

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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Urban Challenges in India and Globally

Source: The post urban challenges in India and globally has been created, based on the article “**What are major challenges faced by Indian cities?**” published in “**The Hindu**” on 4th November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper1- Society-urbanisation, their problems and their remedies

Context: The article highlights challenges in urban areas, especially in India, including climate change, poverty, and poor planning. It emphasizes issues like overcrowded slums, pollution, lack of resources, limited governance power, and the need for better urban development policies.

For detailed information on **Challenges faced by the Urban Policy Framework in India** [read this article here](#)

What are the global urban challenges?

1. Global cities face multiple challenges, especially **climate change, poverty, inequality, and environmental issues**.
2. **Approximately 4.7 billion people (57.5% of the global population) now live in urban areas**, with this number expected to double by 2050.
3. Rapid urbanisation in the Global South worsens challenges due to **limited resources and weak infrastructure**.
4. Many cities struggle with housing shortages, lack of clean water, and poor sanitation.
5. Urban centres are **vulnerable to climate-related events** like urban flooding.
6. **Poverty-driven urbanisation**, particularly in developing countries, highlights the need for sustainable development policies and resilient infrastructure.

How is urbanisation different in India?

1. India's urbanisation differs from the Global North, where urbanisation followed industrial growth, creating jobs that absorbed rural workers.
2. Western urbanisation was supported by colonial wealth transfers; economist Utsa Patnaik estimates India contributed over \$45 trillion to Britain's economy during colonial rule.
3. India's urbanisation is primarily “poverty-driven,” fueled by economic distress rather than industrialisation.
4. Migration includes both rural-to-urban and urban-to-urban movement.
5. COVID-19 highlighted urban planning gaps as reverse migration surged.

What challenges do Indian cities face?

1. **Outdated Urban Planning:** Plans are not updated to match population growth. Many displaced industrial workers move to peri-urban slums.
2. **High Slum Population:** 40% of India's urban population lives in slums with poor sanitation and water access.
3. **Severe Pollution:** Delhi NCR has eight of India's ten most polluted cities, impacting health.
4. **Climate Vulnerability:** Cities face urban flooding and heat island effects.

5. Governance Limitations: Elected city officials have limited power, with just 0.5% GDP in transfers.

6. Rising Inequality: Urban planning focuses on capital growth, leaving millions without basic housing and services.

Why is governance a problem in Indian cities?

1. Lack of Autonomy: Elected city representatives have limited control over urban planning. Urban governance is often managed by parastatals and private entities, reducing local input and accountability.

2. Ineffective Implementation of Laws: Despite the 74th Constitutional Amendment aiming to empower urban local governments, less than three of the 18 mandated functions have been effectively transferred to these governments.

3. Insufficient Funding: Urban local bodies receive only about 0.5% of GDP in intergovernmental transfers, severely limiting their operational capacity and ability to improve infrastructure and services.

4. Overlooked by National Policies: There is a disconnect between national policies and local needs, leading to inefficient and inadequate urban planning and management

Why does World Cities Day matter for India?

World Cities Day stresses the need for urgent change in Indian cities. Challenges like climate change, poverty, and poor infrastructure show the need for effective, people-focused policies. Comprehensive national strategies are essential to address these urban issues.

Question for practice:

Examine how the challenges of urbanization in Indian cities differ from those faced by cities in the Global North.

India-Iran Partnership Strengthens Through Strategic Cooperation at BRICS Summit

Source: The post India-Iran partnership strengthens through strategic cooperation at BRICS summit has been created, based on the article “**The BRICS summit boost to India-Iran ties**” published in “**The Hindu**” on 4th 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 recent meeting between India and Iran at the 16th BRICS Summit. Both countries aim to strengthen their partnership, focusing on issues like the Gaza conflict, energy supplies, and military cooperation. The meeting emphasizes their untapped potential for collaboration.

For detailed information on **BRICS Plus Grouping- Significance and Challenges** [read this article here](#)

What Was the Focus of the India-Iran Meeting at the BRICS Summit?

1. The India-Iran meeting at the BRICS Summit focused on strengthening bilateral relations.
2. Discussions highlighted India's influence in global arenas, such as facilitating Iran's entry into organizations like the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and BRICS in 2023.
3. Key areas for potential cooperation were also discussed, including the Chabahar port and the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC).

4. Iran's President acknowledged India's growing global role and its potential to aid in de-escalating the Gaza conflict, demonstrating the trust and diplomatic capital India holds in international matters.

Why Is Iran Important to India?

- 1. Energy Reserves:** Iran holds 24% of West Asia's oil reserves and 12% of the world's natural gas reserves, vital for India's energy security.
- 2. Oil Supplies:** Before 2019, Iran met nearly 12% of India's crude oil needs.

For detailed information on **Challenges Between India and Iran Bilateral Ties** [read this article here](#)

What Are the Key Areas of Cooperation?

- 1. Chabahar Port:** India and Iran have a 10-year contract to operate this port, which provides a strategic trade route and helps in delivering humanitarian aid to Afghanistan.
- 2. Energy Supplies:** Iran was a major oil supplier to India before sanctions. Discussions are ongoing about restarting oil and gas imports from Iran.
- 3. Military and Security:** The potential for military cooperation and joint counterterrorism efforts are significant, especially given the common concerns about terrorism in the region.

How Can India and Iran Improve Their Relationship?

1. India's ability to maintain independent relationships with countries that have conflicts with each other (like Iran and Israel) is key.
2. However, sensitive comments from leaders can sometimes hinder these ties.
3. Both nations aim to focus on their long-term partnership beyond occasional controversies.

Question for practice:

Examine how India's relationship with Iran can be strengthened through strategic areas of cooperation, as discussed at the BRICS Summit.

India-Sri Lanka fishing dispute in the Palk Bay

Source: The post India-Sri Lanka fishing dispute in the Palk Bay has been created, based on the article "**Sharing resources: Fishermen from both sides of the Palk Bay must meet to resolve dispute**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 4th November 2024

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

Context: The article discusses the India-Sri Lanka fishing dispute in the Palk Bay. It highlights India's push for fishermen talks, the arrest of Tamil Nadu fishermen, and calls for solutions like deep-sea fishing, ecosystem conservation, and political support for an agreement.

For detailed information on **India-Sri Lanka Fishing Dispute** [read this article here](#)

What is the main issue in the India-Sri Lanka fishing dispute?

