

# 9 PM Current Affairs Weekly Compilation

For UPSC CSE mains examination



**3<sup>rd</sup> Week**

Dec. 2024

**Features :**

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

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## How Powerful Countries Dominate Through Global Chaos

**Source:** The post How Powerful Countries Dominate Through Global Chaos has been created, based on the article "Geopolitics has played a massive role in the rise of 'Master States'" published in "Live mint" on 17th December 2024

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper2- International relations

**Context:** The article explains how powerful countries, or "Master States," use geopolitical chaos to gain economic and military dominance. It highlights how nations like Britain, the US, Germany, and Japan leveraged resources, markets, and opportunities during global upheavals to succeed.

### What is the Westphalian System?

1. The Westphalian system describes a world where countries, known as nation-states, operate under their own rules.
2. These rules are often shaped by a few powerful countries, referred to as "Master States," which dominate because of their military and economic strength.
3. Master States maintain control by creating rules that benefit themselves and disadvantage less developed countries. This creates an unequal global economic system.

### How Have Master States Historically Gained Power?

1. **Colonization and Conquest:** European powers like Britain plundered resources from colonies in Asia, Africa, and the Americas. Colonies provided cheap raw materials, labor, and markets for British goods.
2. **Slavery and High Tariffs:** The U.S. used slavery to address labor shortages and protected its manufacturers with high tariffs while stealing European technology.
3. **Geopolitical Chaos:** The U.S. benefited from World War II by supplying war materials and leading reconstruction. The 1944 Bretton Woods system established the U.S. dollar as the global trade currency.

### How Did the U.S. Help Japan and Germany After World War II?

1. After World War II, the U.S. helped rebuild Japan and Germany. It funded Europe's recovery through the Marshall Plan and boosted Japan by buying its products during the Korean War and beyond, which helped Japan's economy flourish.
2. The rise of Master States relies significantly on their ability to manipulate global rules and take advantage of geopolitical disturbances to cement their economic and military superiority.

### Question for practice:

Discuss how Master States have historically gained power by leveraging geopolitical chaos and economic strategies.

## Indian Railways Electrification Drive Lacks Strategic Clarity

**Source:** The post Indian Railways Electrification Drive Lacks Strategic Clarity has been created, based on the article "The hidden cost of greenwashing the Indian Railways" published in "The Hindu" on 17th December 2024

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper3-Infrastructure: Energy, Railways etc.

**Context:** The article criticizes the Indian Railways' hasty electrification drive. It highlights the wastage of diesel locomotives with years of service left, questions environmental benefits, and argues that the policy lacks economic and strategic clarity, causing significant financial loss.

For details information on **Railway network in 14 states 100% electrified in FY23** [read this article here](#)

### What is the Issue with Indian Railways' Electrification Efforts?

- 1. Wastage of Diesel Locomotives:** As of March 2023, 585 diesel locomotives were idle. Today, the number is 760. Over 60% of these locomotives have a remaining life of more than 15 years.
- 2. Minimal Foreign Exchange Savings:** According to the AC Nielsen report (2014), Railways' diesel consumption is just 2% of India's total diesel use (2021-22). Trucks consume 28%, and agriculture consumes 13.2% of diesel, showing Railways' minimal contribution.
- 3. Environmental Claims Are Misleading:** 50% of electricity in India comes from coal-fired plants. Railways earn 40% of total freight revenue by transporting coal. Electrification increases coal dependency, shifting pollution to thermal plants.
- 4. Policy Lacks Clarity:** The rush for 100% electrification wastes serviceable assets and taxpayer money, causing financial losses.

### What is the Strategic Reasoning Behind Keeping Diesel Locomotives?

- 1. Disaster Management:** Indian Railways plans to retain **2,500 diesel locomotives** for emergencies and strategic purposes.
- 2. Traffic Needs:** Around **1,000 diesel locomotives** will remain operational for a few more years to meet traffic demands.
- 3. Residual Service Life:** Over **60% of idle locomotives** still have more than **15 years of service left**.

**Conclusion:** The Indian Railways' rush for 100% electrification lacks practical and environmental justification. Over 760 diesel locomotives, 60% with over 15 years of life, are being wasted. Electrification relies on 50% coal-generated electricity, increasing pollution. Retaining 3,500 diesel locomotives highlights policy contradictions. This approach causes significant financial loss without achieving real "green" goals.

### Question for practice:

Examine the economic, environmental, and strategic issues associated with the Indian Railways' rush for 100% electrification, as highlighted in the article.

## India's Path to Overcome Green Hydrogen Challenges

**Source:** The post India's Path to Overcome Green Hydrogen Challenges has been created, based on the article "**Green hydrogen and the financing challenge**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 17th December 2024

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper3-Infrastructure: Energy

**Context:** The article highlights India's challenges in achieving its green hydrogen goals due to high production costs and financing barriers. It suggests innovative financing, policy frameworks, industrial hubs, and global

collaborations to reduce risks and scale green hydrogen production efficiently. For details information on **Green Hydrogen Mission** [read this article here](#)

### Why is Green Hydrogen Important for India?

- 1. Ambitious Goal:** India aims to produce **5 million metric tonnes (MMT)** of green hydrogen annually by **2030** to decarbonize its industrial sectors and achieve **net-zero emissions by 2070**. However, current progress is slow, with BloombergNEF estimating that India may meet only **10% of its goal**.
- 2. Reducing Reliance on Fossil Fuels:** Current traditional hydrogen methods (grey/blue) cost \$1.9-\$2.4 per kg, while green hydrogen costs \$5.30-\$6.70 per kg. Scaling production can reduce this gap.
- 3. Global Leadership Opportunity:** Countries like the U.K, U.S., and Japan are creating hydrogen hubs, providing successful examples for India.
- 4. Industrial Hubs Development:** States like Odisha, Maharashtra, and Gujarat can become green hydrogen hubs.
- 5. Access to Abundant Renewables:** Leveraging India's renewable energy resources with efficient financing can lower production costs.
- 6. Economic Potential:** Policies like purchase agreements and international collaborations can attract investments and boost exports.

### What are the major challenges related to India's green hydrogen sector?

- 1. High Production Costs:** Green hydrogen costs \$5.30-\$6.70 per kg, while grey/blue hydrogen costs only \$1.9-\$2.4 per kg, making it hard to attract investment.
- 2. Levelised Cost of Electricity (LCOE):** High **Weighted Average Cost of Capital (WACC)** in emerging markets like India increases LCOE. Studies show WACC rising from **10% to 20%** can increase hydrogen costs by **73%**.
- 3. Electrolyzer Costs:** These range between **\$500-\$1,400/kW** for alkaline systems and **\$1,100-\$1,800/kW** for proton exchange membrane systems.
- 4. Slow Investments Globally:** By **May 2024**, only **27.6%** of **1,572 large-scale hydrogen projects** (valued at **\$370 billion**) reached final investment decisions.
- 5. Lack of Policy Innovation:** Unlike the **U.K.'s Low Carbon Hydrogen Standard** or **U.S. hydrogen hubs**, India lacks policies to build market confidence and integrated ecosystems.

### How Can India Overcome Financing Barriers?

India must adopt a multi-pronged approach to attract investments:

#### 1. Policy Measures:

- Implement **long-term hydrogen purchase agreements**.
- Provide loan guarantees to reduce risks.
- Use regulatory **sandboxes** to experiment with new business models.

## 2. Innovative Financing Models:

- Introduce modular project financing to scale facilities in phases.
- Use “anchor-plus” financing where industrial anchor customers support initial capacity.
- Adopt equipment-leasing structures to reduce upfront electrolyzer costs.

## 3. Global Collaboration:

1. Set up standardized hydrogen certification to boost exports.
2. Develop **cross-border trade partnerships**, such as the Australia-Japan Hydrogen Energy Supply Chain Project.

## Way Forward

India needs to develop industrial hubs in states like Odisha, Maharashtra, and Gujarat, where projects can demonstrate effective business models and achieve lower hydrogen prices through strategic planning and financial structuring.

## Question for practice:

Evaluate how India can overcome the challenges of high production costs and financing barriers to achieve its green hydrogen goals.

## La Niña delays impact India's weather patterns

**Source:** The post La Niña delays impact India's weather patterns has been created, based on the article “**How does La Niña affect India's climate?**” published in “**The Hindu**” on 17th December 2024

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper3- Environment

**Context:** The article discusses La Niña, a climate phenomenon that affects global weather. It explains its delayed emergence in 2024, its effects on rainfall, temperature, and air quality, and how it impacts India's monsoon and winter seasons. Climate change may increase its frequency.

## What is La Niña and El Niño?

La Niña is a phase of the El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO). It occurs when the Pacific Ocean between Indonesia and South America becomes cooler than normal. Its counterpart, El Niño, causes warming of the same region.

For details information on **El Nino: Concept and impacts** [read this article here](#)

## How is La Niña affecting winter in India?

1. This winter, southern cities like Bengaluru and Hyderabad are colder than usual. Northern India has a delayed winter with above-normal temperatures.
2. **Current ONI values** show that La Niña has not formed yet.
3. If La Niña had formed, north India would have experienced colder winters.

#### 4. 35-Year Analysis:

- La Niña winters have *colder nights* but *higher daytime temperatures*.
- **Wind Speed:** Winds are stronger during La Niña, reducing air pollution.
- **Planetary Boundary Layer Height (PBLH):** PBLH is slightly lower, which can trap pollutants near the ground.

#### How is La Niña affecting India?

1. **Delayed Onset:** La Niña was expected to emerge by July 2024 but has not yet formed. There is now only a 57% chance it will develop this year.
2. **Air Quality Effects:** Higher wind speeds during expected La Niña conditions could help disperse air pollutants, potentially improving air quality. However, cooler temperatures might increase biomass burning, worsening pollution due to more pollutants being trapped near the ground.
3. **Monsoon Impact:** La Niña years typically see normal or above-normal rainfall in India, benefiting the monsoon season. In contrast, El Niño years often bring less rainfall and hotter summers, like the severe heatwaves India faced in April of this year.
4. **Future Outlook:** If La Niña persists into 2025, it may bring relief from heat waves and strengthen the monsoon.

For details information on **Negative impact of delayed La Niña** read [this article here](#)

#### Conclusion

La Niña's delayed emergence is affecting weather patterns. Its formation could benefit India by reducing heat and strengthening the monsoon. However, it may also impact winter air quality and temperature patterns in the coming months.

#### Question for practice:

Examine how the delayed emergence of La Niña in 2024 is impacting India's winter, air quality, and monsoon patterns.

### France faces political crisis after failed elections

**Source:** The post France faces political crisis after failed elections has been created, based on the article “**Costly gambles: Emmanuel Macron is driving France into one crisis after another**” published in “**The Hindu**” on 17th December 2024

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper2- International relations

**Context:** The article discusses France's political crisis after President Macron's failed gambles. A hung parliament, economic troubles, and unstable governments have worsened the situation. Macron's refusal to work with the Left has prolonged the crisis, risking further instability and economic harm.

#### What Led to France's Current Political Crisis?

1. President Emmanuel Macron called a snap legislative election to secure a new mandate for his centrist coalition and stop the far-right National Rally's rise.

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2. However, the election led to a hung parliament. The left-wing **New Popular Front (NFP)** emerged as the largest bloc, but Macron appointed **Michel Barnier**, a conservative leader from the Republicans (who finished fourth), to form the government.

