

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 Paper3-Public Distribution System objectives, functioning, limitations, revamping; issues of buffer stocks and food security.

Context: The article discusses reforming India's Public Distribution System (PDS). It highlights issues like high leakages (28%), excessive coverage (57%), and poor nutritional outcomes. It suggests cash transfers, reduced subsidies for the non-poor, and promoting diverse, nutritious food through reformed PDS.

For detailed information on **Impact of the National Food Security Act 2013 on PDS leakages** [read this article here](#)

What is the Problem with Free Food Distribution?

- 1. Excessive Coverage:** Free food covers 57% of India's population under PMGKAY, though only 12.9% live in extreme poverty (below \$2.15/day, World Bank 2022). Such broad coverage strains resources unnecessarily.
- 2. High Leakages:** 28% of allocated grains (19.69 MMT) do not reach beneficiaries, causing an annual loss of Rs 69,108 crore (HCES 2022-23). States like Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland report the highest leakages.
- 3. Limited Impact on Poverty Reduction:** Large-scale subsidies contradict claims of reducing poverty for 248 million people (NITI Aayog, 2024).
- 4. Nutritional Gaps:** Despite free food, 35.5% of children under five are stunted, 19.3% are wasted, and 32.1% are underweight (NFHS 2019-21). Spending on pulses and vegetables has also declined.
- 5. Inefficient Use of Resources:** Funds spent on free food could be redirected toward agri-R&D, skilling, and climate-resilient farming for higher returns.

For detailed information on **Arguments for and against reducing food subsidies** [read this article here](#)

What Reforms are Suggested for the PDS?

- 1. Targeted Support:** Reduce PDS coverage to the extremely poor (12-15% of the population). Others can pay half the Minimum Support Price (MSP).
- 2. Direct Cash Transfers:** Provide direct cash transfers to beneficiaries to plug leakages.
- 3. Nutrition Hubs:** Convert some Fair Price Shops into hubs offering diverse foods like eggs, pulses, millets, and fruits. Use digital food coupons to make these accessible.
- 4. Invest in Agriculture:** Use savings from reduced subsidies to invest in climate-resilient agriculture and rural development.

Conclusion

The PDS needs urgent reform to reduce leakages, improve nutritional outcomes, and save resources. Targeted support, better technology, and diversification of food distribution can make the system more effective and sustainable.

Question for practice:

Discuss the challenges with India's Public Distribution System (PDS) and the reforms suggested to address these issues.

Need to value care work in India

Source: The post need to value care work in India has been created, based on the article “**The consumer economy cannot afford to disregard the care economy of unpaid labour**” published in “**Indian Express**” on 11th November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- Economy-growth, development and employment.

Context: The article emphasizes the need to value care work in India, both unpaid and paid. It advocates policies to reward caregivers, improve public care infrastructure, and change societal attitudes. It highlights care as essential for human connection and a balanced economy.

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

What is the current state of care work in India?

1. Care work includes unpaid labor by women, government care workers, and domestic workers.
2. United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) data shows 360 million children and 147 million elderly need care in India.
3. Women spend 5.6 hours daily on unpaid care work, while men spend only 30 minutes.
4. Employed women perform six times more unpaid care work than employed men.

What challenges do caregivers face?

1. **Low Compensation:** ASHAs, Anganwadi workers, and domestic workers often lack fair wages and social security.
2. **Healthcare Burden:** Caregivers bear the fallout of pollution and pandemics, facing health and financial stress.
3. **Lack of Support:** Traditional family structures often fail to provide reliable care for the elderly.
4. **Cultural Barriers:** Men lack caregiving skills due to societal expectations focused on competition.

What should be done?

1. **Reward Care Workers:** Policies must reform tax brackets, wage rates, and retirement ages for women to address this imbalance.
2. **Social Security for Frontline Workers:** Workers like ASHAs and Anganwadi staff bear the burden of pollution and pandemics. Ensure fair wages and social security packages for them.

3. Public and Private Care Infrastructure: Strengthen childcare, social pensions, and provide subsidies to businesses/cooperatives offering care services.

4. Value Care as a Skill: Practical education in caregiving can instill empathy and foster civic responsibility.

5. Shift Gender Norms: Encourage men to engage in care roles through education and social support. For example, many middle-aged men lack caregiving skills due to societal focus on competition.

Question for practice:

Examine the current state of care work in India, the challenges caregivers face, and the measures needed to address these issues.

India's recent peace efforts with China

Source: The post India's recent peace efforts with China has been created, based on the article "**The LAC agreement, the détentés and the questions**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 12th November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2-India and its Neighborhood- Relations.