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1. The main issue is fishing rights in the Palk Bay. Fishermen from Tamil Nadu are often arrested for crossing into Sri Lankan waters.
2. These arrests create tension. Sri Lanka charges the fishermen with trespassing and destructive practices, like bottom trawling.
3. As of October 27, 2023, Tamil Nadu's Chief Minister, M.K. Stalin, reported 30 incidents of arrests this year. Currently, 140 fishermen and 200 boats are in Sri Lankan custody.

What are India's efforts for a resolution?

1. India encourages dialogue between fishermen of both countries. At the sixth India-Sri Lanka Joint Working Group on Fisheries in Colombo on October 29, India pushed for these talks.
2. Fishermen from Tamil Nadu and the Northern Province of Sri Lanka have expressed support.
3. In Rameswaram, fishermen staged a protest on October 25 to demand talks. Earlier, Northern Province fishermen had asked for discussions with Tamil Nadu counterparts.

How is Sri Lanka responding?

1. Sri Lanka's President Anura Kumara Dissanayake stressed the need to protect Sri Lanka's interests. He supports a long-term solution that respects both sides.
2. The upcoming parliamentary elections in Sri Lanka, in mid-November, may impact the environment for talks.

Why does India consider the issue humanitarian?

1. India highlights the humanitarian aspect of the dispute. Many Tamil Nadu fishermen depend on these waters for their livelihood.
2. Long detentions and severe fines on repeat offenders worsen their economic hardship.
3. India has pushed for alternative fishing methods, like deep-sea fishing, to lessen their dependence on contested waters.

What environmental concerns are involved?

1. Conserving the marine ecosystem is crucial. Sri Lanka opposes bottom trawling, which harms the seabed and affects fish populations.
2. Fishermen from the Northern Province have complained about its impact. India aims to promote alternative, sustainable fishing methods among Tamil Nadu fishermen.

What possible solutions exist?

1. Promote deep-sea fishing for Tamil Nadu's fishermen, as India initiated in 2017.
2. Help Sri Lankan fishermen, especially in the Northern Province, to rebuild post-civil war.
3. Revisit a 2010 understanding between both countries' fishermen.
4. Allow Tamil Nadu fishermen a transition period to adopt new fishing methods.

Question for practice:

Examine the main issues and efforts toward resolution in the India-Sri Lanka fishing dispute in the Palk Bay, considering the humanitarian, environmental, and political aspects involved.

India's Stock Growth vs. China's Wage Rise: A Comparative Analysis

Source: The post India's Stock Growth vs. China's Wage Rise: A Comparative Analysis has been created, based on the article "**India could not create mass prosperity. It's not too late**" published in "**Indian Express**" on 4th November 2024

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

Context: The article discusses why China grew wages but had weak stock returns, while India saw strong stock returns but low wage growth. To improve, India needs more manufacturing jobs, fewer farmers, and better policies for domestic production and employer support.

For detailed information on **Macroeconomic differences between India and China** [read this article here](#)

Why has China achieved strong wage growth but weak stock returns, while India shows the reverse?

1. China's Wage Growth: China's economic model prioritized manufacturing and moved millions from farms to factories, increasing productivity and wages. This transition lifted incomes as people moved to higher-paying, urban jobs.

2. China's Weak Stock Returns: Public market shareholder returns in China have been weak, averaging about minus 13% over the last 20 years. This may reflect state-driven policies that emphasize wage growth over maximizing shareholder profits.

3. India's Strong Stock Returns: India delivered strong stock market returns, around 1,300% over 20 years. This reflects a growing domestic market and investor-friendly policies.

4. India's Weak Wage Growth: India's job structure remains limited, with only 11% in manufacturing. Many people work in low-productivity, informal jobs, especially in agriculture, which hampers wage growth despite economic reforms.

5. Conclusion: China's factory-driven growth supports wages; India's stock-driven growth boosts shareholder returns.

How has India progressed since independence?

1. India has established the world's largest democracy since 1947, overcoming challenges from its hierarchical society.

2. Life expectancy rose significantly from 31 years at independence to 68 years today.

3. India is now a middle-income country, although it faces limited social mobility — middle-income nations see 40% lower mobility than high-income ones.

4. Only 11% of India's workforce is in manufacturing, with 45% in agriculture, leading to "**employed poverty.**"

5. According to the World Bank, only 34 middle-income countries (with a total population of 250 million, equal to Uttar Pradesh) have reached high-income status since 1990.

Why hasn't India moved more workers from farms to factories?

1. India hasn't moved more workers from farms to factories mainly because of regulatory burdens.

2. Excessive compliance requirements, frequent filings, and criminalisation make it hard for small businesses to grow. This "**regulatory cholesterol**" hurts small and informal firms more than big companies.

3. It's not due to shortages of land, labor, or capital: **Land** is ample; every household could get half an acre.

Labor is available; 30% are in employed poverty. **Capital** is flowing; 50% of FDI since 1947 came in the last five years.

What should be done?

- 1. Reduce Regulatory Burden:** Simplify compliance requirements that hinder small and informal businesses. Support initiatives like Jan Vishwas 2.0, Enterprise Digilocker, and the National Open Compliance Grid.
- 2. Strengthen Domestic Production Policies:** Promote local production through tariffs and non-tariff barriers, as seen in the auto industry. This can reduce dependence on imports and build competitive supply chains.
- 3. Leverage Existing Skills:** Utilize NEP 2020 and short-term training programs to ready workers for factory jobs; eight-week training suffices for tasks like cell phone assembly.
- 4. Promote Social Mobility:** Address India's low social mobility by creating high-productivity firms that support mass prosperity and reduce poverty among employed individuals.
- 5. Enhance Consumption-Driven Growth:** Encourage industries tied to India's domestic market, such as services, while complementing Make in India with "Make for India" strategies.

Question for practice:

Examine why India's economic growth has led to strong stock returns but limited wage growth, while China has experienced the opposite.

Reasons for the shortage of di-ammonium phosphate (DAP) fertilizer

Source: The post reasons for the shortage of di-ammonium phosphate (DAP) fertilizer has been created, based on the article "**Express View on DAP crisis: Lessons from a fertiliser shortage**" published in "**Indian Express**" on 4th November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3 -Agriculture -Issues related to direct and indirect farm subsidies.

Context: The article discusses India's shortage of di-ammonium phosphate (DAP) fertilizer, caused by poor planning and outdated price controls. This shortage affects farmers' planting. It suggests replacing price controls with per-acre payments to encourage efficient fertilizer use.

For detailed information on **India's fertilizer situation amid global crises** [read this article here](#)

What are the reasons for the shortage of di-ammonium phosphate (DAP) fertilizer?