3. Barnier's government collapsed within **three months**, leaving France without a budget for **2025**.

#### Who Is France's New Prime Minister?

1. Macron has now appointed **François Bayrou**, leader of the Democratic Movement party, as Prime Minister.

2. His party holds just **33 seats** in the **577-member National Assembly**, making him weak in Parliament.

3. Even if Macron's coalition (Ensemble) and the Republicans combine, they **still lack a majority** (289 seats).

#### What Are the Challenges Facing the New Government?

1. The Socialist Party, part of the left-wing alliance, has refused to join the new government.

2. This leaves Bayrou's government dependent on Marine Le Pen's **far-right National Rally** for survival.

3. Passing an emergency budget to ensure essential services is Bayrou's immediate task.

4. Negotiations will be difficult as the far-right opposes **further cuts in social spending**.

#### How Severe Are France's Economic Issues?

France is facing significant economic troubles:

- Rising unemployment and falling domestic consumption.
- The fiscal deficit has jumped to **6.1% of GDP**, worse than Greece, Spain, and Italy (countries hit hard in the 2008-09 debt crisis).
- France's national debt has grown to **€3.2 trillion**, over **112% of GDP**.

#### Question for practice:

Discuss the factors that led to France's current political crisis and the challenges facing its new government.

### Religion and Reservations in India

**Source:** This article on **Religion and Reservations in India** is based on article “ **How Supreme Court, govt have attempted to define importance of religion in SC & OBC reservations**” published in **The Indian Express** on **17<sup>th</sup> December 2024**.

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS-2- Indian Constitution—Historical Underpinnings, Evolution, Features, Amendments, Significant Provisions and Basic Structure.

**Context:** The article addresses the complex and contentious issue of **religion and reservations** in India, focusing on **Other Backward Classes (OBC)** and **Scheduled Caste (SC)** quotas. It examines the evolving legal and governmental positions on whether religion can be a basis for providing reservation benefits and highlights specific Supreme Court and High Court rulings that have shaped the debate.

#### Can reservations be based on religion, especially for Other Backward Classes (OBC)?



1. While the Constitution (Article 16(4)) allows states to provide reservations for “backward classes” underrepresented in public services, the Supreme Court in **Indra Sawhney v Union of India (1992)** ruled that religion cannot be the *sole* basis for determining backwardness.
2. The court emphasized that other **social, economic, or educational criteria must also justify reservations.**
3. Several states have provided OBC reservations to Muslims. For example:
  - **Kerala:** Muslims have been part of OBC quotas since 1956.
  - **Karnataka:** In 1995, based on the Justice O. Chinnappa Reddy Commission’s 1990 report, Muslims “as a whole” were deemed socially and economically backward.
  - **Tamil Nadu:** Included Muslim groups in the OBC quota in 2007.
4. However, challenges persist. For instance, on **May 22, 2024**, the Calcutta High Court struck down OBC reservations for 77 classes—mostly from the Muslim community—stating that the reservations were based on religion without “objective criteria” to prove backwardness.

### How does religion impact Scheduled Caste (SC) reservations?

1. The Constitution (Article 341) allows the President to specify SC communities. The **Scheduled Castes Order, 1950** restricts SC status to Hindus, later extended to Sikhs (1956) and Buddhists (1990). Converts to Christianity and Islam remain excluded.
2. In the *Soosai v Union of India* (1985) case, the Supreme Court ruled that a religious convert cannot retain SC status unless they prove caste-related discrimination persists in their new religious community.
3. The **Ranganath Mishra Commission (2007)** found caste discrimination exists across all religions and recommended that SC status should extend to converts to Christianity and Islam. However, the Centre rejected this recommendation.
4. A key challenge is pending in the **Ghazi Saaduddin v State of Maharashtra** case (since 2004), which questions the constitutional validity of the 1950 Presidential Order. In April 2024, the Supreme Court delayed the case, citing the Centre's formation of a commission led by ex-CJI K G Balakrishnan to examine the issue. The commission’s report is now expected by **October 2025**.

### What are the legal hurdles regarding reservations for religious groups?

Legal challenges arise when reservations for religious groups are provided without clear justification:

- **Andhra Pradesh (2005):** The state introduced 5% reservations for Muslims within the OBC quota. The Andhra Pradesh High Court struck it down, stating the government did not use “objective criteria” to prove backwardness.
- **Calcutta High Court (2024):** Similar reasoning invalidated reservations for 77 predominantly Muslim classes.

The Supreme Court is yet to decide on the Andhra Pradesh case, despite indicating it would address it after the Economically Weaker Section (EWS) judgment in 2022.

## India's Demographic Advantage and Challenges

**Source:** This article on **India's Demographic Advantage and Challenges** is based on article “ **India’s asset-less, ageing population with poor health is a crisis in the making**” published in **The Indian Express** on **17<sup>th</sup> December 2024**.

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** **GS 3- Indian Economy and issues relating to Planning, Mobilization of Resources, Growth, Development and Employment**

**Context:** The article critically examines India's demographic situation, highlighting the gap between its potential demographic dividend and the challenges hindering its realization. India, currently at its demographic prime, has a substantial proportion of its population in the working-age group (15-59 years), which will

continue for the next few decades. However, the article underscores that demographic advantage alone is not sufficient unless accompanied by the right policies and investments to ensure high productivity, education, skills, and health.

### What is India's demographic status, and what are the key challenges?

1. India is in its demographic prime, with **67.3%** of its population aged **15-59 years**, a unique advantage expected to last for three more decades.
2. By 2030, India will have the **largest workforce** in the world, but this can only translate into economic growth if supported by **proper education, skills, and health**.
3. However, current challenges include:
  - **Education:** Only **41% of women** and **50.2% of men** (15-49 years) have 10+ years of schooling.
  - **Health:**
    - **Anaemia:** 57% of women and 25% of men are anaemic.
    - **BMI:** 18.7% of women and 16.2% of men have a BMI below normal.
  - **Learning Outcomes:** Among adolescents, only **77%** of 17-18-year-olds can read a Class 2 textbook, and just **35%** can perform division.

### How do nutrition and health issues among children impact India's future workforce?

1. **Under-5 Health:**
  - **Stunting:** 35.5% are stunted.
  - **Wasting:** 19.3% are wasted.
  - **Underweight:** 32.1% are underweight.
  - **Anaemia:** 67.1% of children (6-59 months) are anaemic.
2. **Diet:** Only **11.3% of children under two years** receive a minimal adequate diet. Poor nutrition hinders **90% brain development**, which occurs before age five, affecting future cognitive abilities.

### What is the risk of an ageing population post-2030?

1. After 2030, India will start **ageing**, with the workforce shrinking and the elderly population rising.
2. Without intervention, India risks a **large, asset-less, ageing population in poor health**, creating economic burdens rather than growth opportunities.

### What urgent steps must India take to harness its demographic dividend?

1. Conduct a **real-time analysis** of the demographic situation.
2. Redesign policy frameworks to strengthen:
  - **Nutrition:** Ensure minimal adequate diets for children.
  - **Healthcare:** Address anaemia, undernutrition, and physical health gaps.
  - **Education:** Improve learning outcomes, especially foundational skills like reading and arithmetic.
3. A strong foundation of **nutrition, health, and education** across the life cycle is critical to ensure India's demographic dividend can capitalize on future economic opportunities and avoid becoming a burden.

## Indianness of the Constitution

**Source:** This article on **Indianness of the Constitution** is based on “**Yogendra Yadav writes: What's Indian about the Indian Constitution?**” is published in **The Indian Express** on 17<sup>th</sup> December 2024.

**UPSC Syllabus topics:** GS-2- Indian Constitution—Historical Underpinnings, Evolution, Features, Amendments, Significant Provisions and Basic Structure.

**Context:** The article reflects on the **Indianness of the Indian Constitution**, a question that has surfaced repeatedly since its drafting and continues to be debated. It critiques the ideological and political attempts, particularly by certain factions, to question the Constitution's legitimacy on the grounds of its alleged "foreign" origins.

**Why is the question about the Indianness of the Constitution important? Was this question raised earlier?**

1. The question of Indianness is central because it challenges the Constitution's legitimacy and authenticity, which is being questioned by those aiming to undermine India's constitutional republic.
2. The debate reflects an ideological conflict about whether the Constitution aligns with India's cultural and civilizational values.
3. Even during the Constituent Assembly debates, the question of the Constitution being "alien" or "foreign" was brought up due to its reliance on Western constitutional traditions and English as its working language.

**What does "Indianness" of the Constitution not mean?**

1. An Indian Constitution cannot mean a document untouched by foreign ideas. A modern state requires a written constitution that incorporates universal principles.
2. Mere adding illustrations from Indian mythology or renaming laws (e.g., Indian Penal Code to Bharatiya Nyaya Samhita) does not inherently make it Indian.
3. Simply privileging Hindu-ness or any singular element from India's past does not ensure authenticity. This approach mimics systems like Pakistan (Islamic Republic) or even models like Nazi Germany or modern Israel, which undermine India's pluralistic identity.

**How can the Constitution reflect Indianness authentically?**

1. **Radical Originality:** Creating an entirely new Constitution by rejecting Western political thought and building one solely on India's civilizational heritage. This was Gandhi's vision in *Hind Swaraj*. However, this remains impractical since no workable draft exists.
2. **Compositional Originality:** Adapting and modifying Western constitutional ideas to suit India's context and traditions. This is the approach taken in India's Constitution.

**How does the Indian Constitution reflect compositional originality?**

1. The Constitution was not a result of sudden creation. It was written in under three years and it was the product of over a century of modern Indian political thought and engagement with multiple intellectual traditions.
2. It brought together diverse visions of India, combining received ideas from Western constitutionalism with India's civilizational wisdom to forge an "Indian modernity."
3. The lived experience of Indian jurisprudence and public participation over the past 75 years proves that even those unfamiliar with the Constitution resonate with its morality and values.

**What unique Indian features does the Constitution showcase?**

1. **Union of India:** Unlike classic federal states, the Constitution aligns with India's multi-layered governance traditions from pre-modern times.
2. **State-Nation Concept:** India's model respects cultural and social diversity, unlike European-style nation-states.
3. **Secularism:** Indian secularism adopts a "principled distance" approach based on *maitri* and *sarva dharma samabhava*, not the Western models of American or French secularism.
4. **Socialism:** The socialist features align with India's value of *karuna* (compassion).
5. **Rejection of caste and untouchability:** The Constitution builds on long-standing Indian traditions of reform.

**What is the essence of Indianness in the Constitution?**

1. The Constitution reinterprets and recasts inherited ideas, blending modern principles with India's intellectual traditions, much like an *authentic Indian dish* made from foreign ingredients.
2. The Indian Constitution is a testament to India's *desi genius*. It is modern yet deeply rooted in Indian values, traditions, and cultural context, creating something unique and authentically Indian.

### Procedure for removing judges

**Source:** This article **Procedure for removing judges** is based on article "What is the procedure for removing judges?" published in The Hindu on 17<sup>TH</sup> December 2024.

**Syllabus: GS 2- Polity-** Appointment to various Constitutional Posts, Powers, Functions and Responsibilities of various Constitutional Bodies.

**Context:** The article discusses the procedure for the removal of judges in India and highlights the specific case involving Justice Shekhar Kumar Yadav of the Allahabad High Court. It explains the constitutional and legal framework for removing judges and delves into the allegations against Justice Yadav that have prompted a motion for his removal.

What does the Constitution say about the removal of judges?

1. Articles 124 and 217 of the Constitution state that a Supreme Court or High Court judge can be removed by the President on grounds of *proved misbehaviour* or *incapacity*.
2. This must be approved by both Houses of Parliament with:
  - A majority of the total membership of that House, and
  - A two-thirds majority of members present and voting in the same session.