Context: The article discusses India's recent peace efforts with China, focusing on troop disengagement at the border, ongoing de-escalation, and unresolved questions. It urges transparency from the Indian government about agreements, border security plans, and relations with neighboring countries.

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

What happened recently between India and China?

1. India and China announced peace efforts, including a summit at the BRICS meeting in Kazan on October 23, 2024.
2. Prime Minister Modi and President Xi Jinping agreed to restore peace at the border. Soldiers from both countries exchanged sweets at the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

What challenges remain at the border?

- 1. Pending De-escalation:** Troop de-escalation and withdrawal along the LAC are incomplete and require on-ground and satellite verification.
- 2. Unresolved Patrolling Arrangements:** No details of new patrolling mechanisms or PLA access at Yangtse in Arunachal Pradesh have been shared.
- 3. Buffer Zones:** Buffer zones restrict Indian patrolling and civilian grazing rights, making a return to the pre-2020 status quo impossible.
- 4. Past Lessons from Doklam:** China expanded infrastructure near Doklam post-disengagement in 2017, creating risks for future escalations.
- 5. Ambiguity on 2020 Transgressions:** The reason for China's 2020 LAC transgressions, including amassing troops at four points, remains unclear.

Why did China act aggressively in 2020?

- 1. Xi Jinping's Territorial Policy:** In 2014, Xi announced a policy to claim "every inch" of Chinese territory. This led to aggressive actions in several regions, including Taiwan, South China Sea, and along the India-China border (Ladakh, Sikkim, and Arunachal Pradesh).
- 2. Counter to India-U.S. Partnership:** China aimed to remind India of its continental challenges, despite growing maritime ties with the U.S. India's 3,500-km boundary with China remains a key concern.
- 3. Opposition to Indian Infrastructure:** China reacted to India's construction of roads, tunnels, and villages near the LAC, including the Daulat Beg Oldie (DBO) airstrip and other strategic projects.
- 4. Response to Jammu and Kashmir Reorganization (2019):** China protested India's revocation of Jammu and Kashmir's special status. Beijing criticized Ladakh's reorganization, claiming it affected "Chinese territory."

What other diplomatic efforts have been made?

- 1. Elections in Jammu and Kashmir:** India held elections in Jammu and Kashmir, signaling a step toward political stability. The government may restore Statehood and transfer more powers to the region.
- 2. Addressing Ladakhi Protesters:** Protests led by Sonam Wangchuk ended after the Home Ministry promised discussions on Statehood, tribal status, local employment guarantees, and parliamentary representation. A meeting is scheduled for December.
- 3. Engagement with Pakistan:** External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar attended the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) meeting in Islamabad. This marked a significant move as previous SCO meetings were attended virtually.
- 4. India-China Summit:** The October 2024 Kazan summit between Modi and Xi Jinping focused on peace efforts, troop disengagement, and reducing tensions.

What steps are needed for transparency?

The government must be transparent about border agreements and future strategies. A detailed enquiry into the 2020 LAC events is necessary. In a democracy, citizens should be informed about decisions affecting national security and regional stability.

Question for practice:

Examine the recent efforts and challenges in India-China relations concerning troop disengagement and border security along the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

Prison discrimination and inequality

Source: The post prison discrimination and inequality has been created, based on the article "**Ending discrimination in prisons**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 12th November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2-Governance- Prison Reforms

Context: The article discusses prison discrimination and inequality. It highlights how courts struck down rules segregating prisoners by caste, class, or status, ensuring equality under Articles 14 and 15. It emphasizes dignity, non-discrimination, and equal treatment for all prisoners, advocating reforms.

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For detailed information on **Supreme Court's Ruling on Caste Bias and Prison Segregation** [read this article here](#)

What is the Supreme Court's stand on caste-based segregation in prisons?

1. In *Sukanya Shantha v. Union of India (2024)*, the Supreme Court struck down prison rules segregating prisoners by caste.
2. These rules forced marginalized caste prisoners to perform cleaning jobs while others did cooking.
3. The Court held this violated Articles 14 and 15 of the Constitution.
4. It directed states to amend such discriminatory practices to ensure equality and dignity.

How has the Supreme Court addressed other types of prisoner segregation?

1. In *Inacio Manuel Miranda v. State (1988)*, a rule limiting the number of letters prisoners could write based on classification was held discriminatory.
2. Similarly, in *Madhukar Bhagwan Jambhale v. State of Maharashtra (1984)*, a ban on writing letters to co-prisoners was struck down for violating freedom of expression.
3. In *Prem Shankar Shukla (1980)*, economic status-based handcuff rules were invalidated for being irrational.