- 1. Low Opening Stocks:** Only 15-16 **lakh tonnes (lt)** of DAP were available as opening stocks on October 1, compared to the recommended 27-30 lt, highlighting poor advance planning.
- 2. Reduced Imports:** DAP imports were just 19.7 lt during April-September, down from 34.5 lt in the same period of 2023, limiting supply.
- 3. Decreased Domestic Production:** Domestic production fell to 21.5 lt from 23.3 lt, further reducing available DAP for the rabi season.
- 4. Unviable Pricing Due to Price Controls:** The government allows an MRP of Rs 27,000 per tonne and provides a subsidy of Rs 21,911. Combined, these do not cover the full cost (including import, bagging, and distribution) of Rs 65,000 per tonne, making it unprofitable for companies to import DAP.
- 5. High Demand for Sowing Season:** Farmers require DAP during sowing for crops like mustard, potato, and wheat. Good monsoon rains and crop prices have increased their enthusiasm to plant, intensifying demand.

6. Farmers Paying Extra: Due to the shortage, farmers reportedly pay Rs 250-350 more than the government-fixed price of Rs 1,350 per 50-kg bag.

What should be done?

1. Encourage alternative fertilizers: Promote the use of complexes and water-soluble fertilizers which are more efficient and can be directly applied to the crop's root zone.
2. Replace price controls and product-specific subsidies with flat per-acre payments each crop season, conditional on nutrient purchase. This proposal aims to encourage efficient fertilizer choices, benefiting crop growth directly.

Question for practice:

Examine the factors contributing to the shortage of di-ammonium phosphate (DAP) fertilizer in India and suggest potential solutions to address this issue.

India's reservation system for Scheduled Castes (SCs) and its effectiveness

Source: The post India's reservation system for Scheduled Castes (SCs) and its effectiveness has been created, based on the article "Does data justify subdivision of quotas?" published in "The Hindu" on 5th November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2-Mechanisms, Laws, Institutions and Bodies constituted for the Protection and Betterment of these Vulnerable Sections.

Context: The article discusses India's reservation system for Scheduled Castes (SCs) and its effectiveness in helping marginalized communities. It raises questions about unequal benefits among SC subgroups and suggests that improving access to reservations should be prioritized over creating a 'quota-within-quota' system.

For detailed information on **Issues of reservation in India** [read this article here](#)

What is the purpose of India's reservation system?

1. India's reservation system was designed to uplift marginalized groups, especially Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs), by correcting centuries of social and economic exclusion.
2. It provides SCs and STs with opportunities in higher education, government jobs, and public offices.

What are the issues with India's reservation system?

1. Unequal Benefits within SC Groups: Certain SC subgroups benefit more than others. For example, in Punjab, subdivision of quotas since 1975 has helped disadvantaged groups like Mazhabi Sikhs and Balmikis, allowing them to catch up to more advanced groups like the Ad Dharmis.

2. Access Issues: Access to reservations is a problem, as many eligible SC households lack the necessary caste certificates. In **Uttar Pradesh** and **Bihar**, fewer than 50% of SC households report having these certificates. In contrast, **Tamil Nadu** and **Andhra Pradesh** perform better, with 60-70% of SC households holding certificates. Without proper access, many SCs cannot benefit from the system.

3. Quota-within-Quota: The "quota-within-quota" could help where SC subgroups show disparities, like in Punjab. But in places like Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, such a division may not be needed. The Supreme Court also suggested a "creamy layer" exclusion for wealthier SCs, similar to policies for Other Backward Classes (OBCs). However, evidence is limited on whether economic mobility reduces discrimination for SCs.

4. Political Influence: Bihar's creation of a "Mahadalit" category aimed to target the most marginalized SCs, but political pressure led to the inclusion of all SCs, undermining the policy's intended focus.

5. Lack of Updated Data: The delay in India's national Census prevents comprehensive data on caste disparities, making policy reforms difficult to base on current, reliable data.

6. Disparity with General Category: Despite some SC subgroups progressing, the gap between SCs and upper-caste groups remains far more significant than disparities within SC subgroups.

Conclusion

India's reservation system has uplifted millions of SCs, but it needs improvement. The priority should be ensuring all SCs have access to benefits and addressing the larger disparities between SCs and upper-caste groups. For reservations to remain a tool for social justice, policies must be guided by strong data and actual need, rather than politics.

Question for practice:

Examine how India's reservation system addresses disparities within Scheduled Castes (SCs) and the challenges associated with access and unequal benefits among SC subgroups.

Online harassment and abuse faced by women in politics, worsened by AI-driven disinformation

Source: The post online harassment and abuse faced by women in politics, worsened by AI-driven disinformation has been created, based on the article "Big Tech's fail — unsafe online spaces for women" published in "The Hindu" on 5th November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS paper3- Science and Technology- developments and their applications and effects in everyday life.

Context: The article discusses the online harassment and abuse faced by women in politics, worsened by AI-driven disinformation. It emphasizes the failure of social media platforms and tech companies to control harmful content and calls for better safeguards.

For detailed information on **Social and Political Impacts of AI** [read this article here](#)

What challenges do women in politics face with AI-driven disinformation?

1. Women in politics, especially high-profile figures like Kamala Harris, face AI-generated deepfakes and disinformation.
2. Kamala Harris's campaign was attacked with fake videos, including one shared by Elon Musk, using cloned voice technology.
3. These videos misrepresented her, questioning her capability and integrity.
4. Other women politicians, such as Nikki Haley, Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, and Bangladeshi politicians Rumin Farhana and Nipun Roy, also faced similar targeted online harassment.

How does online harassment affect women differently than men?

1. Online abuse against women is often gendered, focusing on objectification, sexually explicit content, and personal attacks. Men may face criticism of their actions, but women are targeted based on their appearance and character.

2. Women politicians are trolled more harshly with racist, sexist, and sexualized content. For example, Kamala Harris was mocked by Donald Trump, while Megan Kelly and Ben Shapiro questioned her career progression.

What role do tech companies play in this problem?

1. Big Tech companies are criticized for not controlling the spread of harmful content. They often claim immunity under '**safe harbour**' protections, which shields them from liability for user-generated content.
2. They are accused of not investing enough in content moderation tools to combat disinformation.
3. Harmful content often remains on platforms, causing lasting harm to individuals. For instance, the viral spread of deepfake videos with millions of views remains a challenge.

For detailed information on **Governance of AI technology** [read this article here](#)

Is technology empowering women, or is it causing harm?