### How are *misbehaviour* and *incapacity* defined?

The terms are not explicitly defined in the Constitution. However, the Supreme Court has interpreted *misbehaviour* to include wilful misconduct, corruption, lack of integrity, or offences involving moral turpitude. *Incapacity* refers to physical or mental inability to perform duties.

### What is the role of the Judges (Inquiry) Act, 1968?

The Act provides a detailed procedure for removal:

1. A motion must be signed by at least **50 MPs** in the Rajya Sabha or **100 MPs** in the Lok Sabha.
2. The Chairman (Rajya Sabha) or Speaker (Lok Sabha) can either admit or refuse the motion.
3. If admitted, a **three-member committee** (comprising judges and a jurist) investigates the allegations.
4. If the judge is absolved, the motion is dropped. If found guilty, the report is presented to both Houses, which must pass the motion with a *special majority*.

### What standards govern judges' conduct?

The *Reinstatement of Values of Judicial Life* (adopted by the Supreme Court in 1997) mandates that judges must reaffirm people's faith in judicial impartiality and avoid any behaviour unbecoming of their office.

Though the *Judges (Inquiry) Bill, 2006* was not passed, it suggested defining 'misbehaviour' to include violations of judicial codes of conduct. It also proposed minor penalties like warnings, censures, or temporary withdrawal of judicial work for misconduct that does not warrant removal.

### Why is judicial conduct so significant?

Judges must uphold the dignity of their constitutional office. Any behavior that undermines public confidence in their impartiality can harm the judiciary's credibility.

### What challenges are involved in the removal process?

The process is stringent, requiring a **special majority** in both Houses of Parliament. Even if the inquiry committee finds a judge guilty, the motion often fails to pass, which protects judicial independence.

### How does the "Blackstone's ratio" apply?

The principle that *"it is better for ten guilty persons to escape than for one innocent to suffer"* applies to the removal process. The rigorous procedure ensures judicial independence by safeguarding judges from frivolous or politically motivated removal attempts.

## Complexity in achieving Universal Health Coverage (UHC) in India

**Source:** The post complexity in achieving Universal Health Coverage (UHC) in India has been created, based on the article **"The challenge of universal health coverage"** published in **"The Hindu"** on 18th December 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 diverse healthcare challenges and the need for state-specific strategies for universal health coverage. It emphasizes the importance of addressing local health profiles, reducing out-of-pocket expenses, and strengthening primary healthcare for effective solutions.

For detailed information on **Universal Health Coverage (UHC)** [read this article here](#)

### Why is there complexity in achieving Universal Health Coverage (UHC) in India?

- 1. Diverse Health Systems:** India has multiple health system types across states, with some states having more than one system. This diversity complicates a one-size-fits-all approach to UHC.
- 2. Uneven Health Expenditure:** Per capita government health expenditure varies widely. For example, Himachal Pradesh spends ₹3,829, Kerala ₹2,590, and Bihar only ₹701 (National Health Accounts 2019-20).
- 3. State-Specific Challenges:** West Bengal has a low fertility rate (1.64) but a high teenage pregnancy rate (16%). In contrast, Kerala and Himachal Pradesh have teenage pregnancy rates of only 2.4% and 3.4%.
- 4. High Out-of-Pocket Expenditure:** Despite increased government spending, out-of-pocket costs remain high. West Bengal's rate was 67% in 2019-20, and Andhra Pradesh's was 64%.
- 5. Non-Communicable Diseases:** States like West Bengal, Bihar, and Gujarat have high blood sugar rates but low hypertension. Kerala and Tamil Nadu face high rates of both conditions, requiring tailored interventions.
- 6. Infrastructure Gaps:** A 58% shortfall in primary health centers in states like West Bengal weakens primary care delivery.
- 7. Misaligned Policies:** High C-section rates in public hospitals of West Bengal show inefficiencies in resource utilization, despite schemes like **Swasthya Sathi**.

### What should be done?

1. The complex healthcare landscape requires a holistic approach, considering local health profiles, historical and cultural factors, and regional public health needs.
2. A one-size-fits-all solution is ineffective; instead, state-specific strategies and enhanced primary care are essential for effective healthcare delivery.

**Question for practice:**

Examine the factors contributing to the complexity of achieving Universal Health Coverage (UHC) in India and suggest measures to address these challenges.

**India's AI-powered surveillance and its impact on privacy rights**

**Source:** The post India's AI-powered surveillance and its impact on privacy rights has been created, based on the article "**The legal gaps in India's unregulated AI surveillance**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 18th December 2024

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper3- Science and Technology – Developments and their applications and effects in everyday life.

**Context:** The article discusses India's increasing use of AI-powered surveillance and its impact on privacy rights. It highlights legal gaps, issues with the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, lack of safeguards, and suggests adopting transparent, risk-based regulations to protect citizens' constitutional rights.

**How has India expanded its surveillance infrastructure?**

1. In 2019, India announced plans to create the world's largest facial recognition system for policing.
2. Over the next five years, AI-powered surveillance systems were deployed at railway stations, and Delhi Police integrated AI for crime patrols.
3. Plans include launching **50 AI-powered satellites**, enhancing surveillance infrastructure further.

**What concerns does AI-powered surveillance raise?**

1. **Privacy Violation:** AI systems like facial recognition collect data indiscriminately, as seen in **Telangana Police's data breach**, where databases from schemes like "Samagra Vedika" were accessed.
2. **Lack of Regulation:** India has deployed surveillance without risk assessments or guidelines, unlike the EU's **Artificial Intelligence Act**, which bans real-time biometric surveillance in most cases.
3. **Legal Gaps:** The **DPDPA 2023** provides broad exemptions for government data collection, such as in **Section 7(g)**(epidemics) and **Section 7(i)** (employment data). Citizens face stricter rules under **Section 15(c)**, penalizing errors like outdated personal data.
4. **Proportionality Issues:** India's surveillance lacks safeguards, challenging the principles of the **K.S. Puttaswamy judgment**, which recognized privacy as a fundamental right.

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

**How does India's approach differ from global practices?**

1. The **EU's Artificial Intelligence Act** categorizes AI by risk levels, banning high-risk activities like real-time biometric surveillance except in emergencies.

2. India uses AI-powered facial recognition in cities like Delhi and Hyderabad without risk assessments or public guidelines.
3. India's **Digital Personal Data Protection Act (DPDPA)** grants broad exemptions, unlike the EU's stricter regulations.
4. While the EU ensures accountability, India lacks a regulatory framework; promised laws like the **Digital India Act** remain pending.

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

#### What should be done?

1. Adopt **transparent data collection practices**, including disclosure of what data is collected, its purpose, and storage duration.
2. Ensure **independent judicial oversight** for data processing exemptions.
3. Follow a **risk-based approach** like the EU to regulate high-risk AI applications.
4. Embed privacy measures and consent mechanisms into AI systems before deployment.
5. **Retroactive fixes** for privacy issues are costly and inefficient.
6. Transparent rules, consent mechanisms, and accountability can prevent misuse.
7. Addressing gaps in the **DPDPA** and enacting the **Digital India Act** are urgent for safeguarding privacy and civil liberties.

#### Question for practice:

Discuss how India's expanding use of AI-powered surveillance raises concerns about privacy rights and how these challenges can be addressed effectively.

### Importance of minority rights in democracy

**Source:** The post importance of minority rights in democracy has been created, based on the article "**The Constitution on minority rights**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 18th December 2024

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper2- Polity-Constitution of India —historical underpinnings, evolution, features, amendments, significant provisions and basic structure.

**Context:** The article discusses the importance of minority rights in democracy, their historical origins, constitutional provisions in India (Articles 29, 30, 350A, 350B), judicial interpretations, and frameworks for defining and protecting minority institutions, emphasizing equality, cultural preservation, and institutional excellence.

#### What is the importance of minority rights in democracy?

Minority rights are essential for the survival of democracy. They ensure equality, protect diversity, and uphold dignity. As Franklin Roosevelt said, "No democracy can survive without recognizing minority rights." The UN declared December 18 as Minority Rights Day in 1992 to highlight this importance.

#### How did minority rights originate?

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### 1. 19th Century Constitutional Laws:

- Austria's Constitutional Law (1867) recognized ethnic minorities' absolute right to preserve their nationality and languages.
- Hungary's Act XLIV (1868) included similar provisions.
- The Swiss Constitution (1874) granted equal rights to three national languages in civil services, legislation, and courts.

### 2. Post-World War I Treaties:

- Five treaties protected minorities in Poland, Romania, Greece, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia.
- Austria, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Turkey also included minority protections in peace treaties.
- Countries like Albania, Finland, and Iraq voluntarily committed to minority protections.

**3. Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948):** Article 27 gave individuals the right to enjoy their culture and participate in cultural forums.

### How did India's Constitution address minority rights?

1. The framers of the Constitution were sensitive to minority needs. Articles 25-30 were introduced to ensure cultural and religious freedoms:

- **Article 25:** Freedom of religion.
- **Article 29:** Right to conserve language, script, and culture.
- **Article 30:** Right to establish and administer educational institutions.

2. Pandit G.B. Pant stressed that satisfying minorities was essential for peace and progress in India.

### 3. Additional Provisions:

- **Articles 350A and 350B:** Provide for education in the mother tongue and appoint special officers for linguistic minorities.
- **Institutional Support:** The National Commission for Minorities and the National Commission for Minority Educational Institutions address issues and provide safeguards.

### How does the judiciary interpret minority rights?

**1. Kerala Education Bill (1957):** The Supreme Court emphasized that the dominant term in Article 30 is "choice," allowing minorities to establish institutions without compromising their character. It held that the State cannot impose conditions that undermine minority rights while granting aid or affiliation.

**2. Educational Autonomy:** In *St. Xavier's College Society (1974)*, the court observed that minority rights ensure equal opportunities in establishing and managing educational institutions.

**3. TMA Pai Foundation (2002):** The court clarified that minorities should be defined at the state level and laid down guidelines for determining the nature of minority institutions.



4. **Equality and Non-Discrimination:** In *Aligarh Muslim University (2024)*, the court reaffirmed Article 30 as a facet of equality and non-discrimination.

5. **Balance of Rights and Regulation:** Courts have consistently upheld that reasonable regulations ensure educational standards without infringing on minority rights.

**Question for practice:**

Examine how the Indian Constitution and judiciary have addressed the protection and promotion of minority rights.

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For detailed information on **Religious nationalism threatens democracy and minority rights** [read this article here](#)

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### How ABDM Anonymizer Enhances Healthcare Data Security

**Source:** The post How ABDM Anonymizer Enhances Healthcare Data Security has been created, based on the article "Give anonymized medical data an extra privacy shield" published in "Live mint" on 18th December 2024

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper3-Security and GS paper 2-Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health

**Context:** The article discusses the Ayushman Bharat Digital Health Mission's (ABDM) anonymizer module, which ensures personal medical data is anonymized for security. Anonymization protects data during breaches, enables safer workflows in hospitals, and allows aggregated data for healthcare improvements without compromising privacy.

#### **What is the anonymizer module in ABDM?**

1. The Ayushman Bharat Digital Health Mission (ABDM) includes an anonymizer module to de-identify personal medical data.
2. This ensures patient information is hidden by default and only accessible to doctors and nurses.
3. Anonymization reduces the risks of personal data misuse during breaches. For example, anonymized medical records cannot directly link data to individuals. This protects patients' privacy and improves the safety of digital hospital systems.
4. Unlike most hospitals, which store patient data as plain text, ABDM's anonymization adds a layer of security.
5. Anonymized codes are used for other functions like billing or diagnostics, minimizing risks in case of data breaches.

