

ForumIAS

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Mains Marathon

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HISTORY
ECONOMICS
POLITY
SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
GEOGRAPHY AND ENVIRONMENT

FORUMIAS

INDEX

“Discuss the implications of the U.S.’s retreat from the Paris Agreement on global climate negotiations and the principle of climate justice.” (250 words)..... 2

Diabetes is a growing public health concern globally and in India. Critically evaluate India’s preparedness to meet the 2030 WHO targets for diabetes diagnosis and management.” (250 words)..... 2

Evaluate the need for robust healthcare infrastructure in high-altitude regions like the Himalayas. Discuss with examples from Ladakh and Himachal Pradesh. 3

Discuss the concept of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities (CBDR-RC). How does CBAM undermine this principle in the context of international climate agreements? 4

“Without commonly shared moral values, even a free market system cannot thrive.” Analyze this statement in light of the relationship between ethical governance and economic development. (150 words, 10 marks) 5

“Ensuring access to justice for undertrial prisoners is a reflection of an ethical justice system.” Discuss the ethical principles involved in implementing BNSS provisions effectively. (150 words, 10 marks)..... 6

“Planetary crises disproportionately affect vulnerable populations, especially children.” Discuss the implications of UNICEF’s findings on climate-related challenges for child welfare policies in India. (250 words, 15 marks) 7

Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) poses a significant global health threat. Analyze how improved immunization coverage can aid in mitigating AMR in India under the ‘One Health’ framework. (250 words) 8

The India-UAE Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT) reflects a nuanced approach to balancing investment protection and sovereign regulatory rights. Discuss the key changes introduced in this treaty compared to India’s 2015 Model BIT and their implications for foreign investments. (250 words) 9

“Discuss the implications of the U.S.’s retreat from the Paris Agreement on global climate negotiations and the principle of climate justice.” (250 words)

Introduction: Contextual Introduction

Body: Highlight implications of the U.S.’s retreat from the Paris Agreement.

Conclusion: Way forward

The U.S.’s retreat from the Paris Agreement (PA) under the Trump administration reflected a broader shift in American climate policy that undermined international climate action and principles of climate justice.

Implications for Global Climate Negotiations

- **Erosion of Multilateral Trust:** The U.S.’s withdrawal from the PA, coupled with its refusal to commit to global climate finance, damaged trust in multilateral frameworks. Developing nations, particularly those in the Global South, viewed the retreat as a shirking of responsibility by the world’s largest historical emitter of greenhouse gases (GHGs).
- **Weakening of Climate Finance:** The U.S.’s opposition to “climate reparations” and funding mechanisms like the Green Climate Fund (GCF) hindered resource mobilization for vulnerable countries, forcing them to grapple with mitigation and adaptation challenges without adequate financial support.
- **Undermining Science and Innovation:** The dismantling of federal climate science programs and cuts to research on renewable energy and battery storage impaired global progress on clean energy technologies. This weakened the ability to meet the Paris Agreement’s temperature targets and delayed the clean energy transition.

Implications for the Principle of Climate Justice

- **Abdication of Historical Responsibility:** The U.S. is responsible for approximately 25% of global historical emissions. Its retreat undermined the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDR), which holds developed nations accountable for their disproportionate contribution to climate change.
- **Exacerbation of Vulnerabilities:** Least-developed countries (LDCs) and small island developing states (SIDS), already bearing the brunt of climate impacts, suffered from reduced financial and technological support. This further entrenched inequities between the Global North and South.
- **Political Delegitimization of Climate Justice:** By opposing mechanisms like “climate reparations” and ending green subsidies, the U.S. de-emphasized the ethical responsibility of developed nations to aid vulnerable populations. This stymied progress in creating frameworks for equitable climate action.

Conclusion

For equitable and effective climate action, it is crucial to rebuild trust, reinforce multilateral frameworks, and ensure developed nations uphold their commitments to climate justice.

Diabetes is a growing public health concern globally and in India. Critically evaluate India’s preparedness to meet the 2030 WHO targets for diabetes diagnosis and management.” (250 words)

Introduction: Contextual Introduction

Body: What is India’s preparedness to meet WHO 2030 targets for diabetes management?