1. Although technology is seen as a tool for empowerment, it can also amplify gender biases.
1. AI algorithms, often designed with limited diversity in input data, sometimes reflect and reinforce societal stereotypes.
3. The lack of female AI developers in companies like Meta, Google, and OpenAI contributes to this issue, as technology often reflects the biases of its creators.

What should be done for making online spaces safer for women?

- 1. Label and Remove Harmful Content:** Labelling AI-generated content isn't enough; harmful content, especially explicit materials, should be removed immediately to prevent further damage.
- 2. Enhance Female Representation in Tech:** Increasing the number of female AI developers can help create more gender-neutral technology. Companies like Meta, Google, and OpenAI have a low percentage of female developers, which affects AI outcomes.
- 3. Implement Non-Technical Safeguards:** Alongside technical improvements, regulations, and fines can hold platforms accountable, as suggested in *The Coming Wave* by Mustafa Suleyman.
- 4. Involve Safety Researchers:** Conduct simulation exercises to detect gender biases in AI, ensuring fair and safe digital spaces for all.

Question for practice:

Examine how AI-driven disinformation uniquely impacts women in politics and the role of tech companies in addressing this issue.

The climate goals and challenges

Source: The post online the climate goals and challenges has been created, based on the article "**Time for action: Concrete action must take centre stage in climate mitigation**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 5th November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS paper3 – Environment — Conservation.

Context: The article discusses the upcoming climate conference in Baku, Azerbaijan, where countries will negotiate actions to limit global warming. Key issues include emission reduction targets, climate finance for developing countries, carbon markets, and the need for concrete action over endless negotiations.

For detailed information on **Need for climate finance** read [Article 1](#), [Article 2](#)

What are the climate goals and challenges?

1. The climate conference aims to prevent global temperatures from rising above 1.5° C above pre-Industrial levels.
2. Scientific assessments say greenhouse gas emissions must peak by 2025 and drop 43% by 2030.
3. But, current global commitments would only cut emissions by 2.6% by 2030 compared to 2019.
4. In 2023, emissions reached 53 billion metric tonnes, continuing an upward trend.

What are the funding issues faced by developing countries?

1. Developed countries promised \$100 billion per year in climate finance to help developing countries transition to clean energy, starting in 2020.
2. However, unclear definitions of 'climate finance' and delays in funding have led to frustration.
3. Developing countries need this support to grow without relying on fossil fuels. By 2025, countries must agree on a New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG), with \$100 billion as the base amount.
4. Rich countries also argue that large emitters like China and India should contribute.

What is the debate over carbon markets?

1. Carbon markets allow rich countries or companies to fund green projects in developing nations and earn credits.
2. These credits are tradeable, but setting accounting rules is challenging. The lack of clear guidelines has delayed their effectiveness in financing emission cuts.

Way forward:

Climate negotiations often become lengthy legal debates. To make real progress, countries must move from discussions to concrete actions.

Question for practice:

Discuss the challenges faced by developing countries in accessing climate finance and how these challenges impact their ability to transition to clean energy.

The toxic work culture in India's corporate sector

Source: The post the toxic work culture in India's corporate sector has been created, based on the article "We need to address India's workplace culture" published in "The Hindu" on 5th November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS paper2- Governance-Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

Context: The article highlights the toxic work culture in India's corporate sector. It discusses issues like long hours, employee burnout, and abusive management practices. It calls for regulation to address these problems and improve workplace culture for employees' well-being.

For detailed information on **The Issue of Overwork in India** [read this article here](#)

What sparked the conversation on toxic work culture in India?

1. The tragic death of Anna Sebastian, a young chartered accountant, in July allegedly due to work stress sparked conversations on toxic work culture in India.

2. Her mother expressed anguish, comparing corporate employees to "slaves," despite India's freedom gained in 1947.
3. Despite the Ministry of Labour's promise to investigate within 10 days, the report is still awaited, underscoring delays in addressing such issues.
4. India's corporate sector remains largely silent on this tragedy, likely because similar work conditions exist across many companies.
5. Toxic work culture is pervasive, with issues like excessive hours, inadequate staffing, and pressure to meet stiff targets labeled as "organisational stretch."
6. "Variable pay" policies primarily benefit top management, causing resentment among lower-level employees.

How does this compare to global work cultures?

1. Long working hours are common in the U.S. corporate culture but less so in Europe.
2. France has a standard 35-hour work week, while most European countries average about 40 hours.
3. Despite perceptions of lower competitiveness, European standards of living remain high.
4. In the U.S., the per capita income is \$85,000, compared to India's \$2,700.
5. Indian employees face additional challenges, such as difficult commutes and household responsibilities.
6. These factors contribute to a higher stress level in Indian workplaces compared to more balanced work cultures in Europe.

What role does management behavior play in toxicity?

1. Management behavior is a key contributor to workplace toxicity in India's corporate sector.
2. Bosses often use unprofessional or abusive language, impacting employees' mental well-being.
3. Unlike Europe, where legal protections exist, Indian employees cannot sue companies for mental stress, leaving them vulnerable. For example, in the U.K., Deputy Prime Minister Dominic Raab had to resign after accusations of "bullying" for his aggressive behavior.
4. In India, there are no such repercussions for managers, leading to unchecked toxic behaviors.
5. Performance evaluations are often ruthless, with terms like "weeding out dead wood," showing a lack of respect for employees.

Why do employees feel unfairly treated?

The performance evaluation system is often biased, with "under-performers" treated ruthlessly. "Weeding out dead wood" is a phrase used to justify this. Variable pay disproportionately benefits those at the top, while lower-level employees experience resentment, fueling a toxic work culture.

How does work culture differ in public sector firms?

Public sector firms in India generally have a better work culture. Employees may not earn as much, but they enjoy job security and union protection. Pay disparities are less severe, and although grievances exist, reports of toxic culture are rarer.

What are potential solutions to improve work culture?

1. To tackle toxic culture, corporates may talk about "core values" and organize "town hall meetings," but these rarely change things.

2. Boards of directors should take responsibility for work culture, staying informed and acting on issues.
3. Regulatory measures could enforce accountability and ensure that boards engage with employees at all levels.
4. Just as the Nirbhaya case led to changes in women's safety, Anna Sebastian's death should be a turning point for workplace reforms in India.

Question for practice:

Discuss the factors contributing to the toxic work culture in India's corporate sector and potential solutions to address these issues.

