

9 PM Current Affairs Weekly Compilation

For UPSC CSE mains examination



4th Week

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Features :

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

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Concerns about Big Tech's dominance in AI

Source: The post concerns about Big Tech's dominance in AI has been created, based on the article "Democratising AI needs a radically different approach" published in "The Hindu" on 23rd November 2024

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

Context: The article highlights concerns about Big Tech's dominance in AI due to high costs, data monopolies, and integrated services. It suggests shifting focus from "bigger is better" AI models to smaller, purpose-driven AI guided by theory, expertise, and progressive goals.

For detailed information on **Regulating Big Techs In India** [read this article here](#)

What is the concern about Big Tech's dominance in AI?

- 1. High Computational Costs:** Building deep learning models is expensive. For instance, the Gemini Ultra model cost \$200 million to train, making it nearly impossible for smaller companies to compete.
- 2. Dependence on Big Tech:** Smaller players rely on Big Tech for compute credits, deepening their dominance.
- 3. End-to-End Services:** Big Tech offers integrated tools for tasks like data preparation and algorithm access, making their platforms more convenient and cost-effective.
- 4. Data Monopoly:** Big Tech collects vast, continuous data streams across domains and geographies, creating a competitive edge. Open data initiatives often fail as Big Tech leverages public data more effectively.
- 5. Control Over Research:** Big Tech now leads academic research, surpassing universities in publications and citations, influencing AI's direction.
- 6. Missed Opportunities:** Initiatives like the Global Development Compact fail to rethink the paradigm, reinforcing the "bigger is better" model without addressing systemic issues.

What is the Proposed Shift in AI Development?

- 1. Emphasis on Small AI:** The shift suggests moving away from massive data-driven models, like Gemini Ultra, which costs about \$200 million to train, towards smaller, targeted models that focus on specific societal needs.
- 2. Theory of Change:** This approach advocates for AI development guided by causal relationships and hypotheses testing, rather than sheer data volume.
- 3. Domain Expertise:** It prioritizes the use of domain knowledge and lived experiences to inform AI development, ensuring that models are relevant and effectively address real-world challenges.
- 4. Purpose-Driven Models:** By focusing on specific goals, these smaller models can be more sustainable and democratic, offering alternatives to Big Tech's monopolistic practices.

Question for practice:

Examine the concerns associated with Big Tech's dominance in AI and the proposed shift towards smaller, purpose-driven AI models.

Challenges faced at the G-20 summit in Brazil

Source: The post challenges faced at the G-20 summit in Brazil has been created, based on the article “**Urgent deadline: Poverty and climate change must be tackled urgently by the G-20**” published in “**The Hindu**” on 23rd November 2024

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

Context: The article discusses the challenges faced at the G-20 summit in Brazil. It highlights unmet expectations on tackling global hunger, poverty, and climate justice. Conflicts in Gaza and Ukraine affected discussions. Developing nations urged better representation and climate action.

What were the key goals of the G-20 summit in Brazil?

1. The summit aimed to address global hunger, poverty, and climate justice.
2. Brazilian President Lula Da Silva emphasized taxing the super-rich, proposing a 2% wealth tax to generate over \$200 billion.
3. Prime Minister Narendra Modi highlighted the struggles of the Global South, calling for better global representation.
4. The summit marked the third consecutive G-20 presidency by a Global South country after Indonesia (2022) and India (2023).

For detailed information on **Global Alliance against Hunger and Poverty** [read this article here](#)

What challenges affected the summit’s focus?

1. Global Conflicts:

- a. October 7 attacks on Israel and Gaza crisis diverted attention.
- b. Russia’s invasion of Ukraine complicated forging consensus.
- c. The declaration avoided mentioning Russia and only expressed "deep concern" over Gaza, lacking specifics on resolving conflicts.