Conclusion: Way forward

Diabetes has emerged as a critical public health challenge globally, and India now leads in both prevalence and undiagnosed cases, with 212 million people living with the condition and 133 million over the age of 30 remaining untreated. The rise in diabetes cases in India, driven by lifestyle changes, dietary patterns, and tobacco use, poses significant barriers to achieving the WHO’s 2030 target: ensuring 80% of people with diabetes are diagnosed and 80% of them achieve glycemic control.

India's Preparedness to Meet WHO 2030 Targets

- **Improved Diagnostic Criteria:** Recent studies incorporating fasting plasma glucose and HbA1c levels provide a more comprehensive assessment of diabetes prevalence. This helps identify undiagnosed cases, particularly in high-burden regions like South Asia.
- **Policy Support:** Initiatives under the National Programme for Prevention and Control of Cancer, Diabetes, Cardiovascular Diseases, and Stroke (NPCDCS) aim to provide free screening and management services. Ayushman Bharat Health and Wellness Centres (HWCs) are being utilized to expand access to diagnostics.
- **Role of Technology:** Telemedicine services and mobile health units are increasingly deployed to reach underserved areas. Integration of digital health platforms supports patient tracking and follow-ups.
- **Awareness Campaigns:** National campaigns highlight lifestyle changes such as healthy diets and physical activity to mitigate diabetes risk factors.
- **Large Undiagnosed Population:** With 133 million people over 30 years of age undiagnosed, there is a significant gap in early detection. Many individuals remain asymptomatic or unaware of their condition, particularly in rural and underserved areas.
- **Lifestyle and Behavioral Factors:** Unhealthy diets rich in carbohydrates and saturated fats, sedentary lifestyles, and insufficient public focus on tobacco use as a diabetes risk factor exacerbate the problem. Tobacco use increases the risk of diabetes by 30-40%, yet its connection to diabetes is underemphasized in public health policies.
- **Healthcare Infrastructure Gaps:** Rural areas face significant deficits in diagnostic facilities and trained healthcare personnel. Poor integration of gestational diabetes management into maternal healthcare services increases the long-term risk for mothers and children.
- **Financial Barriers:** High out-of-pocket expenses for diabetes care deter many individuals from seeking timely diagnosis and treatment.
- **Lack of Coordinated Action:** Weak linkages between diagnostic services, treatment facilities, and community-based interventions hinder comprehensive diabetes management.

Conclusion

While India has taken steps to address diabetes, the magnitude of the challenge requires intensified and coordinated efforts. Scaling up diagnosis, integrating comprehensive care at the primary level, and addressing lifestyle and behavioral factors, particularly tobacco use, are critical to meeting the 2030 WHO targets.

Evaluate the need for robust healthcare infrastructure in high-altitude regions like the Himalayas. Discuss with examples from Ladakh and Himachal Pradesh.

Introduction: Contextual Introduction

Body: Highlight the need for robust healthcare infrastructure in high-altitude regions

Conclusion: Way forward

High-altitude regions such as the Himalayas are not only known for their scenic beauty but also for the health challenges they present due to extreme environmental conditions. High-altitude sickness (HAS) is a significant concern for residents and tourists alike.

Healthcare Needs in High-Altitude Regions

- **Addressing Altitude-Related Illnesses:** High-altitude sickness (HAS), including Acute Mountain Sickness (AMS), High-Altitude Pulmonary Edema (HAPE), and High-Altitude Cerebral Edema (HACE), poses severe risks. Example: Ladakh has developed specialized facilities to handle such cases, but similar infrastructure is sparse in other Himalayan states.

- **Lack of Immediate Medical Facilities:** Remote regions often lack well-equipped hospitals or clinics to handle emergencies. Example: In Himachal Pradesh, areas like Lahaul-Spiti have limited healthcare facilities, forcing patients to travel to Shimla or Chandigarh for advanced care.
- **Emergency Response Limitations:** Rapid medical evacuations are essential in high-altitude emergencies but are hindered by the absence of air-ambulance services and adequate road connectivity. Example: The rugged terrain in Himachal Pradesh and Ladakh delays response times, leading to preventable fatalities.
- **Increasing Tourism and Adventure Activities:** The influx of tourists and trekkers increases the demand for preventive and emergency healthcare services. Example: Uttarakhand, a hub for trekking and mountaineering, often witnesses tourist fatalities due to unpreparedness for high-altitude conditions.