India's progress in fighting tuberculosis

Source: The post India's progress in fighting tuberculosis has been created, based on the article "**WHO reports shows India has plugged gaps in TB care. Funding deficits could delay eradication**" published in "**Indian Express**" on 5th November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS paper2-Governance- Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health

Context: The article highlights India's progress in fighting tuberculosis, including improved detection, treatment, and reduced incidence rates. However, challenges like under-nutrition, insufficient funds, and high costs for families remain. Expanded health insurance could help eradicate TB by 2025.

For detailed information on **TB in India: A fight to the end** [read this article here](#)

What is India's progress in tuberculosis control?

1. India has significantly improved tuberculosis (TB) detection and treatment, with 25.1 lakh out of 27 lakh estimated cases receiving treatment in 2023.
2. Over 85% of suspected TB cases were under medical care, essential as undiagnosed cases can be fatal.
3. Multi-drug-resistant TB has been addressed with shorter treatment periods, showing positive results.
4. TB cases declined by 18% in eight years, more than double the global rate of 8%.

What are the challenges to TB eradication in India?

1. India faces several obstacles to eliminate TB, including limited awareness, under-resourced medical facilities, and high rates of under-nutrition.
2. **Under-nutrition:** Poor diet is a major issue, contributing to 35-45% of new cases. It also increases mortality risk among TB patients.
3. **Insufficient Nutritional Support:** Though support coverage has improved, the amount remains low and leaves out 20% of TB patients.
4. **High Financial Costs:** WHO reports that 20% of families face catastrophic TB-related expenses, especially affecting those with severe cases.

What role can government funding and health insurance play?

1. India's funding for TB eradication has dropped from \$432.6 million in 2019 to \$302.8 million in 2023.

2. Experts suggest that expanding the government's health insurance program to cover TB patients, particularly those with severe infections, could help achieve TB eradication.

3. This approach could significantly ease the financial burden on families and strengthen the TB control program.

Question for practice:

Evaluate the impact of government funding and health insurance expansion on India's tuberculosis eradication efforts.

Challenges in India's higher education

Source: The post challenges in India's higher education has been created, based on the article "Rising STEM research demands revitalised education" published in "The Hindu" on 6th November 2024

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

Context: The article discusses challenges in India's higher education. Many graduates lack essential skills due to poor training quality. It suggests focusing on teaching over research, establishing joint degree programs between teaching and research institutions, and improving faculty development to enhance education quality and student outcomes.

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

What Are the Main Challenges in India's Higher Education?

- 1. Skill Gaps in Graduates:** Many students graduating from private colleges and newer IITs lack basic industry-required skills, impacting industry and research quality.
- 2. Quality of Training:** Faculty often chase papers for rankings, compromising teaching quality. This leads to poor-quality graduates, affecting industry standards and research output.
- 3. Faculty Shortages:** Institutions face faculty shortages, worsening as fewer students pursue higher education.
- 4. Overemphasis on Research:** Teaching institutions prioritize research output, often participating in predatory publications, diverting resources from teaching.
- 5. Limited Access to Research Institutes:** 95% of students study in non-premier institutions, like KIIT University, admitting over 2,000 computer science students annually, unlike IIT Bhubaneswar's 60.
- 6. Lack of Collaboration:** Minimal partnerships exist between research and teaching institutions, with few models, like NIT Surat-IIT Bombay, showing success.

How Can India's Education System Improve?

- 1. Separate Rankings:** Rank teaching institutions based on teaching quality, not research output, to reduce the reliance on low-quality publications.
- 2. Establish Joint Degree Programs:** Research and teaching institutions should establish partnerships for pedagogy improvements through "hyphenated degrees." For instance, in India, NIT Surat and IIT Bombay collaborate, allowing select students to spend their final year at IIT Bombay and continue into its M.Tech. program. In the U.S., community colleges partner with research universities, offering similar pathways.

3. Encourage Faculty Collaboration: Promote partnerships like the Partnerships for Accelerated Innovation and Research (PAIR) program, launched by the Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF), incentivizing research-teaching institution collaborations.

4. Develop Centers of Excellence: Fund government-backed centers focused on pedagogy, similar to research centers, to boost teaching quality across institutions.

What Role Can Collaboration Between Institutions Play?

1. Strengthening Education: Partnerships between research institutions (which admit about 5% of undergraduates) and teaching institutions (where 95% study) enhance the overall quality of education and research.

2. Joint Degree Programs: Establishing agreements allows top-performing students from teaching institutions to spend their final years in research institutions, earning degrees from both and improving their skills.

3. Curriculum Alignment: Collaborations help align curricula between teaching and research institutions, ensuring consistency in content and pedagogy for better learning outcomes.

4. Faculty Development: Faculty from research institutions can mentor those in teaching institutions through workshops and training, enhancing pedagogical skills.

How Will These Changes Benefit India?

1. Improving pedagogy will raise the quality of undergraduate education, helping produce more skilled graduates.

2. This focus on teaching can also improve research quality by relieving faculty of publication pressures.

3. These proposals are applicable to all fields, not just science and engineering. Revitalizing India's teaching institutions will create a stronger talent pool capable of driving research and innovation.

Question for practice:

Examine how collaborations between teaching and research institutions can address the challenges in India's higher education system.

Tensions between Canada and India over the killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar

Source: The post tensions between Canada and India over the killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar has been created, based on the article "On India-Canada diplomatic relations" published in "The Hindu" on 6th 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 talks about tensions between Canada and India over the killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar. India accuses Canada of sheltering Khalistani extremists. Cultural misunderstandings, legal issues, and media roles have strained relations. Both countries view the situation differently.

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

Why are Canada and India in Conflict?

1. The diplomatic row began when Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau alleged that India's intelligence might be involved in the killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, a Canadian citizen.
2. India had labeled Nijjar a Khalistani terrorist.
3. In response to these accusations, both nations expelled each other's top diplomats, worsening Hindu-Sikh tensions in Canada.

What is the Historical Background?

1. India has long criticized Canada for being a safe haven for Khalistani extremists.
2. India's biggest grievance was Canada's failure to prevent the 1985 Air India bombing, carried out by Canada-based Khalistani extremists.
3. This terrorist act killed 329 people, including children, and was the largest airline bombing before 9/11.
4. Canada's response to the bombing and subsequent investigations has strained relations between the two countries.

Do Sikhs in Canada Hold Political Power?

1. Sikhs make up only 2% of Canada's population but hold significant political influence due to geographic concentration. At one point, four Sikh ministers served in Trudeau's cabinet.
2. Many Sikh MPs belong to Trudeau's Liberal Party, although surveys show most Sikhs in Canada may vote Conservative in the next election.
3. While Trudeau's government has engaged with Sikh community events where Khalistan flags are displayed, this engagement isn't solely for political gains.