What about the classification of political prisoners?

The Calcutta High Court ruled on this in *Gaur Narayan Chakraborty and Others (2012)*:

1. Maoist petitioners were classified as political prisoners under the West Bengal Correctional Services Act, 1992.
2. The Court held political prisoners deserved basic amenities like furniture, newspapers, and writing material.
3. It suggested these amenities should extend to all prisoners to ensure dignity.

What is the way forward for prison reforms?

1. Amendments to the *Model Prison Manual 2016* should include basic amenities for all prisoners, ensuring dignity.
2. These reforms can eliminate discriminatory practices and improve living conditions in Indian prisons.

Question for practice:

Discuss how the Supreme Court and other courts have addressed discrimination and inequality in Indian prisons.

COP16's efforts to halt biodiversity loss by 2030

Source: The post COP16's efforts to halt biodiversity loss by 2030 has been created, based on the article “**Will financial roadblocks continue to hinder conservation efforts?**” published in “**The Hindu**” on 12th November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3 – Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.

Context: The article discusses COP16's efforts to halt biodiversity loss by 2030. It highlights achievements like inclusive decision-making, biodiversity funding, and conservation initiatives but notes setbacks in financial commitments and monitoring. India presented its updated biodiversity plan amid global challenges.

For detailed information on **COP-16 of Convention on Biological Diversity** [read this article here](#)

What was the focus of COP16?

COP16 aimed to address biodiversity loss and set measures to reverse it by 2030. A key challenge was funding for these measures, along with slow progress on achieving the "30x30" target to protect 30% of land and oceans.

What were the achievements of COP16?

A. Inclusive Decision-Making:

1. A permanent body of Indigenous peoples and local communities was established to ensure their participation in biodiversity conservation.
2. Traditional knowledge of people of African descent was recognized and integrated into conservation efforts.

B. Biodiversity Funding:

1. The '**Cali Fund**' was introduced, requiring corporations like those in the pharmaceutical sector to share 0.1% of revenue or 1% of profits from genetic resources.
2. Half the fund is allocated to Indigenous communities, potentially raising over \$1 billion annually.

C. Invasive Species Management: Guidelines were developed to address invasive alien species with improved databases, trade regulations, and e-commerce coordination.

D. Marine Protection: A revived process for identifying 'Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas' (EBSAs) was agreed upon to protect vulnerable ocean ecosystems.

E. One Health Approach: A Global Action Plan links ecosystem, human, and animal health to address issues like zoonotic diseases and promote sustainable ecosystems.

F. Synthetic Biology Discussions: Potential uses of bioengineered species for restoration were discussed, along with regulatory frameworks to minimize ecological risks.

What were the challenges of COP16?

A. Financial Commitments

1. The **Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF)** requires \$700 billion annually, but only \$163 million was pledged.
2. Disputes over fund governance and structure led to a lack of resolution.

B. Monitoring and Implementation

1. Only 44 of 196 countries updated their biodiversity action plans (NBSAPs).
2. A lack of enforcement mechanisms threatens the success of the GBF.

What was India's role at COP16?

1. India unveiled an updated National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plan (NBSAP) with 23 biodiversity targets.
2. It aims to balance conservation and economic growth, focusing on ecosystem restoration, marine area management, and wetland protection.
3. India uses a **“Whole-of-Government” and “Whole-of-Society” approach** for biodiversity goals.

What lies ahead for biodiversity conservation?

1. COP16 made progress in inclusive frameworks and funding mechanisms but lacked strong financial and monitoring support.
2. To meet the 2030 targets, nations must commit to ambitious, measurable actions.
3. **COP17 in Armenia** will be crucial for advancing global biodiversity efforts.

Question for practice:

Examine the key achievements and challenges of COP16 in addressing biodiversity loss by 2030.

Indonesia's new President, his controversial past, and strategic importance

Source: The post Indonesia's new President, his controversial past, and strategic importance has been created, based on the article **“With Indonesia, India’s opportunity and Beijing’s eye”** published in **“Indian Express”** on 12th November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2-International Relations-Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India’s interests

Context: The article highlights India's neglect of Indonesia, its vital maritime neighbor, over decades. It discusses Indonesia's new President Prabowo Subianto, his controversial past, and strategic importance. It urges India to strengthen ties with Indonesia to counter China's growing influence.

Who is Indonesia's new president?