#### **How does anonymization unlock secondary data use?**

1. Aggregated, anonymized medical data can help identify health trends, disease clusters, and personalized treatments. For instance, trends derived from anonymized datasets could improve public health policies.
2. Anonymization removes the need for individual consent under India's data protection laws, enabling wider data use for research and development.

#### **What are the limitations of anonymization?**

1. Anonymization is not foolproof. Historical cases, such as Harvard professor Latanya Sweeney identifying anonymized medical records in a database, highlight its vulnerabilities.
2. Repeated use or layering of datasets can make de-anonymization easier.
3. Additional measures like Secure Data Environments (SDEs) are needed to strengthen data protection.

#### **What are Secure Data Environments (SDEs)?**

SDEs change the way data is used by allowing algorithms to work directly on secure, anonymized datasets without transferring data to analysts. For example, Europe's health data spaces and the UK's NHS use SDEs to protect privacy. India can adopt this approach to further improve ABDM's anonymization system.

#### **How does this benefit India's healthcare system?**

1. The anonymizer module in ABDM demonstrates forward-thinking in India's digital health system.
2. By integrating interoperable SDEs, India can safely enable secondary use of medical data, advance research, and improve health outcomes.

3. It aligns with global practices and strengthens data protection in healthcare.

**Question for practice:**

Examine how the anonymizer module in the Ayushman Bharat Digital Health Mission (ABDM) enhances data security and enables secondary use of medical data while addressing its limitations.

**Gukesh's Journey to Becoming World Chess Champion**

**Source:** The post Gukesh's Journey to Becoming World Chess Champion has been created, based on the article "" published in "The Hindu" on 16th December 2024

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper 1 – Sports

**Context:** This article reflects on the remarkable achievements of Indian chess prodigy Gukesh Dommaraju, who became the World Chess Champion at the age of 18, breaking records and showcasing an extraordinary style of play. The article also highlights the growing prominence of Indian chess on the global stage. It discusses Gukesh's unique playing style, his ability to create and control positions with originality and accuracy, and his mental resilience, which sets him apart from other players.

**Who is Gukesh Dommaraju, and what milestone did he achieve?**

1. Gukesh Dommaraju became the World Chess Champion at the age of 18, setting a record likely to last for decades. His victory signifies the rise of Indian chess prodigies.
2. Gukesh's victory highlights that chess is evolving into a game dominated by youngsters. Aggression and "fighting chess" have become the norm, replacing the conservative and dry approaches of the past.

**How does the style of play today differ from earlier eras?**

Unlike the strategic but often passive matches of the past—like the 2000 World Championship between Garry Kasparov and Vladimir Kramnik—today's games involve active over-the-board thinking. Players avoid premature draws and fight for a win, as seen in Gukesh's final game against Ding Liren.

**What are Gukesh's defining qualities as a player?**

1. Gukesh is known for his originality, creativity, and ability to calculate accurately.
2. He is compared to a young Anatoly Karpov due to his capacity to build and dominate positions.
3. He avoids simplifications, making it difficult for opponents to draw.
4. Gukesh plays with confidence and the intention to win every game, unlike opponents who settle for draws.
5. He is not overconfident and demonstrates immense mental and physical strength.

**What sets Indian chess apart from other countries?**

1. Indian chess players, including Gukesh and Arjun Erigaisi, show continuous progress due to their hard work and dedication.
2. They train for 10 to 11 hours daily, unlike many international players whose growth halts at a certain stage.

**How does the Indian system support chess players?**

1. The current system offers limited support. Success is largely due to personal effort by players and their families.

2. Sponsorships are region-specific, and government backing is minimal compared to the USSR's robust chess infrastructure.

### How does India's chess scene compare with historical benchmarks?

While India has 36,000 active registered players, this is far below the USSR's 4.5 million tournament players during Kasparov's era.

### What makes Gukesh's success significant for the chess world?

1. Gukesh's originality, resilience, and fighting spirit reflect the changing dynamics of chess, where younger players dominate with aggressive and innovative styles.
2. His rise underscores India's growing influence in the chess world, despite systemic challenges.

## Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Kuwait Visit

**Source:** The post Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Kuwait Visit has been created, based on the article "C Raja Mohan writes: What Indian PM's first visit to Kuwait in four decades means for diplomacy in Middle East" published in "Indian Express on 18th December 2024"

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS2- International relations- Bilateral, Regional and Global Groupings and Agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests

**Context:** This article examines the significance of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's upcoming visit to Kuwait, marking the first visit by an Indian prime minister to the Gulf nation in over four decades. It highlights the strategic importance of the Middle East for India's security, economic growth, and international diplomacy, particularly in light of the region's ongoing structural changes.

### What is the significance of PM Modi's visit to Kuwait?

1. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit marks the first by an Indian PM to Kuwait in over four decades, closing a significant gap in India's diplomatic engagement with the Gulf region.
2. It underscores the growing importance of the Arab Gulf nations for India's security and economic prosperity.

### How has India's relationship with Kuwait evolved over time?

1. Relations were strained during the 1990-91 Gulf War due to India's affinity for Saddam Hussein's Iraq.
2. High-level visits resumed in the 2000s, with Vice President Hamid Ansari visiting Kuwait in 2009.
3. PM Modi's visit reflects a definitive shift in priorities, part of a broader engagement with Gulf countries.

### How has PM Modi transformed India's ties with the Gulf region?

1. Modi has visited the Gulf frequently: seven times to the UAE, twice to Qatar and Saudi Arabia, and once each to Bahrain and Oman.
2. This frequent engagement contrasts with the limited Gulf visits by his predecessors.
3. The transformation is evident in strong personal rapport, growing commercial ties, security partnerships, and new connectivity projects.

### What geopolitical developments frame the timing of this visit?

1. The visit coincides with the recent fall of the Assad dynasty in Syria, signaling a potential restructuring of the Middle East.
2. The decline of Ba'athist regimes, historically supported by India, paves the way for closer ties with moderate Arab monarchies.

### What historical challenges have shaped India's Gulf diplomacy?

1. India's post-colonial affinity for Ba'athist republics like Iraq and Syria led to strained relations with conservative Gulf monarchies.

2. India's reluctance to condemn invasions by close partners (e.g., Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, or Russia's invasion of Ukraine) reflects the tension between principles and strategic interests.

**How have Gulf monarchies changed in recent years?**

1. Countries like Saudi Arabia and the UAE are embracing reforms promoting religious moderation, social modernization, and economic diversification away from oil dependence.
2. These reforms align with India's interests, making the Gulf a natural partner.
3. Pakistan's influence in the region has diminished, with Arab monarchies prioritizing their ties with India.

**How does the fall of the Assad regime affect India-Kuwait relations?**

1. The decline of Ba'athist republics removes a historical hurdle in India's relationship with Kuwait.
2. It opens new opportunities for engagement as the Middle East undergoes political restructuring.

**What are the broader implications for India's Middle East diplomacy?**

1. India must better understand the core concerns of moderate Arab states, which include resistance to Ottoman and Persian dominance, opposition to radical Islamist movements, and dissatisfaction with Israel's stance on Palestine.
2. The Abraham Accords offer a framework for India to encourage cooperation between Israel and Arab states.

**What does this visit mean for India's role in the Middle East?**

1. Modi's visit to Kuwait symbolizes a broader effort to deepen India's ties with moderate Arab states amidst a rapidly changing Middle Eastern order.
2. It signifies India's commitment to becoming a key player in the region's economic and security dynamics.

## Constitution and Individual Dignity in India

**Source:** The post **Constitution and Individual Dignity in India** has been created, based on the article "Pratap Bhanu Mehta writes: In today's India, can the Constitution protect individual dignity?" published in "Indian Express on 18th December 2024

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS-2- Indian Constitution—Historical Underpinnings, Evolution, Features, Amendments, Significant Provisions and Basic Structure

**Context:** This article critically examines the challenges faced by the Indian Constitution in upholding individual dignity and freedoms amidst the country's evolving political and social dynamics. It reflects on recent parliamentary debates about threats to constitutional values, focusing on how India's politics of identity and executive dominance impacts the foundational principles of the Constitution.

**How does politics influence the debate on the Constitution?**

1. The debate in Parliament has become partisan, focusing on whether the BJP or the Congress poses a greater threat to the Constitution.
2. While such debates showcase democratic accountability, they fail to inspire confidence that core constitutional values, such as individual dignity and checks and balances, will be preserved.

**What is the significance of avoiding "authenticity" debates in constitutional matters?**

- **Key Point:** The framers deliberately avoided burdening the Constitution with questions of faith, history, and identity.
- **Reason:** These issues, though important, are best addressed outside the context of state or legal power to avoid making the Constitution a zero-sum game.

- **Conclusion:** Debating the "authenticity" of the Constitution is futile and risks undermining its neutrality.

**What are the core aspirations of constitutionalism?**

1. Protection of individual rights and dignity.
2. Affirmation of political equality.
3. Establishment of checks and balances on government power.
4. Preservation of democracy and political agency for all citizens.
5. Practices of political justification for decisions affecting public life.

**What are the major threats to constitutional values in India?**

1. **Identity Politics:** Freedom is subverted by reducing individuals to caste, religion, or national identities.
2. **Executive Power:** Both major political parties have failed to curb the rise of unchecked executive authority.
3. **Economic Inequality:** Lack of economic justice undermines the functioning of democracy.
4. **Social Power Dynamics:** Permanent majorities and minorities distort the Constitution's intent to liberate individuals.

**How does the Basic Structure Doctrine relate to constitutional time and permanence?**

1. **Concept:** The Basic Structure Doctrine treats the Constitution as quasi-eternal, limiting amendments to those consistent with its fundamental principles.
2. **Significance:** It provides stability but risks being invoked opportunistically rather than through genuine allegiance to constitutional values.

**What is the historical role of constitutions in representing social power?**

1. **Traditional Constitutions:** Represented and balanced real social power, such as classes or groups.
2. **Modern Constitutions:** Abstract away from specific social forms, relying instead on universal legal principles.
3. **India's Exception:** The Constitution acknowledges caste as a social form, raising debates about whether this should be a temporary or permanent feature.

**What is the contradiction in India's constitutional politics?**

1. The Constitution aims to liberate individuals, but contemporary politics reinforces ascriptive identities, such as caste and religion, as permanent majority and minority categories.
2. This dynamic challenges the Constitution's ability to function as a modern, inclusive framework.

**Can the Constitution navigate these contradictions?**

The answer remains uncertain. The success of the Constitution depends on:

1. Preserving individual freedoms and dignity.
2. Ensuring that social forces do not claim permanent majority status.
3. Upholding a democratic spirit that transcends identity politics.

By addressing these challenges, India can hope to sustain the integrity of its Constitution and its commitment to individual dignity.

**Arctic Tundra Emitting More Carbon Than Absorbing It**

**Source:** The post **Arctic Tundra Emitting More Carbon Than Absorbing It** has been created, based on the article "Why Arctic tundra is emitting more carbon than it absorbs, for first time in many millennia" published in "Indian Express on 18th December 2024"

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS -3- Conservation, Environmental Pollution and Degradation, Environmental Impact Assessment.

**Context:** The article sheds light on a significant and concerning environmental shift in the Arctic tundra, which has long functioned as a massive carbon sink. Recent analyses reveal that this biome has now become a net emitter of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) and methane (CH<sub>4</sub>), both potent greenhouse gases (GHGs). This marks a significant departure from the role it has played for millennia in stabilizing global climate systems.