Are There Cultural Misunderstandings Between India and Canada?

Misunderstandings exist on both sides.

1. **In Canada**, the Air India bombing was long viewed as a "foreign tragedy" due to the victims' Indian heritage, reflecting systemic racism. Many Canadians remain unaware of Khalistani activism because no Khalistani terrorist acts have occurred in Canada since the bombing.
2. **In India**, public opinion assumes that Canadian institutions function similarly to Indian ones, with less understanding of Canada's guarded police independence and stringent rule of law.

Why Does Canada Deny India's Extradition Requests?

1. India's extradition requests for Khalistani extremists are often denied due to Canada's legal standards and concerns about India's human rights record.
2. Western countries, including Canada, avoid extradition when there's a risk of prolonged detention without trial.
3. Only six individuals have been extradited to India from Canada between 2002-2020.
4. Notably, India also struggles to extradite individuals like Nirav Modi and Vijay Mallya from countries like the U.K., which are friendly to India.

What Role Has the Media Played?

1. **In Canada**, media outlets have been critical of Trudeau's government for not sharing evidence regarding India's alleged involvement in Nijjar's killing. However, they also criticized India's aggressive stance.

2. **Indian** media has strongly supported the government narrative, sometimes pushing misinformation, such as claiming there were no convictions for the Air India bombing, despite Inderjit Singh Reyat's 30-year sentence for making the bomb.

Is Freedom of Expression a Factor?

1. India is frustrated by Canada's allowance of Khalistani referendums and parades that glorify violence.
2. In Canada, free speech laws permit these expressions, as long as they do not cross the legal threshold for hate speech.
3. Legal experts in Canada argue that stronger vigilance is needed against explicit hate speech, particularly in cases where threats are made.

Question for practice:

Discuss the factors contributing to the diplomatic conflict between Canada and India over the Khalistan issue and the killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar.

Balancing Privacy and Justice: Aadhaar Access for Identifying Unidentified Bodies

Source: The post balancing privacy and justice: Aadhaar access for identifying unidentified bodies has been created, based on the article "Aadhaar biometric data access will aid forensics" published in "The Hindu" on 6th November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2- Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

Context: The article discusses the conflict between privacy rights and the need to identify unidentified deceased individuals. It argues for allowing police access to Aadhaar biometric data in specific cases, emphasizing that this would help uphold the dignity of the deceased and aid investigations.

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

What is the Current Policy on Biometric Data Access?

1. The Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) enforces strict data privacy policies to protect personal information in the Aadhaar database.
2. Core biometric information, such as fingerprints and iris scans, cannot be shared with anyone, as per Section 29(1) of the Aadhaar Act.
3. Section 33(1) allows limited disclosure of certain data, but only by a High Court judge's order.

What Challenges Arise from this Restriction?

1. **Identification of Unidentified Bodies:** Police face obstacles in identifying unknown bodies, especially those of economically disadvantaged individuals, migrants, and daily wagers, who often lack identification documents.
2. **Limited Fingerprint Databases:** Police fingerprint databases usually contain records only for individuals with criminal histories. Many states have not yet digitized these records, slowing down cross-referencing efforts.
3. **Inefficiencies in Standard Procedures:** Current methods, such as checking distinctive features, CCTV footage, and missing persons reports, are often inadequate, especially when bodies are decomposed.

4. Impact on Families and Justice: Access to Aadhaar biometric data could provide closure to families and assist in homicide investigations, but the current restrictions prevent this. In the U.S., agencies use Deceased Persons Identification (DPI) Services for similar cases, helping to uphold public safety and dignity.

What should be done?

1. Amend the Aadhaar Act to allow police access to core biometric data, specifically for identifying deceased individuals, to address cases where other methods fail.
2. Limit access strictly to cases with a registered First Information Report (FIR) regarding unidentified bodies under Section 194 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (formerly Section 174 of the CrPC), and allow approval by the jurisdictional judicial magistrate instead of requiring a High Court order.
3. Draw inspiration from the United States' Deceased Persons Identification (DPI) Services, which help law enforcement identify unknown bodies through fingerprint databases.
4. Ensure requests for Aadhaar data are restricted to verified cases, prioritizing privacy and security.
5. This approach upholds dignity, offers closure to families, and ensures justice, especially for marginalized communities facing unequal access to the criminal justice system.

Question for practice:

Evaluate the potential benefits and challenges of amending the Aadhaar Act to allow police access to biometric data for identifying unidentified deceased individuals.

Supreme Court's judgment on the UP Madarsa Act, 2004

Source: The post Supreme Court's judgment on the UP Madarsa Act, 2004 has been created, based on the article **"With UP Madarsa verdict, Supreme Court upholds positive secularism"** published in **"Indian Express"** and on the article **"Express View on Supreme Court's UP Madarsa verdict: A learning matter"** published in **"Indian Express"** on 6th November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2- mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections.

Context: The article discusses the Supreme Court's judgment upholding the UP Madarsa Act, 2004. It protects minority rights, regulates madarsa education, ensures quality education, balances secularism and religion, and rejects misuse of the Basic Structure doctrine for ordinary laws.

What is the Anjum Qadri and Anr vs Union of India & Ors case about?

The Supreme Court's decision in *Anjum Qadri and Anr vs Union of India & Ors* is a landmark judgment upholding the constitutionality of the Uttar Pradesh Board of Madarsa Education Act, 2004. This ruling, authored by Chief Justice D.Y. Chandrachud, reverses the Allahabad High Court's March 22 judgment that struck down the Act, bringing relief to thousands of madarasas and lakhs of students.

What Was the Supreme Court's Ruling on the UP Madarsa Act?

1. Challenge to the Act: The Allahabad High Court struck down the Madarsa Act, citing secularism as part of the Basic Structure doctrine. It argued that regulating religious education violates secularism and Article 21A (Right to Education).

2. Act Upheld: The Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of the Uttar Pradesh Madarsa Act, 2004, overturning the Allahabad High Court's decision to strike it down.

3. Basic Structure Doctrine Misapplied: The Court clarified that the Basic Structure doctrine applies only to constitutional amendments, not ordinary laws like the Madarsa Act. This was supported by the 1975 *Indira Nehru Gandhij* judgment.

4. Secularism Defined: Citing *S.R. Bommai v. Union of India* (1994), the Court emphasized that secularism ensures equal treatment of all religions. Recognizing madarsas safeguards minority educational rights without violating secular principles.