Recommendations

- **Establishing Advanced Medical Facilities:** Create state-of-the-art hospitals equipped to handle high-altitude ailments in major Himalayan tourist hubs. Equip facilities with portable hyperbaric chambers, supplemental oxygen, and necessary medications like acetazolamide and dexamethasone.
- **Implementing Mandatory Health Screening:** Introduce mandatory health checks at base points, similar to the Inner Line Permit system in Ladakh. Example: Screenings for trekkers in Lahaul-Spiti could significantly reduce emergency cases.
- **Promoting Acclimatization Practices:** Enforce guidelines for gradual ascent, limiting daily altitude gain to no more than 500 meters above 3,000 meters. Conduct awareness campaigns on the risks of HAS and the importance of acclimatization.
- **Air-Ambulance Services:** Equip Himalayan states with air-ambulance facilities for rapid medical evacuation. Example: Ladakh's remote villages could benefit significantly from such services.

Conclusion

Drawing lessons from Ladakh's specialized healthcare efforts and expanding such measures across other Himalayan states will enhance resilience and preparedness in these remote yet vital regions.

Discuss the concept of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities (CBDR-RC). How does CBAM undermine this principle in the context of international climate agreements?

Introduction: Contextual Introduction

Body: Describe concept of CBDR & CBDR-RC and how CBAM undermine climate agreements.

Conclusion: Way forward

Common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDR), principle of international environmental law establish that all states are responsible for addressing global environmental destruction yet not equally responsible. CBDR was formalized in international law at the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro. The CBDR concept has evolved into CBDR-RC with the addition of Respective Capacities term to it, in the Paris Accord. CBDR-RC principle, has since then been a key element in international environmental agreements involving climate change. The principle recognizes historical differences in the contributions of developed and developing States to the creation of global environmental problems like climate change, global warming. At the same time, the principle also recognizes the differences in the economic and technical capacities of developed and developing countries to tackle these problems.

How CBAM Undermines CBDR-RC

- **Shifting the Burden to Developing Countries:** CBAM forces exporters from developing countries to bear additional costs for complying with EU carbon pricing standards. This contradicts the

CBDR-RC principle, which requires developed countries to support rather than penalize developing nations for their lower emissions capabilities and resources.

- **Neglecting Historical Responsibilities:** CBAM applies a uniform tax based on carbon content, ignoring the historical emissions of developed countries like EU members. It disproportionately impacts developing nations that have contributed minimally to historical greenhouse gas concentrations.
- **Trade Barriers and Economic Inequality:** CBAM acts as a trade barrier, making exports from developing countries less competitive in global markets. For example, countries like India and Indonesia, heavily reliant on carbon-intensive industries, may face significant economic disadvantages.
- **Lack of Financial and Technological Support:** CBDR-RC mandates developed nations to assist developing countries with climate adaptation and mitigation. However, CBAM imposes additional compliance costs on these countries without ensuring reciprocal financial or technological support.
- **Risk of Climate Colonialism:** CBAM can be perceived as a form of "climate colonialism," where developed nations impose their climate standards on developing countries without accounting for their unique developmental needs and constraints.

Conclusion

Protectionist measures like CBAM undermine the cooperative efforts essential for tackling global climate challenges. India's criticism of CBAM as "discriminatory" is justified, as it disproportionately burdens developing nations while disregarding historical emissions and differences in capacities. By championing equity-based approaches, advocating for revenue redistribution, and upholding the principles of CBDR-RC, India can enhance its role as a leader in international climate negotiations and foster a more just and inclusive approach to combating climate change.