### What is happening in the Arctic tundra?

1. The Arctic tundra, a frozen, treeless biome that has stored carbon for thousands of years, has become a source of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) and methane (CH<sub>4</sub>) emissions.
2. A recent report by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) reveals this alarming shift, driven by rising temperatures and increased wildfires.

### How does the Arctic tundra store carbon?

1. Plants absorb CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere through photosynthesis.
2. Organic matter decomposes very slowly due to the cold climate.
3. Carbon from dead plants and animals remains trapped in permafrost (ground frozen for at least two years straight).
4. Arctic soils store over 1.6 trillion metric tonnes of carbon, double the amount currently in the atmosphere.

### Why is the Arctic tundra emitting more carbon than it absorbs?

1. **Rising Temperatures:**
  - a. The Arctic is warming four times faster than the global average.
  - b. 2024 recorded the second-warmest annual surface air temperatures in the Arctic since 1900.
  - c. Thawing permafrost activates microbes that decompose organic matter, releasing CO<sub>2</sub> and CH<sub>4</sub>.
2. **Increased Wildfires:**
  - a. Wildfires in the Arctic have intensified in frequency and severity.
  - b. 2023 saw the worst wildfire season on record, while 2024 had the second-highest wildfire emissions.
  - c. Wildfires accelerate permafrost thaw and release greenhouse gases (GHGs).

### What are the consequences of these emissions?

1. The Arctic tundra has shifted from being a carbon sink to a carbon source for the first time in millennia.
2. This exacerbates climate change, as CO<sub>2</sub> and CH<sub>4</sub> are heat-trapping GHGs driving global warming.

### Can this trend be reversed? What challenges lie ahead?

Yes, but only by significantly reducing global GHG emissions. Lower emissions would slow permafrost thaw and reduce carbon release. However, there are some challenges:

1. Global GHG emissions continue to rise.
2. A study by the Global Carbon Project estimates that total CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in 2024 will increase to 41.6 billion tonnes, up from 40.6 billion tonnes in 2023.
3. Efforts to combat climate change are being outpaced by ongoing fossil fuel burning and land-use changes.

### What actions are scientists recommending?

1. Reducing global emissions is the only viable solution to prevent further carbon release from the Arctic.
2. Brendan Rogers, a scientist contributing to the Arctic Report Card, urges aggressive emission reduction efforts to mitigate the impacts.
3. By understanding and acting on these findings, we can work towards protecting the Arctic tundra and its crucial role in the global carbon cycle.



## Global Events Impacting India's Economic Outlook in 2025

**Source:** The post Global Events Impacting India's Economic Outlook in 2025 has been created, based on the article “In 2025, the hurdles to India’s growth” published in “Indian Express” on 19th December 2024

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper3- Economy

**Context:** The article discusses India's economic outlook in 2025, highlighting challenges like slow growth, fiscal deficit, and global volatility. It questions the effectiveness of government policies like the PLI scheme and trade strategies, and emphasizes the need for private sector investment and export growth.

For detailed information on **Concerns about the Indian economy amid global uncertainties** [read this article here](#)

### What is the India's economic outlook in 2025?

- Economic Growth:** India may surpass Japan to become the fourth-largest economy, reaching a \$4 trillion GDP. However, nominal growth is expected to stay below 10% for the third consecutive year, down from the decade average of 11%.
- Fiscal Challenges:** The fiscal deficit is projected to fall from 4.9% to 4.5% of GDP, signaling contractionary fiscal policies. Rising committed expenditures, like the Eighth Pay Commission, could strain finances.

### How Are Global Events Impacting India?

- US Economic Policies:** Donald Trump’s potential tariffs on Canada, Mexico, and China could create global volatility, affecting trade and investments.
- Currency Pressures:** Higher US interest rates and a stronger dollar are testing the RBI's ability to defend the rupee. Inflation moderation pressures RBI to cut rates, risking further currency depreciation.
- Trade Agreements:** India’s inconsistent trade approach, such as avoiding RCEP but signing deals with Australia and UAE, shows hesitancy. Pending FTAs with the UK and EU highlight missed opportunities amid China plus one shifts benefiting others.
- Private Sector Investments:** Global uncertainties have limited private investment growth, despite government initiatives like the PLI scheme, which disbursed only Rs 32,620 crore over four years, with significant funds going to mobile phones and semiconductors.
- Geopolitical Influence:** A \$4 trillion economy could strengthen India’s global standing, but uncertainties dampen this potential.

### What Are the Challenges Ahead?

- The Eighth Pay Commission and rising committed expenditure could strain public finances.
- The upcoming 16th Finance Commission will need to balance competing fiscal interests, impacting Centre-state relations and election strategies.
- Reduced elections in 2025 (only Delhi and Bihar have elections) may allow the government to focus more on policy reforms.

### Question for practice:

Discuss how global economic events and domestic fiscal challenges are impacting India's economic outlook in 2025.

### Significance of President Dissanayake's visit to India

**Source:** The post significance of President Dissanayake's visit to India has been created, based on the article "Express view on President Dissanayake's India visit: Building bridges with Sri Lanka" published in "Indian Express" on 19th December 2024

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

**Context:** The article discusses Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Dissanayake's visit to India, focusing on strengthening bilateral relations. It highlights key issues like trade, energy, fishing disputes, Tamil minority rights, and Sri Lanka's stance on foreign powers, particularly China's involvement in the region.

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

#### What is the significance of President Dissanayake's visit to India?

This is Anura Kumara Dissanayake's first overseas visit since becoming Sri Lanka's President. It comes at a crucial time for India-Sri Lanka relations. Both nations aim to deepen their economic and strategic partnership.

#### Why is this visit important for economic ties?

1. Sri Lanka confirmed it will continue with the IMF programme for economic recovery. The government plans to increase welfare spending.
2. Both countries are urged to resume talks on a Free Trade Agreement. Key areas of focus include: Energy supply, Technology exchange, Indian investments in Sri Lanka
3. The joint statement highlights the role of **digital public infrastructure**, including an Aadhaar-like system and UPI payments, for Sri Lanka's development.

#### What challenges exist in bilateral relations?

1. **Fishermen disputes:** Fishermen often cross maritime borders, causing tensions. Overfishing is also an issue. A **coordinated fishing model** may resolve this.
2. **Tamil minority rights:** Prime Minister Modi urged Sri Lanka to hold **provincial council elections** as per its Constitution. He avoided directly mentioning the **13th Amendment**, reflecting the sensitive nature of the issue.

#### How does Sri Lanka address security concerns in the Indian Ocean?

1. President Dissanayake assured India that Sri Lanka's land would not harm Indian interests. He also supported a **free, open, and secure Indian Ocean Region**.
2. This statement indirectly references **China's activities**, especially at the Hambantota port, which China is developing.

#### What should India and Sri Lanka focus on moving forward?

Both nations should:

- Define **red lines** for their foreign policies.

- Strengthen communication to avoid misunderstandings.
- Elevate their relationship to be a significant partnership in South Asia.

This visit signals potential for stronger ties if challenges are addressed carefully.

#### Question for practice:

Examine the key challenges and opportunities in India-Sri Lanka relations highlighted during President Anura Kumara Dissanayake's visit to India.

### India's Shift to a Services-Led Economy and Its Challenges

**Source:** The post India's Shift to a Services-Led Economy and Its Challenges has been created, based on the article "Services led exports are a mixed blessing for us" published in "Live mint" on 19th December 2024

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper3- Indian Economy- changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth.

**Context:** The article highlights India's shift to a services-led economy, driven by strong service exports surpassing merchandise exports. It notes India's success in high-value services but warns of job inequality, uneven sectoral growth, and the need to address economic disparities.

For detailed information on **Challenges with India's service-driven growth** [read this article here](#)

#### Why Are India's Service Exports Outshining Merchandise Exports?

1. In November 2024, India's service exports were projected to surpass merchandise exports.
2. The trade deficit reached a record \$37.9 billion in November, but strong service exports were a positive sign.
3. Services are less affected by tariffs and geopolitical issues compared to goods.

#### What Makes Service Exports Resilient?

1. Unlike goods, services face fewer protectionist barriers and geopolitical risks.
2. Despite challenges in IT and AI disruptions, Global Capability Centres (GCCs) have emerged as key growth drivers.
3. GCCs offer higher-end services and better value realization than traditional IT companies.

#### How Is India's Service Sector Different from China's Manufacturing?

1. While China became the global factory for low-cost goods, India moved up the value chain in services.
2. From basic IT tasks like Y2K fixes to customized software and GCCs, India's talent pool drives high-value services.
3. India ranks fifth globally in service exports and aims for \$2 trillion annual exports by 2030.

#### What Are the Challenges of a Services-Led Economy?

- Limited Job Creation:** Services create fewer jobs than manufacturing. Fresh workers from rural areas are easily trained for factory work, but services demand higher education and skills.
- Income Inequality:** Services pay higher wages than manufacturing, leading to increased income disparities.
- Sectoral Employment Mismatch:** Agriculture and industry employ 69% of the workforce, while services employ only 31%, despite services contributing 55% to GDP.
- Stagnant Manufacturing Growth:** Manufacturing remains at 17% of GDP, showing India's leapfrogging from agriculture to services skipped the middle manufacturing phase.
- Social Discontent Risk:** Uneven growth between employment and sectoral output can spill over into social tensions, threatening national progress.

#### Question for practice:

Examine the reasons behind the resilience of India's service exports compared to merchandise exports and their implications for the economy.

### Indian judiciary's suo motu powers

**Source:** The post Indian judiciary's suo motu powers has been created, based on the article "**Refrain from judicial overreach: It'll strengthen India's judiciary**" published in "**Live mint**" on 19th December 2024

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper2-Structure, organisation and functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary

**Context:** The article discusses the Indian judiciary's suo motu powers. It highlights their importance in addressing urgent issues but criticizes misuse, delays, and overreach. It emphasizes the need for guidelines and feedback to ensure timely, effective, and credible judicial interventions.

#### What are Sua Motu Powers of the Judiciary?

- Suo motu powers allow courts to take up cases on their own, without a formal petition.
- These powers aim to protect public interest, ensure justice, and address overlooked issues.

#### Why is the Use of Sua Motu Powers Controversial?

- Growing Invocation:** Increasing use of these powers in matters already handled by lower courts has raised concerns.
- Jurisdictional Tensions:** Supreme Court interventions can overshadow the work of high courts. For example, in the RG Kar Medical College rape case, the Supreme Court acted after significant progress by the Calcutta High Court.
- Potential Political Influence:** There is criticism over perceived political motivations in some cases.

#### What Are the Challenges in Sua Motu Interventions?

- Delays in Resolution:** Prolonged engagement without results frustrates the public. *Like in* Yamuna pollution case took over 20 years to be transferred to the National Green Tribunal.
- Implementation Challenges:** Judicial directives often lack follow-through. During COVID-19, the Supreme Court's intervention highlighted healthcare gaps but lacked concrete results.

3. **Overreach Concerns:** Courts sometimes venture into legislative or administrative domains. In the Ramlila Maidan case, the Supreme Court expanded Article 21 to include a “Right to Sleep.”

#### How Can Sua Motu Powers Be Improved?

1. **Frame Guidelines:** The judiciary should create clear guidelines for suo motu actions.
2. **Feedback Mechanisms:** Courts must track implementation to ensure compliance with directives.
3. **Strengthen High Courts:** High courts should be allowed to handle local matters effectively.