5. Article 21A and RTE Act: The Court rejected claims that madarsa education violated Article 21A. In *Pramati Trust* (2014), the SC exempted minority institutions from the RTE Act's application.

What is the significance of the ruling?

1. Protection of Minority Rights: The judgment upheld the autonomy of madarsas under Article 30, safeguarding the rights of 13,364 madarsas educating over 12 lakh students in Uttar Pradesh.

2. Clarification on Secularism: It reaffirmed secularism as equal treatment of all religions, citing *S.R. Bommai* (1994), and dismissed the idea that madarsa education violates secularism.

3. Regulation with Balance: The Court supported state regulation to ensure education quality without undermining the minority character of institutions.

4. Distinction Between Laws: It clarified that the Basic Structure doctrine applies to constitutional amendments, not ordinary laws like the UP Madarsa Act.

5. Education Quality Concerns: The Court addressed criticisms of madarsa education quality, comparing it to systemic issues in secular schools. For example, 25% of 14-18-year-olds struggle with basic reading, according to the 2023 ASER report.

Question for practice :

Discuss how the Supreme Court's ruling on the Uttar Pradesh Madarsa Act, 2004, balances the protection of minority rights with the principles of secularism and education quality.

Significance of the 2024 BRICS Summit in Kazan, Russia

Source: The post significance of the 2024 BRICS Summit in Kazan, Russia has been created, based on the article "**The BRICS journey — gaining heft while in transition**" Published in "**The Hindu**" on 9th November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2- Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

Context: The article discusses the BRICS summit in 2024, highlighting Russia's leadership, its expansion, and the focus on economic, security, and cultural cooperation. It emphasizes India's role in BRICS, supporting multipolarity and bridging differences between global powers, with a growing influence of the group.

For detailed information on **BRICS Plus Grouping- Significance and Challenges** [read this article here](#)

What Was the Focus of the 2024 BRICS Summit in Kazan, Russia?

1. The 2024 BRICS summit in Kazan highlighted the group's survival and rejuvenation despite global challenges like COVID-19, geopolitical tensions, and economic sanctions.
2. Russia chaired the summit, which saw discussions on reforming the United Nations, enhancing economic cooperation, and addressing global conflicts.
3. The summit also addressed the use of local currencies for trade among member countries.

How has BRICS evolved over time?

1. **Formation and Initial Growth:** BRICS began in 2009 with Brazil, Russia, India, and China. South Africa joined in 2011, forming the current grouping.

2. **First Decade's Accomplishments:** In its first decade, BRICS achieved notable progress in fostering political, economic, and cultural cooperation.

3. **Challenges in the Second Decade:** BRICS faced major challenges:

- a. The COVID-19 pandemic put China on the defensive.
- b. The India-China border clash in Galwan Valley (June 2020) strained relations.
- c. Russia's Ukraine invasion (2022) led to a confrontation with NATO.

4. Expansion and Growth:

1. The 2023 summit welcomed five new members: Saudi Arabia, UAE, Iran, Egypt, and Ethiopia.
2. At the 2024 Kazan summit, 13 countries, as 'partner states. Countries are, Latin America: Cuba and Bolivia; Eurasia: Belarus and Türkiye; Africa: Algeria, Nigeria, and Uganda; Southeast Asia: Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, and Vietnam; and Central Asia: Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.

What are the key verticals of BRICS?

A. Political and Security Cooperation

1. Focuses on global peace, security, and conflict resolution.
2. The 2024 Kazan summit emphasized the conflict in West Asia, condemning Israel's actions but omitted the October 7 Hamas attack.
3. Called for an immediate ceasefire, release of hostages, and recognition of Palestine.
4. On Ukraine, BRICS reiterated national positions, urging dialogue and addressing "root causes" of the conflict.

B. Economic and Financial Cooperation

1. Encourages the use of local currencies in trade among BRICS members.
2. Discussed further development of the New Development Bank as a "new type of MDB."
3. Expansion of Saudi Arabia into BRICS raised hopes for a capital boost, but these remain unfulfilled.

C. Cultural and People-to-People Cooperation

1. Aims to strengthen social and economic development through exchanges in sports, culture, and civil society.
2. Cooperation with think tanks, businesses, and parliaments may have long-term benefits.

What role does BRICS play for India?

1. BRICS helps India promote multipolarity and maintain strategic autonomy.
2. It strengthens India-Russia ties and supports Global South interests.

3. At the summit, PM Modi and President Xi Jinping agreed on border disengagement, signaling improved India-China relations.
4. As China-India relations improve, the strategic space for India to deal with its western partners may also expand.
5. India uses BRICS to act as a bridge between the east, west, north, and south, enhancing its geopolitical influence.

Question for practice:

Discuss the significance of the 2024 BRICS Summit in Kazan, Russia, in addressing global challenges and enhancing cooperation among member countries.

Redevelopment plan for the Musi River

Source: The post redevelopment plan for the Musi River has been created, based on the article “**The Musi’s clean-up: The ‘revitalisation plan’ flows away from fixing the issue of severe pollution**” published in “**The Hindu**” on 9th November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper1- society-developmental issues

Context: The article discusses Telangana's Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy's plan to redevelop Hyderabad's polluted Musi riverfront. It highlights evictions of long-time residents, inadequate rehabilitation, lack of consultation, and failure to address pollution sources like untreated sewage and industrial effluents.

What is the redevelopment plan for the Musi River?

1. Telangana’s Chief Minister, A. Revanth Reddy, proposed an ambitious plan to redevelop Hyderabad’s Musi riverfront.
2. The plan aims to replicate London’s Thames riverfront.
3. Features include high rises, promenades, shopping complexes, and multiple bridges.

What is the current state of the Musi River?

1. The Musi River is heavily polluted and toxic. It carries 2,000 million litres of sewage daily, with over 60% untreated. Industrial effluents, mainly from Hyderabad’s generic drug industry, worsen the pollution.
2. People living along its banks include about one lakh residents, some on dry riverbeds and others on the floodplain buffer zone.

What are the Concerns with the Government's Approach?

- 1. Forced Evictions:** Around 15,000 structures in Old City were demolished, displacing long-term residents, including blue-collar workers like ragpickers and construction workers.
- 2. Disruption of Livelihoods:** Relocation plans propose high-rises in far-off locations, impacting the livelihoods of evictees.
- 3. Lack of Consultation:** The government claims consultations occurred, but evictees dispute this.
- 4. Failure to Address Pollution:** The plan overlooks key issues like 2,000 million litres of daily sewage flow, 60% untreated, and industrial effluents from the pharmaceutical sector.