2. Timing Issues:

- a. Held close to COP29, expected to influence the COP29 discussions in Azerbaijan. Issues like climate financing and justice were anticipated to be priorities.
- b. However, the U.S. presidential election results might impact future commitments, especially with Donald Trump's administration likely disregarding climate goals.

3. Diluted Commitments:

- a. Key topics like poverty and hunger lacked strong action plans.
- b. Lula’s proposed 2% wealth tax on the super-rich was not adopted.

What is the role of the Global South in shaping future G-20 goals?

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1. The quartet of Indonesia, India, Brazil, and South Africa must ensure the next summit prioritizes poverty, hunger, and climate issues.
2. South Africa will host the 2024 G-20, creating an opportunity to solidify these concerns.
3. COP30 in Brazil (2025) links G-20 outcomes to climate justice. With the U.S. hosting G-20 in 2026, the Global South must ensure concrete actions by then.

Question for practice:

Discuss the challenges faced by the G-20 summit in Brazil and their impact on addressing global issues like hunger, poverty, and climate justice.

Adani's Global Expansion and India's Reputation

Source: The post Adani's Global Expansion and India's Reputation has been created, based on the article "Adani indictment in US damages global credibility of India Inc" published in "Indian Express" on 23rd November 2024

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

Context: The article discusses how the Adani Group's global expansion, supported by the Indian government, has raised concerns over crony capitalism, corruption, and reliance on foreign finance. It criticizes the government's involvement in backing the group's questionable practices, damaging India's global reputation.

What is the Adani Group's global strategy?

1. The Adani Group has expanded globally, investing in projects from Australia to Greece, Bangladesh to Kenya, and beyond.
2. Its ventures, like ports and power projects, are supported by the Indian government as part of India's geopolitical and geo-economic strategy.
3. For instance, the U.S. partnered with Adani, providing \$533 million in financing for a port project in Sri Lanka to counter China's influence.
4. An Indian diplomat even described this support as "geo-strategic," using Adani's projects to enhance India's foreign policy goals.
5. However, critics argue that this has promoted crony capitalism, where political connections benefit certain businesses. The Indian government has been compared to **South Korea's chaebol model**, supporting global expansion of large businesses with state backing. Critics argue that India's version lacks accountability compared to South Korea.

How has crony capitalism evolved in India?

1. Crony capitalism in India began during the licence-permit-control era and later shifted to public-private partnerships and regulatory policies.
2. Political-business ties remain strong, with businesses relying on political support to secure contracts domestically and abroad.

What legal and financial issues has the Adani Group faced?

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1. Unlike China, which uses its own funds to expand globally, Indian firms depend on Western financial markets.
2. This dependence exposes them to foreign laws and legal risks, like anti-bribery regulations. A U.S. grand jury indictment highlights these issues.
3. Similar concerns have arisen globally:

a. Sri Lanka: Reviewing an Adani power project.

b. Kenya: Plans to cancel an Adani airport expansion project.

c. Bangladesh: High Court ordered a probe into Adani's power agreement.

What are the broader implications for India?

1. The government's overt support for Adani has blurred the line between promoting national business interests and enabling unethical practices.
2. Indian firms like Tata and Infosys built strong global reputations through ethical practices and consistent effort. In contrast, Adani's issues have harmed "Brand India," undoing decades of progress in building the global equity of Indian businesses.
3. Critics call for action to restore trust and ensure ethical practices in business-government relations.

Question for practice:

Evaluate how the Adani Group's global expansion, supported by the Indian government, has impacted India's reputation and raised concerns over ethical business practices.

Combating Antimicrobial Resistance: Global and India Efforts

Source: The post Combating Antimicrobial Resistance: Global and India Efforts has been created, based on the article "**How to fight back against the toughest diseases**" published in "**Indian Express**" on 23rd November 2024

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

Context: The article discusses the threat of antimicrobial resistance (AMR), its global impact, and India's efforts to combat it. It highlights surveillance improvements, policy actions, and India's need for better governance, investments, and research to strengthen AMR containment and save lives.

