessly.
4. **Symbol of Tribal Justice:** Advocated for tribal land ownership and preservation of customs.

How are tribal contributions celebrated today?

1. **Janjatiya Gaurav Divas:** November 15, Bhagwan Birsa Munda’s birth anniversary, is celebrated annually since 2021 to honor tribal freedom fighters.
2. **Showcasing Tribal Legacy:** “Janjatiya Darpan,” a gallery in Rashtrapati Bhavan Museum, highlights tribal art, culture, and their role in nation-building.
3. **Government Initiatives:**
 - a. **Dharti Aaba Janjatiya Gram Utkarsh Abhiyan improves infrastructure in 63,000 tribal villages.**
 - b. **PM-JANMAN focuses on 11 key interventions for effective tribal welfare.**
4. **Recognition of PVTGs:** Representatives from 75 Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) were invited to Rashtrapati Bhavan for an interaction.

Question for practice:

Discuss the legacy of Bhagwan Birsa Munda and the ways in which tribal contributions are celebrated today.

Delhi's worsening air pollution, despite reduced farm fires

Source: The post Delhi's worsening air pollution, despite reduced farm fires has been created, based on the article "Delhi's continuing severe air pollution challenge" published in "Indian Express" on 15th November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS paper3-Environmental pollution and degradation.

Context: The article highlights Delhi's worsening air pollution, despite reduced farm fires. It criticizes ineffective measures like smog towers and water sprinklers. It urges the CAQM to focus on data-driven, long-term solutions and regional coordination for sustainable pollution control.

For detailed information on **Air Pollution In Delhi** [read this article here](#)

Why is Delhi's air pollution worsening despite reduced farm fires?

1. Delhi's air quality has deteriorated, with the AQI reaching "severe" for the first time this season. 2. This is the most delayed occurrence of such pollution in 10 years.
3. Average PM 2.5 levels are the highest in five years.
4. Pollution persists even after the crop residue burning season in Haryana and Punjab has seen a decline.
5. Chandigarh, for example, recorded the second-worst air quality recently, showing the regional nature of the problem.

For detailed information on **Delhi's air quality crisis** [read this article here](#)

What measures has the Delhi government taken, and are they effective?

1. The government has used smog towers and water sprinklers, but their effectiveness is limited to small areas. There has been no emission audit for these devices.
2. Cloud seeding and drones are also being considered, but their impact remains unproven.
3. These measures are seen as temporary fixes and do not address long-term pollution control.

What role does the CAQM play in managing pollution?

1. The **Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM)**, established three years ago, has mainly acted as a regulatory body.
2. It has not prioritized data-driven, scientific methods to combat pollution.
3. Experts emphasize the need for solutions like airshed pollution management, which requires coordination between local and state agencies to identify and tackle pollution hotspots.

For detailed information on **Commission for Air Quality Management** [read this article here](#)

What long-term approach is needed to solve the problem?

1. Experts stress the need to move beyond seasonal approaches and emergency responses.

2. They recommend institutional reforms and better coordination between agencies.
3. The focus should be on sustainable measures that address local and regional pollution comprehensively, beyond just stubble burning or temporary solutions.

Question for practice:

Examine the reasons behind the worsening air pollution in Delhi despite a decline in farm fires and the effectiveness of the measures taken to address it.