#### Conclusion:

1. Sua motu powers are vital for justice but must be used judiciously.
2. Overuse, delays, and poor implementation harm public trust in the judiciary.
3. Guidelines and better mechanisms are needed to ensure timely and effective justice.

#### Question for practice:

Discuss the challenges associated with the judiciary's use of suo motu powers and suggest measures to improve their effectiveness.

### Making Affordable Generics More Reliable

**Source:** This post on Making Affordable Generics More Reliable is based on article “ Making affordable generics more reliable” published in The Hindu on 19<sup>th</sup> December 2024.

**UPSC Syllabus topic:** GS 3- Indian Economy and issues relating to Planning, Mobilization of Resources, Growth, Development and Employment

**Context:** The article delves into the critical role of generic medicines in addressing healthcare affordability in India. It underscores the importance of generic drugs in reducing healthcare costs, particularly in a country marked by vast income disparities and high out-of-pocket healthcare expenditure. However, it highlights the challenges associated with ensuring the quality, efficacy, and safety of generics, which are essential for their reliability and effectiveness.

#### Why are generic medicines important for healthcare affordability?

1. Generic drugs, being bioequivalent to branded drugs, are cost-effective alternatives crucial for addressing healthcare affordability, especially in countries like India with significant income disparities.
2. India leverages economies of scale and low production costs to supply affordable medicines both domestically and internationally.
3. With out-of-pocket healthcare expenditure at 39.4% of total health expenditure in 2021-22, generics significantly reduce financial burdens and improve treatment adherence.
4. Through the Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana, generic medicines worth ₹5,600 crore sold over a decade saved consumers an estimated ₹30,000 crore by August 2024.

#### What challenges do generic medicines face in India?

1. **Quality Concerns:** Despite bioequivalence to branded drugs, quality control lapses have compromised their efficacy and safety in some cases.
2. **Therapeutic Variability:** A study by PGIMER, Chandigarh, revealed that while an innovator itraconazole drug achieved therapeutic levels in 73% of patients within two weeks, generic formulations often required 6–8 weeks, dose escalation, or switching.

3. **Manufacturing Defects:** Generic capsules showed defects such as fewer and unevenly sized pellets, impacting absorption and bioavailability.

**Why do generic and innovator drugs differ in efficacy?**

1. **Excipients:** Variations in binders, fillers, disintegrants, and coatings affect dissolution rate, stability, and drug delivery mechanisms.
2. **Manufacturing Processes:** Differences in compression force, granulation methods, and tablet hardness can influence drug disintegration and absorption rates.
3. **Bioequivalence Thresholds:** Regulatory standards allow pharmacokinetic parameters to vary between 80%-125% of the innovator drug's range. This variability can be problematic for drugs with a narrow therapeutic index.
4. **Stability Issues:** Generic drugs may suffer from reduced shelf life and reliability due to inadequate stability testing.

**What are the regulatory challenges in India's drug regulation system?**

1. **Decentralisation:** India's drug regulation system is fragmented, with significant authority granted to State Drug Regulatory Authorities (SDRAs). This leads to inconsistent enforcement and quality standards.
  - a. The Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) has limited authority and can only recommend actions to States.
2. **Inadequate Stability Testing:** Stability testing, mandated in 2018, is inconsistently implemented. Additionally, generics approved before 2018 are not subject to retrospective testing, allowing substandard drugs to persist in the market.
3. **Lenient Impurity Standards:** India's Pharmacopoeia permits higher impurity levels than U.S. and EU standards. Stricter International Council for Harmonisation (ICH) guidelines were rejected due to cost concerns.

**What reforms are necessary to improve generic drug reliability?**

1. **Centralised Drug Regulation:**
  - a. Transfer regulatory authority from States to the Centre to ensure consistent enforcement of quality standards.
  - b. Strengthen the CDSCO with additional resources, personnel, and central drug-testing laboratories.
2. **Enhanced Stability Testing:**
  - a. Enforce uniform stability testing protocols.
  - b. Mandate periodic reassessment of all approved generics, including those approved before 2018.
3. **Stricter Impurity Standards:**
  - a. Align India's Pharmacopoeia with global benchmarks by adopting stricter impurity guidelines.

**What role should the CDSCO play in these reforms?**

- The CDSCO should be overhauled to implement robust regulatory safeguards, ensuring protection against substandard and counterfeit medicines.
- Key actions include stringent regulatory protocols, effective inspections, and strong enforcement mechanisms.

**What steps have been recommended historically to address these issues?**

1. Decades-old recommendations by the **Bhatia (1954), Hathi (1975), and Mashelkar (2003) committees** have called for centralised oversight of drug regulation.
2. Implementing these recommendations is essential to restoring public confidence in generic drugs.

**What is the key takeaway regarding generics and quality assurance?**

1. While generics are indispensable for equitable healthcare, equity must not come at the expense of quality.
2. Centralising drug regulation, enforcing stricter testing protocols, and adopting stringent impurity standards are critical steps toward making generics more reliable and trustworthy.

### Positive Signals from India-China Talks

**Source:** This post on **Positive Signals from India-China Talks** has been created based on "Positive signals emerge from India-China talks" published in The Hindu on 19th December 2024.

**UPSC Syllabus topic:** GS 2- India and its Neighborhood- Relations

**Context:** The article discusses the resumption of boundary talks between India and China, marking the first meeting of the Special Representatives (SRs) in five years. This meeting, held in Beijing on December 18, 2024, involved India's National Security Adviser Ajit Doval and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi.

#### What was the key highlight of the meeting between India and China?

1. The key highlight was the first meeting of the Special Representatives (SRs) on boundary talks in five years.
2. National Security Adviser Ajit Doval and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi positively affirmed the implementation of the Line of Actual Control (LAC) disengagement and discussed measures to maintain peace, the resumption of the Kailash Mansarovar pilgrimage, border trade, and trans-border river data sharing.

#### What agreements were discussed during the talks?

1. The leaders reaffirmed their commitment to a fair and reasonable resolution of the boundary dispute, as outlined in the 2005 political guidelines.
2. Both sides positively reviewed the October 2024 disengagement agreement, which enabled patrolling and grazing in areas like Depsang and Demchok.
3. Discussions were aimed at advancing border management and preventing border issues from hindering bilateral relations.
4. Mr. Doval and Chinese leaders emphasized restoring cooperation in economic, cultural, and trade areas.
5. The talks highlighted a need for new momentum in bilateral relations.

#### What is the significance of the SR process resumption?

1. The SR mechanism, established in 2003, had been paused since 2019 due to heightened tensions, including the 2020 LAC standoff.
2. This resumption marks a step toward re-establishing diplomatic mechanisms and fostering peace at the border. It also paves the way for further troop de-escalation and a fair resolution of the boundary dispute.

#### What was China's perspective on the meeting?

1. The Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement about the "six-point consensus," which emphasizes maintaining peace at the border and strengthening bilateral ties.
2. Chinese Vice President Han Zheng described India and China as influential global powers, urging the restoration of political trust and collaboration in economic, trade, and cultural areas.

#### What role did the October 2024 disengagement agreement play?

1. The October 2024 agreement resolved issues at the last of seven friction points at the LAC.
2. It facilitated the SR meeting and formal talks between Indian PM Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping in Kazan, where the agreement was hailed as a *détente*.

#### What were the key outcomes of the meeting?

1. Commitment to drawing lessons from the 2020 standoff for better border management.
2. Positive directions for resuming cross-border exchanges, including religious pilgrimages and trade.

3. A roadmap for de-escalation and troop withdrawal.
4. Agreement to hold the next SR meeting in New Delhi.
5. Both sides emphasized strategic communication and the restoration of political trust to ensure stable bilateral development.
6. Ajit Doval highlighted India's commitment to enhancing ties, while Wang Yi was invited to New Delhi for the next round of talks.

### Strengthening the Roots of an Agri-Carbon Market

**Source:** This post on Strengthening the Roots of an Agri-Carbon Market has been created based on "Strengthening the roots of an agri-carbon market" published in The Hindu on 19th December 2024.

**UPSC Syllabus Topics:** GS 3- Indian Economy and issues relating to Planning, Mobilization of Resources, Growth, Development and Employment

**Context:** The article explores the transformative potential of carbon markets in Indian agriculture. It outlines how these markets could incentivize sustainable farming practices while simultaneously addressing climate change. The focus is on how carbon pricing, through compliance and voluntary carbon markets, can encourage businesses and individuals to mitigate greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. It also highlights India's growing interest in establishing its own carbon markets and the progress made so far.

#### What are carbon markets, and how do they work?

1. Carbon markets offer a way to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions while incentivizing sustainable farming practices.
2. **Compliance Markets:** Regulated systems impose emission caps on companies. Exceeding these caps requires purchasing carbon credits or paying carbon taxes.
3. **Voluntary Markets:** Unregulated platforms like Verra and Gold Standard allow organizations to trade carbon credits freely.
4. Both systems aim to lower GHG emissions and meet global climate goals.

#### What principles are crucial for carbon markets?

1. **Additionality:** Credits must lead to new emission reductions, requiring adoption of fresh practices.
2. **Permanence:** Benefits, such as soil carbon storage, must be long-lasting.

#### What recent advancements have been made in India's carbon markets?

1. India plans to launch compliance and voluntary carbon markets.
2. NABARD, in collaboration with research bodies, has listed five agriculture carbon credit projects under Verra.
3. Over four years, 50 projects have targeted 1.6 million hectares, aiming to generate 4.7 million credits annually. However, no credits have been issued yet, and farmers haven't received payments.

#### What findings emerged from carbon farming projects in Haryana and Madhya Pradesh?

1. **Inclusiveness:** Marginalized communities and women (4% participants) were largely excluded.
2. **Land Ownership:** Carbon farmers cultivated more land, with 63% owned by non-marginalized castes compared to 46% among non-carbon farmers.
3. **Adoption of Practices:** Techniques like zero tillage and intercropping were newly adopted, meeting the additionality criterion.

#### What challenges are hindering project success?

1. Poor communication (45%) and lack of training (60%).



2. Discontinuation of sustainable practices (28%) due to insufficient financial incentives.
3. Delayed payments, with 99% of farmers receiving no carbon credit income.

#### How can projects be improved to boost farmer participation?

1. Offer higher prices for credits from inclusive projects targeting smallholders and marginalized communities.
2. Ensure regular training, effective communication, and timely payments.
3. Collaborate with research institutions to minimize yield penalties and safeguard food security.

#### How can technology and collaboration strengthen carbon markets?

1. Advances in remote sensing, satellite imagery, and drones can enhance monitoring.
2. Building a robust agricultural carbon market requires policymakers, researchers, and private entities to ensure inclusivity, transparency, timely rewards, and effective implementation.

### Section 6A of the Citizenship Act

**Source:** This post on **Section 6A of the Citizenship Act** has been created based on “Section 6A of the Citizenship Act — why it fails Assam” published in The Hindu on 19<sup>th</sup> December 2024.

UPSC Syllabus: GS-2-Indian Constitution—Historical Underpinnings, Evolution, Features, Amendments, Significant Provisions and Basic Structure

Context: The article critically examines the constitutional validity and implications of Section 6A of the Citizenship Act, 1955, in the context of Assam.

#### What is Section 6A of the Citizenship Act, 1955?

1. Section 6A, introduced in 1985 after the Assam Accord, provides a framework for granting Indian citizenship to migrants from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) who settled in Assam:
  - I) **Before January 1, 1966:** Migrants are declared Indian citizens.
  - II) **Between January 1, 1966, and March 25, 1971:** Migrants are eligible for citizenship after 10 years of residence.
  - III) **After March 25, 1971:** Such individuals are deemed illegal migrants and liable for detection and deportation.