For detailed information on **UN's urgent call for action against antimicrobial resistance (AMR)** [read this article here](#)

What is AMR and why is it a threat?

1. Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) occurs when microbes become resistant to drugs used to treat them. Drug-resistant infections are difficult to treat and cause many deaths.
2. In 2021, AMR caused 1.14 million deaths globally, with the highest burden in South Asia and Africa.
3. Older adults are most vulnerable, with deaths in those aged 70+ increasing by 80% between 1990 and 2021.

4. Projections by economist Jim O'Neill in 2014 estimated that AMR could cause 10 million annual deaths by 2050.

What steps were taken to address AMR globally?

1. In 2015, the WHO launched the **Global Antimicrobial Resistance and Use Surveillance System (GLASS)**.
2. GLASS now includes 137 countries and provides standardized AMR data.
3. The **Global Action Plan on AMR was adopted in 2015**, and the **UN passed a resolution on AMR in 2016**.
4. The UNGA in 2023 committed to reducing AMR deaths by 10% by 2030 and called for \$100 million in catalytic funding.

What has India done to combat AMR?

1. India launched its National Action Plan (NAP) on AMR in 2017.
2. It monitors AMR trends through national networks and has expanded to secondary-level hospitals.
3. The National Essential Diagnostics List mandates microbiology labs in district hospitals, improving local surveillance.
4. India also has AMR surveillance for livestock, poultry, and fisheries.

For detailed information on **Increasing Antimicrobial Resistance in India** [read this article here](#)

What challenges remain in India's fight against AMR?

1. AMR surveillance lacks a national footprint, and governance mechanisms need strengthening.
2. Funding gaps and coordination issues slow the effective rollout of NAPs.
3. Efforts to monitor antimicrobial consumption must be sustained and expanded.

What more can India do to tackle AMR?

1. India should improve governance and accountability in its next NAP on AMR.
2. Investing in healthcare systems is crucial for infection control, vaccine uptake, and antimicrobial stewardship.
3. Developing new drugs, diagnostics, and vaccines through research is essential.
4. India needs ambitious actions to better protect public health and reduce the AMR burden.

Question for practice:

Discuss the global and Indian efforts to combat antimicrobial resistance (AMR) and the challenges that remain in addressing it.

Financial challenges in urban infrastructure development

Source: The post financial challenges in urban infrastructure development has been created, based on the article "**India's urban infrastructure financing, needs and reality**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 25th November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- infrastructure

Context: The article discusses India's urban growth challenges, highlighting the need for ₹70 lakh crore by 2036 for infrastructure. It emphasizes weak municipal finances, low tax collection, underutilized funds, declining PPPs, and suggests reforms, better planning, and private sector collaboration.

For detailed information on **Urban Local Bodies In India** [read this article here](#)

What are the financial challenges in urban infrastructure development?

1. India's **urban population will rise from 400 million to 800 million in three decades**. To meet infrastructure needs, ₹70 lakh crore is required by 2036. However, government investment in 2018 was only ₹1.3 lakh crore annually, much lower than the needed ₹4.6 lakh crore.

2. **Stagnant Contribution to GDP:** Share of Municipal finances has remained at 1% of GDP since 2002, reflecting limited growth despite rising urban needs.

3. **Low Revenue Self-Sufficiency:** Municipalities' share of their own revenue sources declined from 51% to 43%, reducing self-sufficiency. They rely more on grants and transfers from central and state governments, which increased from 37% to 44%.

4. **Poor Tax Collection:** Many cities collect a small fraction of potential tax revenues. For example, Bengaluru and Jaipur collect only 5-20% of potential property taxes.

5. **Low Property Tax Revenue:** Property tax collection is ₹25,000 crore, a mere 0.15% of GDP, far below its potential.

6. **Cost Recovery Gaps:** Revenue from services like water supply and waste management covers only 20-50% of their costs, leading to funding gaps.