"Without commonly shared moral values, even a free market system cannot thrive." Analyze this statement in light of the relationship between ethical governance and economic development. (150 words, 10 marks)

Introduction: Contextual Introduction

Body: Highlight the role of morals and ethics as the basis of economic development

Conclusion: Way forward

The statement, "*Without commonly shared moral values, even a free market system cannot thrive,*" highlights the interplay between ethical governance, moral values, and economic development. It underscores that a thriving economy, even in a free market framework, depends not only on policies and systems but also on a foundation of shared ethical principles.

Role of Ethical Governance in Economic Development

- **Building Trust in Institutions:** Ethical governance fosters transparency, accountability, and fairness in public institutions, which are essential for a functioning economy. When citizens and businesses trust institutions, they are more likely to engage in productive economic activities, pay taxes, and invest in the market.
- **Reducing Corruption:** Corruption erodes public confidence, misallocates resources, and stifles innovation. For instance, countries with higher levels of corruption, such as Somalia or Venezuela, struggle to attract foreign investments despite having abundant natural resources.
- **Ensuring Fair Market Practices:** Ethical governance enforces anti-monopoly laws and protects smaller businesses from exploitation by dominant players. This ensures a level playing field, encouraging innovation and competition, which are vital for economic growth.

Free Markets and the Need for Ethical Frameworks

- **Environmental Degradation:** Unchecked industrialization without regard for environmental ethics can result in long-term damage, such as climate change.
- **Exploitation of Consumers:** Companies with monopolistic power may overcharge consumers or provide substandard products.
- **Income Inequalities:** The absence of ethical business practices exacerbates inequalities, hampering economic growth by reducing the purchasing power of large sections of society.

Moral Values as the Foundation of Markets

- **Promoting Social Stability:** Shared moral values, such as honesty and fairness, reduce economic uncertainties and enable smooth transactions.
- **Encouraging Responsible Business Practices:** Companies adhering to ethical standards contribute to sustainable development. Unilever's commitment to sustainable sourcing enhances its brand value and profitability while aligning with global sustainability goals.
- **Preventing Exploitative Practices:** Moral values prevent exploitation of vulnerable groups, ensuring inclusive growth. For instance, ethical labor practices help avoid social upheaval, as seen in the Fair Trade movement.

Conclusion

Policymakers must ensure that economic growth aligns with societal values, creating a virtuous cycle of ethical governance and sustainable development.

“Ensuring access to justice for undertrial prisoners is a reflection of an ethical justice system.” Discuss the ethical principles involved in implementing BNSS provisions effectively. (150 words, 10 marks)

Introduction: Contextual Introduction

Body: Highlight ethical principles involved in implementing BNSS provisions effectively

Conclusion: Way forward

The plight of undertrial prisoners in India highlights systemic issues in the justice delivery system. The **Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), 2023**, particularly Section 479, aims to address these concerns by introducing relaxed bail standards for first-time offenders.

Ethical Principles Involved

- **Justice and Fairness:** The principle of justice demands that individuals are presumed innocent until proven guilty. Prolonged detention of undertrials, who constitute over 75% of India's prison population (as per the Prison Statistics India 2022), violates their right to timely justice. Section 479 of the BNSS, mandating bail for first-time offenders after serving one-third of the maximum sentence, upholds the ethical principle of fairness by preventing unnecessary incarceration.
- **Equity and Accessibility:** Justice must be accessible to all, regardless of socio-economic status. Many undertrials remain imprisoned because they cannot afford bail or legal aid. Section 479's provision for automatic bail applications by jail superintendents ensures that systemic inequities do not hinder access to justice.
- **Human Dignity:** Prolonged detention in overcrowded prisons, often without conviction, undermines the inherent dignity of individuals. By addressing the issue of undertrials, the BNSS aligns with the ethical responsibility of safeguarding human dignity.
- **Accountability and Rule of Law:** Effective implementation of Section 479 reflects the state's ethical duty to ensure that the rule of law is not compromised by procedural delays or negligence. The Supreme Court's directive for retrospective application of the BNSS demonstrates institutional accountability.

- **Proportionality:** The ethical principle of proportionality emphasizes that restrictions on liberty must align with the gravity of the offense. BNSS provisions for first-time offenders ensure that imprisonment is not disproportionately punitive for minor infractions.