#### What is the significance of the recent Supreme Court ruling on Section 6A?

1. In October 2024, a Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court, in a 4:1 majority decision, upheld the constitutional validity of Section 6A.
2. However, the ruling has been criticized for overlooking constitutional violations and relying on arbitrary reasoning.

#### How does the judgment justify singling out Assam?

1. The Court argued that Assam’s smaller population and land area make the influx of migrants more impactful compared to other states like West Bengal or Tripura, which share longer borders with Bangladesh.
2. However, it simultaneously concluded that the influx did not affect Assamese language, script, or culture, leading to contradictory reasoning.

#### Why was Section 6A introduced, and what are its implications?

1. The Assam Accord, addressing concerns over cultural preservation, economic strain, and political imbalance, led to the inclusion of Section 6A.

2. However, critics argue that the provision does not adequately safeguard Assam's cultural identity and fails to resolve the issues it was designed to address.

#### What constitutional concerns arise from Section 6A?

1. **Violation of Article 29 (Cultural and Linguistic Rights):**
  - a. Article 29 guarantees the protection of cultural and linguistic identities.
  - b. The Court ruled that Section 6A does not infringe on Assamese cultural rights since it does not prevent active conservation efforts.
  - c. However, critics argue that the demographic shift caused by migration undermines Assam's cultural identity, evident in the declining percentage of Assamese-speaking people (from 69.3% in 1951 to 48.38% in 2011) and the increasing proportion of Bengali-speaking people (from 21.2% in 1951 to 28.91% in 2011).
2. **Temporal Unreasonableness:**
  - a. Laws must remain reasonable over time, but Section 6A lacks a temporal limitation, allowing individuals to apply for citizenship indefinitely, even 40 years after the cut-off date.
3. **Flawed Mechanism for Identifying Migrants:**
  - a. The burden of initiating proceedings lies with the state, without a mechanism for voluntary self-identification.
  - b. The foreigners' tribunal, tasked with determining citizenship, is overwhelmed by the volume of cases, causing inefficiency and confusion.

#### What are the challenges in implementation?

1. **Communication and Training Gaps:** Many farmers reported no communication or training about sustainable practices.
2. **Delayed Carbon Credit Payments:** 99% of farmers have not received payments for carbon credits.
3. **Sustainability Challenges:** 28% of farmers reverted to conventional farming due to insufficient financial incentives.
4. **Demographic Shift:** The increasing proportion of Bengali-speaking individuals has significantly altered Assam's cultural and linguistic demographics.

#### What criticisms have been made of the Supreme Court's ruling?

1. **Contradictory Reasoning:** The Court acknowledged Assam's unique challenges but failed to recognize the cultural and linguistic displacement caused by migration.
2. **Neglect of Temporal Unreasonableness:** By allowing Section 6A to remain in force indefinitely, the Court upheld outdated and arbitrary policies.
3. **Failure to Address Cultural Erosion:** The judgment overlooks how unchecked migration has eroded Assam's linguistic and cultural identity, violating Article 29.

### Ambedkar's Legacy and Dalits' Ongoing Struggle

**Source:** The post Ambedkar's Legacy and Dalits' Ongoing Struggle has been created, based on the article "Don't invoke Babasaheb Ambedkar selectively" published in "Indian Express" on 20th December 2024

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper1- Society-Social empowerment

**Context:** The article discusses the ongoing political controversy over Babasaheb Ambedkar's legacy, highlighting how politicians, especially from dominant castes, exploit it without addressing caste-based discrimination. It stresses that Dalits fight for dignity, equality, and opportunities, not just identity, and emphasizes Ambedkar's vision for the nation.

#### What Is the Current Political Controversy over Ambedkar?

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1. Politicians, mostly from dominant castes, are debating Ambedkar's legacy without addressing caste discrimination.
2. Congress historically resisted Ambedkar's initiatives, opposing reservation and the Mandal Commission recommendations.
3. The party treated Dalits as a poor class ("gareeb janta") rather than addressing caste realities.
4. Dalits still face issues in education, health, and employment, similar to 50-60 years ago, despite budget allocations.

### How Has the Government Addressed Dalit Issues?

1. The government has introduced initiatives like the **Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, 2023**, focusing on women's empowerment.
2. It emphasized Dalit dignity by creating **panch teerth sites** to honor Ambedkar's legacy.
3. Programs such as **GYAN (gareeb, yuva, annadata, nari)** aim to empower marginalized groups, including Dalits.
4. Dalit representation in the BJP has significantly increased in recent years.
5. Despite these efforts, caste-based discrimination persists, with incidents like a Dalit man being urinated upon.

### What is the Role of Babasaheb Ambedkar Today?

1. Babasaheb Ambedkar remains a revered figure, central to Dalit aspirations for dignity and equality.
2. His legacy extends beyond Dalits, influencing broader discussions on discrimination and nation-building.

### What are Dalits Fighting for Today?

1. Dalits seek equal opportunities, equity in governance, and respect for their aspirations beyond mere identity politics.
2. Their struggle encompasses broader themes of aspiration and national inclusivity.

### Question for practice:

Examine the current political controversy surrounding Babasaheb Ambedkar's legacy and its impact on the fight for Dalit dignity and equality.

## 5 ways in which India-Russia relations will shape in 2025

**Source:** The post 5 ways in which India-Russia relations will shape in 2025 has been created, based on the article "5 ways in which India-Russia relationship will shape the world in 2025" published in "Indian Express" on 20th December 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 highlights the importance of India-Russia relations in 2025. It explains how this partnership supports global stability by balancing Russia's ties with China, fostering multilateralism, stabilizing energy markets, aiding Arctic governance, and moderating group dynamics like BRICS and SCO.

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

### **What are the 5 ways in which India-Russia relations will shape in 2025?**

#### **1. Bridge Between Russia and the World:**

- India acts as a link between an alienated Russia and the global order.
- Its multilateral approach anchors Russia to a system it might otherwise disrupt.
- India connects diverse global systems without pushing specific geopolitical agendas.

#### **2. Balancing Russia-China Relations:**

- India prevents Russia from becoming overly reliant on China.
- Russia seeks equal partnerships, which India provides, unlike China.
- At BRICS summits, Russia values India's independent stance over aligning solely with China.

#### **3. Energy Trade and Market Stability:**

- India-Russia energy trade complies with sanctions while stabilizing global energy markets.
- This benefits Europe by avoiding energy crises.
- India's fossil fuel trade with Russia supports price stability crucial for Europe.

#### **4. Strategic Role in the Arctic:**

- India's presence with Russia in the Arctic counters potential Russia-China dominance.
- Projects like the Chennai-Vladivostok corridor enhance Arctic governance and connectivity.

#### **5. Moderating Global Groupings:**

- India's leadership ensures platforms like BRICS and SCO remain non-weaponized against the West.
- India facilitated UAE, Egypt, and Vietnam joining BRICS to foster balance.

#### **Question for practice:**

Examine how India-Russia relations in 2025 contribute to balancing global power dynamics and fostering multilateral cooperation.

## Supreme Court Rules Coconut Oil as Edible Oil

**Source:** The post Supreme Court Rules Coconut Oil as Edible Oil has been created, based on the article “**Is coconut oil an edible oil or a haircare product? Here is what Supreme Court ruled**” published in “**Indian Express**” on 20th December 2024

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper3-Economy-taxation

**Context:** The article discusses how the Supreme Court decided that coconut oil should be classified as an edible oil for taxation purposes, not as a hair care product, despite being sold in small packets sometimes. This decision means coconut oil now attracts a lower Goods and Services Tax rate of 5% instead of 18%.

### How was coconut oil classified earlier?

1. **Before 2005:** Coconut oil was broadly treated as an edible oil under tax regulations.
2. **2005 Amendment (CET Act):** Coconut oil was classified under Section III as an edible oil, attracting an excise duty of 8%. Hair care products, under Section VI, were taxed at 16%.
3. **2009 Circular:** The Central Board of Excise and Customs classified coconut oil in containers smaller than 200 ml as hair oil to impose a higher tax of 16%.
4. **2015 Withdrawal:** The circular was withdrawn after tribunals ruled that small packs could not be presumed to be hair oil.
5. **Tribunal Rulings:** In challenges by companies like Madhan Agro, tribunals held coconut oil as edible oil, regardless of packaging size.

### What led to the Supreme Court case?

1. In 2007, the central excise authorities issued show-cause notices to Madhan Agro Industries, questioning whether coconut oil sold in small packets should be taxed as a hair care product.
2. The company challenged this decision, leading to legal proceedings.
3. In 2015, after the Tribunal ruled that coconut oil in small packs is still edible oil, the Central Excise Commissioner appealed to the Supreme Court.
4. The case revolved around whether small-sized coconut oil should be taxed at the higher 18% rate for hair oils or the 5% rate for edible oils.

### What were the Supreme Court's views?

#### 1. Supreme Court's 2018 Views on Coconut Oil Taxation:

**Split Verdict:** The bench of Justices Ranjan Gogoi and R Banumathi delivered differing opinions:

- Justice Gogoi classified coconut oil as edible oil regardless of its packaging size, emphasizing its primary use as food.
- Justice Banumathi applied the **Common Parlance Test**, ruling that coconut oil in small containers is commonly understood as hair oil and should be taxed accordingly.

- The common parlance test determines how the public or market generally understands or uses a product. It is used when a product can be classified under two tax categories.

## 2. Supreme Court's Recent (2023) Views:

- **Classification Under HSN Norms:** The court ruled coconut oil as an edible oil based on Harmonised System of Nomenclature (HSN) norms, irrespective of packaging size.
- **Rejection of Common Parlance Test:** The test was deemed inapplicable as the product is clearly defined under the law.
- **Size Irrelevance:** The court noted that small-sized packaging is common for both edible and hair oils.
- **Standards of Weights and Measures (Packaged Commodities) Rules, 1977:** The court referred to this rule, which allows edible oils to be packed in sizes like 50 ml, 100 ml, and 200 ml.
- **Examples of Precedents:** The court cited cases like homeopathic hair oil being classified as a medicament (2023) and *anardana* as seeds (2022) to justify its decision.

### Question for practice:

Discuss the Supreme Court's decision on the classification of coconut oil for taxation purposes.

## The Rise and Challenges of Artificial Intelligence

**Source:** The post The Rise and Challenges of Artificial Intelligence has been created, based on the article "Artificial intelligence: The latest opium of the masses" published in "Live mint" on 20th December 2024

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper3- Science and Technology- developments and their applications and effects in everyday life.

**Context:** The article compares AI to religion, highlighting its growing influence and appeal. It discusses both AI's benefits, like solving global problems, and its failures, such as accidents and project failures. The author calls for a balanced, skeptical approach to AI's potential and limitations.

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

### What are the impacts of AI?

1. AI is captivating public attention, much like religion did in its prime. It promises convenience and efficiency.
2. AI is becoming an "addictive toy" that people use without fully understanding. Businesses globally adopted AI 270% more between 2015 and 2022.
3. The AI industry is projected to be worth \$1.8 trillion by 2030. ChatGPT, for example, reached 100 million users in just two months.

### How does AI benefit society?

1. **Global Problem Solving:** AI aids in tackling global challenges such as flood management and environmental cleanup. For instance, Google Flood Hub uses AI to provide advance flood alerts in 80 countries.
2. **Environmental Impact:** Organizations like The Ocean Cleanup utilize AI to map and remove ocean litter more efficiently, enhancing environmental sustainability.