7. **Unutilized Funds:** About 23% of total municipal revenue remains unspent, with major cities like Hyderabad and Chennai spending only 50% of their budgets in 2018-19.

8. **Decline in PPP Investments:** Public-private partnership (PPP) investments dropped from ₹8,353 crore in 2012 to ₹467 crore in 2018, reducing private sector involvement in infrastructure development.

What reforms are needed for sustainable urban development?

1. **Strengthen Municipal Autonomy:** Increase financial and administrative powers for municipalities to better manage and allocate resources. Current revenue generation is low, with municipalities only collecting 43% of their own revenue.

2. **Develop a Robust Pipeline of Projects:** Plan for 600-800 projects annually with about 15% investment potential from PPPs to meet the ₹70 lakh crore requirement over 20 years.

3. **Decouple Project Preparation from Financial Assistance:** This ensures projects are sustainable and well-planned, addressing past issues where only 50% of capital budgets were utilized in major cities like Hyderabad and Chennai.

4. **Leverage Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI):** Improve public services, especially transportation, by adopting modern digital solutions.

5. **Capture Land Value in Transport Projects:** Integrate metro and rail projects with urban development to increase land value and improve city design and efficiency.

Question for practice:

Examine the factors contributing to the financial challenges faced by municipalities in India and the proposed measures to address these challenges.

Impact of Air Pollution and NCAP's Effectiveness

Source: The post Impact of Air Pollution and NCAP's Effectiveness has been created, based on the article “**After a health emergency, toxic air foretells an economic one**” published in “**The Hindu**” on 25th November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3-environment-pollution

Context: The article discusses the severe impact of air pollution on health in India, highlighting increased deaths and chronic diseases due to poor air quality. It criticizes the inadequate response of the National Clean Air Programme and calls for stronger, health-focused actions and policies.

For detailed information on **India's severe air pollution crisis** [read this article here](#)

What is the impact of air pollution on health in India?

- 1. Lung Damage:** Doctors observed that human lungs, naturally pink at birth, turn black with pollution. Teenagers' lungs now resemble those of lifelong smokers, showing the deep impact of polluted air.
- 2. Premature Deaths:** Nearly 2 million lives were lost in 2021 due to pollution-related diseases. Air pollution is India's leading environmental cause of premature deaths.
- 3. Chronic Respiratory Issues:** Exposure to air pollution causes lifelong respiratory problems, including asthma and impaired lung development in children. This diminishes health and quality of life over a lifetime.
- 4. Non-Communicable Diseases:** Poor air quality is linked to hypertension, diabetes, and strokes. Early exposure to pollutants predisposes people to chronic illnesses.
- 5. Inequality in Impact:** Low-income communities living near pollution sources face the worst effects. They lack resources to shield themselves from pollution, deepening the health crisis.
- 6. Economic Costs:** Pollution increases hospitalizations and healthcare expenses, adding financial burdens on families. It also reduces productivity by causing missed work and school days.

For detailed information on **Air Pollution and Mortality in Indian Cities** [read this article here](#)

Is the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) effective?

- 1. Goal and Targets:** The NCAP, launched in 2019, initially aimed to reduce particulate matter pollution by 20-30% by 2024. This target was revised to a 40% reduction by 2026.
- 2. Lack of Effective Implementation:** Experts criticize NCAP for its weak implementation. It is seen as a policy of intent with limited on-ground impact.
- 3. Monitoring vs. Emission Reduction:** Some experts point out that NCAP focuses on monitoring pollutants but lacks strong efforts to reduce emissions.
- 4. Challenges with Uniform Policy:** Experts suggest that a one-size-fits-all approach does not work. Regional strategies targeting specific sources like stubble burning or industrial emissions are needed.
- 5. Structural Challenges:** Economist highlights that NCAP is ineffective without reducing reliance on fossil fuels.
- 6. Public Health Link:** Experts urge integrating public health into pollution control, making it a central focus of the NCAP.