5. Cosmetic Focus: Redevelopment prioritizes aesthetics over permanent solutions, replicating issues seen in Urban rivers like Chennai's Cooum, Delhi's Yamuna, and Kolkata's Hooghly.

Question for practice:

Examine the challenges and concerns associated with the Telangana government's redevelopment plan for the Musi Riverfront.

Sustainable Cooling: Combating Heatwaves Through Global and National Initiatives

Source: The post sustainable cooling: combating heatwaves through global and national initiatives has been created, based on the article "**Staying cool, but with clean tech, global collaborations**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 9th November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- environmental pollution and degradation.

Context: The article discusses the urgent need for sustainable cooling solutions due to rising global temperatures. It highlights India's leadership, global cooperation through the Quad and Kigali Amendment, and emphasizes affordable, energy-efficient cooling technologies to combat climate change and protect vulnerable populations.

For detailed information on **Recent Global Temperature Trends and Climate Change** [read this article here](#)

What is the Importance of Sustainable Cooling?

1. Cooling is essential in a warming world, especially for vulnerable populations facing extreme heat.
2. India experienced temperatures over 50°C in 2024, highlighting the urgency for thermal comfort and safety.
3. By 2030, 160-200 million Indians may face deadly heatwaves annually, risking productivity and health.
4. Cooling-related emissions, including HFCs, could cause 0.52°C of warming by 2100 if unchecked.
5. Efficient cooling can cut emissions, save energy costs, and reduce pollution.

How Are Global Efforts Addressing Cooling-Related Emissions?

1. The **Global Cooling Pledge**, announced at COP28, aims to reduce cooling emissions by **68% by 2050**, providing access to sustainable cooling for **3.5 billion people** and saving **\$17 trillion** in energy costs.
2. The **Wilmington Declaration** by Quad nations highlights a commitment to deploy **high-efficiency cooling systems** in climate-vulnerable regions and develop sustainable energy solutions.
3. These efforts complement the **Kigali Amendment**, which targets HFC reduction to prevent **0.52°C of warming by 2100**.
4. India's leadership through the **India Cooling Action Plan** aligns with these global initiatives to promote clean cooling technologies.

For detailed information on **Global Cooling Pledge at COP28** [read this article here](#)

What Challenges Do Developing Countries Face with Cooling?

1. Inefficient Cooling Appliances: Inefficient models using outdated refrigerants dominate markets, causing higher emissions and energy consumption.

2. Risk of Becoming Dumping Grounds: Without stronger regulations, developing countries risk importing inefficient appliances, worsening climate and energy challenges.

3. High Emissions Impact: Indirect emissions from fossil fuel-powered cooling and direct emissions from harmful refrigerants are critical concerns.

4. Weak Standards: Many countries lack integrated energy efficiency and refrigerant regulations to address these issues.

5. Escalating Cooling Demand: In India, cooling demand is expected to rise sharply, with air conditioner sales increasing 16% for every degree over 30°C and 1.14 billion air conditioners projected by 2050.

What Can Be Done Through a Mission-Mode Approach?

1. Focused Leadership: Establish a national mission for sustainable cooling, ensuring coordinated efforts across ministries.

2. Cross-Sectoral Collaboration: Create an inter-ministerial working group to integrate efforts and policies.

3. Budget Allocation: Allocate initial funding for the mission and develop long-term dedicated budget lines.

4. Capacity-Building: Initiate national training programs to build expertise in sustainable cooling technologies.

5. Address Rising Demand: India may have the highest cooling demand globally by 2050, with over 1.14 billion air conditioners in use.

6. ICAP Goals: Reduce cooling demand by 20%-25%, energy consumption by 25%-40%, and transition to low-GWP refrigerants.

7. Promote Clean Manufacturing: Expand production of high-efficiency air-conditioners and ceiling fans as part of India-U.S. joint efforts.

Question for practice:

Examine the significance of global and national efforts in promoting sustainable cooling to address the challenges posed by rising cooling demand and emissions.

Changed in the RBI's Currency Policy

Source: The post Changed in the RBI's Currency Policy has been created, based on the article “**Unshackling the Indian Rupee**” published in “**Indian Express**” on 9th November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- Indian Economy

Context: The article discusses the Reserve Bank of India's recent decision to actively intervene in the foreign exchange market, which has led to the rupee becoming more stable. This policy is criticized for distorting market signals, potentially harming exports, and lacking transparency.

For detailed information on **The RBI's Currency Management** [read this article here](#)

What Has Changed in the RBI's Currency Policy?

1. Increased Intervention: Since late 2022, the RBI has intervened actively in the forex market to stabilize the rupee, buying dollars to prevent appreciation and selling to prevent depreciation.

2. **Reduced Volatility:** Rupee-dollar volatility dropped to **1.9%** between April 2023 and August 2024, compared to the earlier average of **5%** (1991-2020).

3. **Shift from Market Forces:** Unlike the euro-dollar exchange rate driven by free markets, the rupee's stability stems from RBI's actions.

4. **Pegged-Like System:** The rupee now resembles a pegged exchange rate, raising concerns over export competitiveness and transparency.

Why is the RBI's Increased Intervention Problematic?

1. **Market Distortion:** Pegging exchange rates distorts demand-supply signals, harming the economy, as seen in pre-1991 India.

2. **Export Impact:** Real exchange rate appreciation makes Indian exports costlier, hurting the **Make in India** initiative.

3. **Global Examples:** Countries like Argentina and Thailand faced crises after pegging their currencies.

4. **Transparency Issues:** Lack of clear communication from RBI confuses private market participants, undermining trust and efficient market functioning.

What Were the Benefits of India's Earlier Flexible Exchange Rate Policy?

1. **Economic Stabilization:** During high growth periods, the rupee appreciated, preventing overheating. During downturns, depreciation boosted exports and supported recovery.

2. **Real Exchange Rate Stability:** Long-term balance was maintained, adjusting for inflation differences with trading partners. This supported sustainable trade competitiveness.

3. **Export Competitiveness:** Flexible rates ensured exports remained attractive by reflecting market-driven demand and supply.

4. **Market Efficiency:** The system allowed natural economic adjustments without state interference.

What Are the Consequences of the Current Policy?

1. It undermines India's **Make in India** initiative by making exports costlier.

2. It confuses businesses and investors, disrupting market efficiency.

3. The long-standing flexible exchange rate system, which worked well, has been replaced unnecessarily.

Question for practice:

Examine how the Reserve Bank of India's increased intervention in the foreign exchange market has impacted India's export competitiveness and market efficiency.