1. **Prabowo Subianto** became Indonesia's president on October 20, succeeding Joko Widodo (Jokowi).
2. Jokowi's son, Gibran Rakabuming Raka, is the new vice president, providing political continuity.
3. Prabowo is a nationalist with a controversial past, including allegations of human rights abuses.
4. Prabowo's grandfather founded **Bank Negara Indonesia**, briefly Indonesia's central bank.
5. His father served as a minister under both Sukarno and Suharto, showing political flexibility.
6. Prabowo himself served in elite military roles under Suharto but lost favor after Suharto's ouster in 1998.

What is Indonesia's relationship with China and the US?

1. Prabowo chose China for his first visit as president, despite a Chinese coast guard ship intruding into Indonesian waters on October 26.
2. Relations with the US remain cautious due to his human rights record.
3. Indonesia is wary of China's aggressive economic and geopolitical influence.

What are India and Indonesia's ties?

1. In 1947, Indian aviator **Biju Patnaik** rescued key Indonesian leaders from Dutch forces.
2. The **Bandung Conference (1955)**, co-led by India and Indonesia, laid the foundation for the Non-Aligned Movement.
3. During colonial conflicts, Indian troops fought in Indonesia, which complicates historical narratives.
4. Relations were strained during Suharto's rule, especially after India's tilt towards the USSR in 1971.
5. Ties improved under Jokowi, with joint projects like the **Sabang port** development near the Nicobar Islands.
6. Indonesia sees India as a partner in countering China's maritime assertiveness.

Why is Indonesia important for India?

1. Indonesia is ASEAN's largest nation and a major exporter of resources like coal, rubber, palm oil, nickel, and tin.
2. These exports complement India's growing manufacturing sector and EV battery needs.
3. Cooperation opportunities exist for India's service professionals to reduce Indonesia's business costs.
4. The **Arjuna Wijaya statue** in Jakarta, depicting Arjun and Krishna, reflects the civilizational ties between the two nations.

Question for practice:

Evaluate the significance of strengthening India-Indonesia relations in the context of historical ties, strategic importance, and countering China's influence.

Causes and impacts of strained India-Canada ties

Source: The post Causes and impacts of strained India-Canada ties has been created, based on the article “**Stop the free fall: India and Canada must not allow their ties to deteriorate further**” published in “**The Hindu**” on 13th November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2- International Relations – Effect of Policies and Politics of Developed and Developing Countries on India’s interests.

Context: The article discusses strained India-Canada ties after Canada accused India of involvement in a murder. It highlights violence at a temple, disrupted consular services, diaspora tensions, stalled trade talks, and immigration issues, urging both nations to ensure diplomacy and stability.

For detailed information on **India-Canada Relations and the Khalistan Issue** [read this article here](#)

What caused the strain in India-Canada relations?

1. Canada accused India of involvement in the 2023 murder of Khalistan activist Hardeep Singh Nijjar.
2. Washington also alleged an Indian plot against Khalistan leader Gurpatwant Singh Pannun.
3. On November 3, Khalistan activists disrupted a consular camp at the Hindu Sabha Mandir in Brampton, causing violence.
4. Canadian Prime Minister Trudeau called the incident “unacceptable,” while Indian Prime Minister Modi labeled it “cowardly.”
5. Two people linked to Nijjar were arrested in Canada; one is wanted in India.

What are the impacts strain relations?

1. Canada has 19 lakh people of Indian origin (4% of its population). Many require consular services. Disruptions in these services harm people-to-people ties and worsen the situation for Indians living in Canada.
2. India-Canada bilateral trade in goods and services is worth \$19 billion. A trade treaty was under negotiation but is now stalled. Both nations have tried to insulate economic relations, but visa restrictions may still affect students and businesses.
3. Canada is tightening its border policies, with many Canadians believing immigration is too high. New restrictions on student visas will affect Indian aspirants, further straining relations.

Way forward

Both nations must secure diplomatic missions and avoid disruptions in consular services. India's diaspora engagement should reflect its multi-religious identity. Despite tensions, collaboration on shared issues like climate change and trade can help rebuild relations.

Question for practice:

Discuss the causes, impacts, and possible solutions to the strained relations between India and Canada as highlighted in the article.

Progress and challenges of the India-Middle East-Europe Corridor (IMEC)

Source: The post progress and challenges of the India-Middle East-Europe Corridor (IMEC) has been created, based on the article "A mixed report card for the IMEC" published in "The Hindu" on 13th 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 progress and challenges of the India-Middle East-Europe Corridor (IMEC). It highlights delays in the western segment due to conflicts in West Asia and steady progress in the eastern segment, driven by India-UAE trade relations and connectivity efforts.