For detailed information on **What challenges does the NCAP face** [read this article here](#)

What Should be Done?

- 1. Stronger NCAP Implementation:** Move beyond monitoring to strict enforcement, focusing on health outcomes. Tailor strategies regionally, targeting specific sources like stubble burning and industrial emissions.
- 2. Health-Centric Policies:** Link air pollution to public health crises. Recognize pollution as a cause of death certificates.
- 3. Community Involvement:** Encourage local actions like limiting waste-burning and idling vehicles near schools, as campaigns like "My Solution to Pollution" suggest.
- 4. Unified Regulatory Body:** Establish a central agency to regulate air quality effectively.

Question for practice:

Discuss the effectiveness of the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) in addressing the health and environmental impacts of air pollution in India.

Increasing number of satellites leads to pollution in the upper atmosphere

Source: The post increasing number of satellites leads to pollution in the upper atmosphere has been created, based on the article "**Why satellite space junk may be bad news for the environment**" published in "**Indian Express**" on 25th November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- space pollution and Science and Technology-Awareness in the fields of Space

Context: The article discusses how the increasing number of satellites leads to pollution in the upper atmosphere when they burn up. This pollution harms the ozone layer, impacts atmospheric chemistry, and can trigger environmental changes that threaten life on Earth.

For detailed information on **Long-feared space junk has become an imminent threat** [read this article here](#)

What Is the Status of Satellite Pollution?

- Over 10,000 satellites currently orbit Earth. This number may rise to 100,000 by the 2030s and could reach half a million later on.
- When satellites end their life cycle, they burn up and release pollutants into the atmosphere.
- Research by NOAA shows that 10% of particles in the stratosphere contain metals like aluminum from satellite debris.
- The emissions from satellites increased from 3.3 billion grams in 2020 to 5.6 billion grams in 2022.

Why Is Satellite Pollution a Concern?

1. Impact on the ozone layer: Pollutants like aluminum oxide deplete the ozone layer, which protects Earth from harmful UV rays. This is alarming, especially after the Montreal Protocol successfully reduced ozone-depleting chemicals like CFCs.

2. Atmospheric impacts: Pollutants like soot from rockets warm the atmosphere by absorbing solar energy. Metals from spacecraft, such as copper, can trigger chemical reactions and promote cloud formation, further altering atmospheric balance.

3. Even small changes in atmospheric chemistry can disrupt Earth's environment, which evolved over billions of years. Scientists fear these disruptions could harm life on Earth, making satellite pollution a pressing global issue.

Question for practice:

Examine how the increasing number of satellites contributes to pollution and its effects on Earth's atmosphere.

Global negotiations for a treaty to end plastic pollution

Source: The post global negotiations for a treaty to end plastic pollution has been created, based on the article “**Why the world needs a global plastic treaty**” published in “**Indian Express**” on 25th November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- Conservation, Environmental Pollution and Degradation, Environmental Impact Assessment.

Context: The article discusses the upcoming global negotiations in Busan to create a treaty to end plastic pollution. It covers the growing plastic crisis, its environmental and health impacts, the negotiations' goals, and India's position, which focuses on production limits, financial support, and national solutions.

For detailed information on **The UN Treaty on Plastic Pollution** [read this article here](#)

Why is a global plastic treaty needed?

1. Rising Plastic Production: Global plastic production doubled from 234 mt in 2000 to 460 mt in 2019 and may reach 700 mt by 2040 (OECD report).

2. Ineffective Recycling: Less than 10% of plastic has been recycled, while it takes 20–500 years to decompose (The Lancet, 2023).

3. Environmental Impact: 400 mt of annual plastic waste pollutes rivers and oceans, breaking into harmful microplastics.

4. Health Risks: Plastic chemicals cause cancer, diabetes, and reproductive disorders (UNEP studies).

5. Climate Change: Plastic contributed 3.6% of global GHG emissions in 2020, with emissions rising 20% by 2050 (Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory).