3. **Technological Advancements:** AI tools like ChatGPT rapidly gain widespread use, demonstrating their popularity and utility in everyday tasks.

4. **Productivity Boost:** GenAI tools improve developer productivity by approximately 4% without compromising code quality, showing their potential to enhance software development efficiency.

#### What are the challenges of AI?

1. **Unrealistic Expectations:** The term "Artificial Intelligence" can create unrealistic expectations. Renaming it as "Systematic Approaches to Learning Algorithms and Machine Inferences" (Salami) could help manage expectations better.

2. **Failures in Implementation:** Many AI projects fail due to miscommunication, data issues, and high costs. About 30% of Generative AI projects are abandoned after the proof-of-concept stage, and over 80% of AI projects overall fail, according to studies.

3. **High Failure Rate:** Around 30% of Generative AI projects are abandoned after the proof-of-concept stage. Over 80% of AI projects fail, often due to miscommunication or data issues.

4. **Limited Impact:** A study showed GenAI only boosted developer productivity by 4%, with minimal impact on team performance or code quality.

#### Question for practice:

Discuss the benefits and challenges of AI as outlined in the article.

### Controversy over surveying religious places

**Source:** The post controversy over surveying religious places has been created, based on the article "**It is for historians to dig for tell-tale remains, not bigots**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 21st December 2024

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper1-Society – secularism

**Context:** The article discusses the controversy over surveying religious places like mosques to find evidence of earlier temples, questioning its legality under the Places of Worship Act, 1991. It argues such actions violate secularism, Article 26 rights, and promote communal tensions.

For detailed information on **Controversy with the Places of Worship Act** [read this article here](#)

#### What Does the Places of Worship Act State?

1. The **Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991**, prohibits the conversion of a place of worship from one religion to another.

2. It maintains that the **religious character of a place as on August 15, 1947**, must remain unchanged.

3. Any suits or appeals pending in courts regarding such conversions as of the Act's commencement are to **abate immediately**.

4. New legal suits or proceedings for altering the religious character of places of worship are barred after the Act's enforcement.

5. The Act was enacted during heightened tensions around the **Ram Janmabhoomi movement**, to prevent violence and communal unrest.

6. The **Ayodhya judgment** of the Supreme Court hailed this Act for **protecting secularism**.

#### **What Was the Observation of the Former Chief Justice of India?**

1. In 2022, then-CJI D.Y. Chandrachud made an oral observation in the Gyanvapi mosque case.
2. He stated that "a survey may not necessarily fall foul of the Places of Worship Act."
3. This observation caused confusion, as it was not part of a formal judgment but was misinterpreted by lower courts.
4. Following this, courts in Uttar Pradesh ordered surveys of mosques to determine their religious character, violating the 1991 Act.

#### **Why Are Such Surveys Considered Problematic?**

1. **Violation of the Places of Worship Act, 1991:** The Act bars altering the religious character of places of worship as they existed on August 15, 1947, and prohibits related surveys. Surveys contradict this law by trying to reopen settled matters.
2. **Potential for Communal Violence:** For example, surveys in mosques led to violence in Sambhal, Uttar Pradesh, resulting in loss of lives. Such actions risk heightening communal tensions.
3. **Legal Misinterpretation:** Lower courts ordered surveys based on oral observations by former CJI D.Y. Chandrachud in 2022. However, these observations lacked legal standing.
4. **Violation of Article 26:** Article 26 guarantees religious groups the right to manage their worship practices. Surveys interfere with these rights and can be deemed unconstitutional.
5. **Secularism at Risk:** The Act, upheld in the Ayodhya judgment, is seen as protecting secularism. Surveys undermine this principle, fueling religious disputes.

#### **Question for practice:**

Examine how the Places of Worship Act, 1991, seeks to uphold secularism and whether surveys of religious sites align with its provisions.

### **Significance of Prime Minister Modi's visit to Kuwait**

**Source:** The post significance of Prime Minister Modi's visit to Kuwait has been created, based on the article "**A chance to strike gold during the Kuwait visit**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 21st December 2024

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

**Context:** The article discusses Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Kuwait, highlighting its significance for strengthening bilateral ties. It covers Kuwait's strategic importance, its wealth, and strong ties with India, emphasizing areas where both countries can further cooperate and elevate their relationship.

For detailed information on **Why the Gulf matters for India** [read this article here](#)

#### **What is the significance of Prime Minister Modi's visit to Kuwait?**

1. It is the first visit by an Indian Prime Minister to Kuwait in 43 years.

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2. The last visit was by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1981.
3. The visit aims to strengthen ties and fill the gap in India's West Asia engagement.

### Why is Kuwait important strategically?

**Geographic Location:** Kuwait is located at the northeast end of the Persian Gulf, sharing borders with Iraq and Saudi Arabia, making it strategically significant in West Asia.

**American Military Bases:** It hosts important American military bases, ensuring its relevance in regional security.

**Oil Reserves:** Kuwait holds the sixth-largest oil reserves globally, contributing significantly to global energy markets.

**Neutral Mediator:** Kuwait often plays a neutral role in regional disputes and acts as an interlocutor.

**Wealth and Investments:** Its sovereign wealth fund, valued at \$924 billion (March 2024), is the fourth-largest globally.

**Unique Democracy:** It is the only Gulf monarchy experimenting successfully with democracy.

### What is the state of India-Kuwait ties?

1. India and Kuwait share historical and cultural bonds, with diplomatic relations established in 1961.
2. Bilateral trade was \$10.47 billion in FY 2023-24, with Kuwait as the sixth-largest crude supplier to India.
3. Around 1 million Indians live in Kuwait, forming the largest expatriate group.
4. During COVID-19, India provided vaccines to Kuwait, while Kuwait sent oxygen and medical supplies to India.
5. Kuwait quickly repatriated the mortal remains of 40 Indians who died in a fire in June 2024.

### What are the potential areas for strengthening ties?

1. Signing a comprehensive strategic partnership agreement and defense cooperation pact.
2. Collaborating on infrastructure projects under Kuwait's 'Vision 2035.'
3. Setting up Indian Institutes (IIT/IIM) and hospitals in Kuwait to enhance people-to-people connections.
4. Inviting Kuwait to join the International Solar Alliance and the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure.
5. Enhancing cooperation in space technology and increasing airline seat allocations.

### Question for practice:

Discuss the significance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Kuwait and the potential areas for strengthening India-Kuwait ties.

## Federal Reserve faces uncertainty in monetary policy

**Source:** The post Federal Reserve faces uncertainty in monetary policy has been created, based on the article “The Fed is as clueless as markets” published in “Business Standard” on 21st December 2024

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper2- Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India’s interests, Indian diaspora.

**Context:** The article explains uncertainty in the U.S. Federal Reserve’s monetary policy. Inflation is unpredictable, Trump’s policies add risks, and experts debate whether interest rates are at neutral. The Fed is cautious, unsure of future moves, emphasizing economic and political unknowns.

For detailed information on **US Federal Reserve cut interest rates** [read this article here](#)

### Why is the Federal Reserve uncertain about future monetary policy?

1. **Moderation in Inflation:** The Fed cut rates by 100 basis points to 4.25-4.5%, responding to inflation easing from 2022 peaks. However, uncertainty persists about future trends.

2. **Inflation Risks:** 15 of 19 Fed officials see upside inflation risks, the most since 2022. Core PCE inflation rose by 0.3% in both September and October, exceeding projections.

### 3. Impact of Trump’s Agenda:

- **Tariffs:** Proposed tariffs could raise prices, echoing trade war effects from Trump’s first term.
- **Tax Cuts:** New tax cuts may boost growth and inflation, especially if deficit-funded.
- **Labour Supply:** Planned deportations could reduce workforce availability.

### What are the issues with interest rates?

1. **Uncertainty on Neutral Rate:** Officials disagree if current rates are “neutral.” Powell says rates are restrictive, while Hammack suggests they are close to neutral.

2. **Economic Impact:** Some fear interest rates may not stimulate or restrict the economy effectively.

3. **Inflation Risks:** Core PCE inflation rose by 0.3% in September and October, exceeding projections, showing data volatility.

4. **Data Challenges:** Inflation surprises are common, especially in the first quarter, despite seasonal adjustments.

### What is the Fed’s next step?

1. The Fed may pause rate changes to assess economic conditions. Powell indicated they are near a point to slow adjustments.

2. However, Trump’s policy actions, especially trade and tax measures, could lead to either rate hikes or economic slowdown.

3. The uncertainty reflects unknowns about inflation trends, political risks, and how the economy responds to current rates.

**Question for practice:**

Examine the factors contributing to the Federal Reserve's uncertainty about future monetary policy decisions.

**World Bank Report Addresses Climate Change Impact on Low-Income Countries**

**Source:** The post World Bank Report Addresses Climate Change Impact on Low-Income Countries has been created, based on the article “**Water at heart of climate solutions: World Bank report outlines policy priorities & steps to address finance gaps**” published in “**Down to earth**” on 21st December 2024

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper3- Environment

**Context:** The article discusses a World Bank report highlighting how climate change affects people, especially in low-income countries. It emphasizes water's critical role, the need for investment in water management, and solutions to ensure sustainability and reduce vulnerabilities.

For detailed information on **World Bank Report Highlights Poverty and Climate Challenges** [read this article here](#)

**What is the World Bank Group's 2024 Report About?**

1. The World Bank Group's report, released at COP29 in November 2024, focuses on how individuals play a key role in both being affected by and addressing climate change.
2. It draws insights from 72 Climate Country and Development Reports (CCDRs) that guide countries in combining development with climate action.
3. It highlights people's central role in addressing climate risks and achieving sustainable development goals (SDGs).

**What Are CCDRs?**

1. CCDRs, launched in 2022, guide countries in aligning development with climate action.
2. They aim to enhance resilience, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and achieve SDGs.
3. CCDRs bring together governments, private sectors, and citizens to address climate challenges.

**How Does Climate Change Affect Low-Income Countries?**

**Labour Productivity Loss:** Rising temperatures reduce productivity, especially in labor-intensive sectors.

**Drought Impacts:** Droughts harm agriculture, food security, and energy production, leading to malnutrition and migration. In **Malawi**, droughts could push 14% of people below the poverty line.

**Flood Impacts:** Floods cause displacement, waterborne diseases, loss of lives, and infrastructure damage. Like, floods in countries like **South Africa** reduce agricultural production and jobs.

**Economic Losses:** Climate change causes significant financial losses. For example, **Argentina** may lose \$2.1 billion (0.6% of GDP) due to reduced agricultural output by 2050.

**Health Crises:** Waterborne diseases are increasing due to climate change. For Example, by 2040–2050, **Uzbekistan** and **Zimbabwe** will face higher disease rates.

### What Solutions Do CCDRs Suggested?

1. Water is crucial for agriculture, food security, human development, and economic growth. Climate change worsens water scarcity and extreme events.
2. **Investment in Water Management:** Current investments in water are only 0.5% of GDP in most countries. An investment of \$1.8 trillion is suggested to yield benefits worth \$7.1 trillion by 2030, addressing the finance gap in the water sector.
3. **Wastewater Management:** Improvement of wastewater treatment plants is necessary to ensure water quality and efficiency while reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
4. **Demand-Side Management:** This approach emphasizes sustainable and efficient use of water resources.
5. **Performance Monitoring:** Installing systems to monitor and enhance the performance of water treatment facilities is recommended to ensure operational efficiency and environmental compliance.

### Question for practice:

Examine how the World Bank's 2024 report highlights the impact of climate change on low-income countries and the solutions suggested to address water management challenges.