Conclusion

Ethical governance, coupled with judicial accountability, can ensure that undertrial prisoners are treated with fairness and dignity, aligning the justice system with constitutional values and global human rights standards.

**“Planetary crises disproportionately affect vulnerable populations, especially children.”
Discuss the implications of UNICEF’s findings on climate-related challenges for child welfare policies in India. (250 words, 15 marks)**

Introduction: Contextual Introduction

Body: Key implications of UNICEF findings on child welfare policies

Conclusion: Way forward

The UNICEF State of the World’s Children 2024 (SOWC-2024) report highlights how planetary crises, encompassing climate destabilization, biodiversity loss, and pollution, disproportionately impact children, particularly in vulnerable regions like South Asia.

Key Challenges Identified by UNICEF

- **Health Impacts**
 - **Pollution:** The developing lungs, brains, and immune systems of children are acutely affected by air and water pollution.
 - **Vector-Borne Diseases:** Rising temperatures fuel diseases like dengue and malaria.
 - **Waterborne Diseases:** Contaminated water from floods exacerbates diarrhea, a major cause of child mortality.
- **Food Security:** Climate-induced disruptions to agriculture threaten children’s nutrition and increase risks of stunting and malnutrition.
- **Education:** Over 400 million children globally have experienced school closures due to climate disasters, impeding learning and economic prospects.
- **Psychosocial Impacts:** Exposure to extreme weather and displacement fuels trauma, anxiety, and helplessness among children.
- **Digital Divide:** Low internet penetration in regions like South Asia impedes access to digital learning and innovation, compounding inequality.

Implications for India’s Child Welfare Policies

- **Health Infrastructure Enhancement:** Expand healthcare outreach programs to provide vaccinations, nutritional supplements, and treatments for climate-related diseases. Prioritize air and water quality improvement through stricter regulations and investments in clean energy.
- **Climate-Resilient Nutrition Strategies:** Strengthen food distribution systems like the Mid-Day Meal Scheme to ensure continuity during climate crises. Promote climate-resilient crops and agricultural practices to enhance food security.
- **Education Continuity:** Develop disaster-resilient schools and mobile learning solutions to prevent education disruption. Integrate climate education into curricula to prepare children for future environmental challenges.
- **Child-Friendly Disaster Management:** Include child-specific provisions in disaster management plans, such as safe spaces in relief camps and targeted psychosocial support. Enhance the role of local governments in identifying and safeguarding vulnerable children during crises.

- **Digital Inclusion:** Bridge the digital divide through affordable internet access and investments in rural digital infrastructure under initiatives like Digital India. Strengthen online safety measures to protect children from exploitation and cyber risks.
- **Targeting Climate Hotspots:** Prioritize climate mitigation and adaptation efforts in regions like eastern India, which face frequent floods, and northern hill states, prone to glacial melt impacts. Leverage data-driven tools to identify the most vulnerable children and provide targeted aid.

Conclusion

The findings of the SOWC-2024 report serve as a call to action. Planetary crises are not just environmental challenges but moral imperatives that require safeguarding the rights and futures of the most vulnerable—our children. By embedding resilience, inclusivity, and sustainability into policies, India can mitigate these challenges and pave the way for a healthier, safer, and equitable future for its children.

Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) poses a significant global health threat. Analyze how improved immunization coverage can aid in mitigating AMR in India under the 'One Health' framework. (250 words)

Introduction: Contextual Introduction

Body: How Improved Immunization Coverage Can Mitigate AMR?

Conclusion: Way forward

Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is a pressing global health issue, with overuse and misuse of antibiotics driving its rise. In India, a country with high antibiotic consumption and significant healthcare disparities, the role of vaccines is critical in mitigating AMR. Vaccines such as the pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (PCV) and Haemophilus influenzae vaccine (Hib) can reduce disease burden, antibiotic misuse, and AMR risk, especially when implemented under the 'One Health' framework integrating human, animal, and environmental health.