What is the IMEC and why is it important?

1. The India-Middle East-Europe Corridor (IMEC) was announced at the G20 Summit in September 2023.
2. It aims to reduce transit time by 40% and costs by 30% compared to the Suez Canal route.
3. The corridor is expected to boost international trade significantly.

For detailed information on **India Middle East Europe Corridor** [read this article here](#)

What progress has been made on the IMEC?

1. Western Segment Challenges

- Progress in the western part, including Saudi Arabia and Jordan, is delayed.
- The Israel-Palestine conflict since October 2023 has slowed collaboration in the region.
- Geopolitical tensions make joint work with Israel difficult for Arab nations.

2. Eastern Segment Developments

- The eastern segment, connecting India and the UAE, is progressing well.
- India-UAE trade has grown significantly post the 2022 CEPA agreement: Total trade increased from \$43.3 billion (2020-21) to \$83.64 billion (2023-24). Non-oil trade grew from \$28.67 billion (2020-21) to \$57.81 billion (2023-24).

3. Virtual Trade Corridor

- India and the UAE have launched the Virtual Trade Corridor to streamline trade by reducing administrative processes and costs.
- This initiative is expected to serve as a model for other countries in the IMEC to enhance cross-border trade efficiency.

For detailed information on **Challenges faced by IMEC** [read this article here](#)

What Can India Do During the Delay?

1. India can use the current delays in the western segment to enhance its infrastructure.
2. This includes preparing ports, developing economic zones along the corridor, and improving domestic logistics.
3. Enhancing digital infrastructure in logistics can reduce costs and time, making Indian exports more competitive.
4. Moreover, setting up an IMEC secretariat could help organize the corridor's structure and promote its benefits to potential new members.

Question for practice:

Evaluate the progress and challenges of the India-Middle East-Europe Corridor (IMEC) and suggest what steps India can take to address the delays.

Rising burden of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) in India

Source: The post rising burden of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) in India has been created, based on the article "**Debating the 'healthy longevity initiative'**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 13th November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2-Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health

Context: The article discusses the rising burden of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) in India, particularly among the elderly. It highlights the challenges of healthcare access, social security schemes, and the need for policy reforms to address rising healthcare costs and improve NCD prevention and treatment.

For detailed information on **Are non-communicable diseases increasing in India?** [read this article here](#)

What is the Main Concern of the World Bank Report?

1. The World Bank report highlights the increasing number of elderly people globally, especially in Low-and Middle-Income Countries (LMICs).
2. It notes a rise in deaths from non-communicable diseases (NCDs) from 61 million in 2023 to a projected 92 million in 2050.

3. The report suggests a "healthy longevity initiative" to reduce deaths and improve health throughout life.

How Serious is the Problem of NCDs in India?

1. In India, NCDs like heart disease, cancer, respiratory problems, and diabetes are leading causes of death, making up almost 50% of all deaths.
2. The rate of NCDs has grown from 40% of all deaths in 1990 to an expected 75% by 2030.
3. Lifestyle factors such as smoking, poor diet, and lack of physical activity increase the risk of these diseases.

For detailed information on **Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) in India** [read this article here](#)

What Impact Do Social Security Schemes Have?

1. Social security schemes can help reduce the financial burden of healthcare for the elderly.
2. However, the benefits are limited due to low pensions and high costs related to travel, treatment, and medication.
3. Health insurance schemes like Ayushman Bharat are not fully effective due to funding issues, bureaucratic delays, and corruption.

What are the Challenges in Regulating Healthcare Costs?

1. The Supreme Court (2024) of India has directed the government to regulate hospital rates to prevent overcharging.
2. However, enforcing these regulations is difficult, and the effects are often temporary.
3. A comprehensive approach involving price caps, better enforcement, and behavioral changes, like reducing tobacco use, is necessary to manage healthcare costs and improve public health.

Conclusion

India faces significant challenges in combating NCDs due to aging populations, inadequate healthcare systems, and rising lifestyle risks. Effective policies, better healthcare infrastructure, and awareness campaigns are critical to improving health outcomes and achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Question for practice:

Examine the challenges India faces in addressing the rising burden of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and the measures needed to improve health outcomes.

Decline of multilateralism, especially with Donald Trump's re-election

Source: The post decline of multilateralism, especially with Donald Trump's re-election has been created, based on the article "**C Raja Mohan writes: India, Trump, and the crisis in multilateralism**" published in "**Indian Express**" on 13th 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.