How Improved Immunization Coverage Can Mitigate AMR

- **Reduction in Disease Burden:** Diseases caused by Streptococcus pneumoniae and Haemophilus influenzae, including pneumonia, otitis media, and meningitis, lead to high antibiotic use.
- **Curbing Unnecessary Antibiotic Use:** Unvaccinated children are more likely to suffer from preventable infections, leading to antibiotic misuse, even for viral or self-limiting conditions. Enhanced immunization directly reduces the need for antibiotics, slowing the emergence of AMR strains.
- **Equitable Antibiotic Usage:** While antibiotic consumption reduction is most pronounced in wealthier groups due to affordability, vaccination ensures that even economically disadvantaged groups benefit from reduced disease burden, leading to more equitable antibiotic usage.
- **Impact on Livestock and Zoonotic Diseases:** Under the 'One Health' approach, expanding vaccination programs to livestock can reduce the need for antibiotics in animal husbandry, addressing AMR in both humans and animals.
- **Environmental Protection:** By reducing antibiotic consumption, vaccination indirectly minimizes antibiotic residues in the environment, curtailing the proliferation of resistant strains in water and soil.

Conclusion

Vaccination is a vital, yet underutilized, tool in India's fight against AMR. Increasing coverage of PCV and Hib vaccines can prevent illnesses, reduce unnecessary antibiotic use, and promote equitable healthcare access. Under the 'One Health' framework, integrating immunization with efforts to address human, animal, and environmental health can significantly mitigate AMR, safeguarding public health for future generations.

The India-UAE Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT) reflects a nuanced approach to balancing investment protection and sovereign regulatory rights. Discuss the key changes introduced in this treaty compared to India's 2015 Model BIT and their implications for foreign investments. (250 words)

Introduction: Contextual Introduction

Body: Highlight key changes in BIT and implications for foreign investments

Conclusion: Way forward

The recently signed India-UAE Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT) reflects a nuanced approach to balancing investment protection with the sovereign regulatory rights of states. While it draws from India's 2015 Model BIT, significant departures reveal evolving priorities in India's investment treaty practices. These changes aim to address the concerns of foreign investors, streamline investor-state dispute resolution, and limit the discretion of arbitration tribunals.

Key Changes Introduced in the India-UAE BIT

- **Reduced Waiting Period for Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS)**
 - **2015 Model BIT:** Mandated exhaustion of local remedies for five years before initiating ISDS.
 - **India-UAE BIT:** Reduces this period to three years, addressing concerns of delays in India's overburdened judiciary.
- **Definition of Investment**
 - **2015 Model BIT:** Included a criterion that the investment must be "significant for the development" of the host state, leaving room for subjective interpretation.
 - **India-UAE BIT:** Omits this requirement, instead of focusing on objective economic characteristics like capital commitment, profit expectation, and risk assumption.
- **Clarity on Treatment Standards**
 - **2015 Model BIT:** Linked violations such as denial of justice and due process breaches to Customary International Law (CIL).
 - **India-UAE BIT:** Removes reference to CIL, specifying clear grounds for treaty violations.
- **Prohibition of Third-Party Funding and Fraudulent Investments:** Introduces explicit disallowance of third-party funding in disputes and denies ISDS access in cases of alleged fraud or corruption.
- **Exclusion of Most Favored Nation (MFN) Clause and Taxation Measures:** Like the Model BIT, excludes MFN provisions and bars the jurisdiction of ISDS tribunals over taxation measures, even if they are abusive.

Implications for Foreign Investments

- **Improved Investment Climate:** Reduced ISDS waiting period and clearer investment definitions create a more investor-friendly framework, fostering confidence, especially among UAE investors.
- **Regulatory Sovereignty:** Exclusions of MFN clauses, taxation measures, and domestic judicial decisions reinforce India's ability to regulate in the public interest while balancing investment protection.
- **Streamlined Arbitration:** By curbing arbitral discretion and excluding ambiguous criteria like CIL references, the treaty aligns with India's aim of reducing treaty abuse and arbitration costs.
- **Strengthening Bilateral Ties:** The treaty aligns with India's broader economic strategy, complementing the India-UAE Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) to attract UAE investments in sectors like infrastructure and energy.

Conclusion

The continuity and innovation in India's BIT practices underscore a pragmatic approach to fostering a robust investment ecosystem.