6. India's Role: India accounts for 20% of global plastic emissions (9.3 mt annually), far more than Nigeria (3.5 mt), Indonesia (3.4 mt) and China (2.8 mt).

For detailed information on **Global Plastics Treaty** read [Article 1](#), [Article 2](#)

What are the key issues in the treaty negotiations?

1. Production Caps: Oil and gas-rich countries like Saudi Arabia, Russia, and India oppose limits on plastic production, citing it as beyond the treaty's scope. Countries like Rwanda and the EU propose ambitious targets, such as a 40% reduction by 2040.

2. Finance and Technology: Countries differ in funding methods. UNEP urges mobilizing private and public finance. India demands financial aid, technology transfer, and infrastructure assessment for waste management.

3. Just Transition: Talks address the impact on workers and communities dependent on plastic production, highlighting the need for fair solutions.

What is India's stance on the treaty?

1. India opposes restrictions on polymer production, stating it is beyond the UNEA's 2022 resolution mandate.
2. It calls for decisions on harmful chemicals to be based on scientific studies and prefers domestic regulation.
3. India seeks financial and technical assistance, including technology transfer, for implementing treaty provisions.
4. It highlights the need to assess financial resources and infrastructure for waste management.
5. India banned 19 single-use plastic items in 2022 but advocates for nationally driven regulations.

Question for practice:

Examine the key issues in the global treaty negotiations to address plastic pollution and India's stance on these issues.

Delhi's severe air pollution and its solution

Source: The post Delhi's severe air pollution and its solution has been created, based on the article “**Three solutions for clean air**” published in “**Indian Express**” on 25th November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3-Environment

Context: The article discusses Delhi's severe air pollution, highlighting stubble burning, transport, and local sources as causes. It suggests crop diversification, stronger EV policies, and innovative technologies like smog towers to reduce pollution and improve public health and sustainability.

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

What is the main cause of air pollution in Delhi?

1. Delhi experiences severe air pollution, especially in November, with the AQI often surpassing 400. This is due to slow wind velocity and pollutants such as PM 2.5 stagnating in the air.
- 2. Stubble Burning:** According to IITM, Pune, stubble burning in Punjab and Haryana contributed 35.18% to Delhi's PM 2.5 levels on November 1, 2024.
- 3. Transport Sector:** Delhi's transport sector added 19% to the pollution.
- 4. Other Sources:** Contributions include: Residential areas: 3.9%; Industries: 4.6%; Construction: 2.4%; Road dust: 1.4%; Neighboring areas: 30-35%

What should be done?

1. One solution is **diversifying crops** in Punjab and Haryana, where 1 to 1.5 million hectares of paddy could switch to crops like pulses or millets. This change could reduce groundwater depletion and greenhouse gas emissions, as paddy is highly water-intensive and receives large subsidies. If farmers receive better incentives and support for crop diversification, it could reduce pollution and enhance sustainability.

2. **Implementing Delhi's Electric Vehicles (EV) policy** more aggressively could help. The policy targets 25% of all new vehicle registrations as EVs by 2025. However, a lack of charging infrastructure remains a hurdle, with only 1,919 charging stations available. Expanding this infrastructure is crucial for reducing emissions from the transport sector.

3. **Innovative technologies** like vacuum cleaning towers, or smog towers, could capture pollutants directly from the air. Placing these towers at major traffic intersections and highly polluted areas could significantly improve air quality.

Question for practice:

Discuss the major causes of air pollution in Delhi and the potential solutions to address them.

India's Constitution Progress and Ongoing Challenges

Source: The post India's Constitution Progress and Ongoing Challenges has been created, based on the article "The Constitution still thrives, let it show India the way" published in "The Hindu" on 26th November 2024

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

Context: The article reflects on the 75th anniversary of India's Constitution adoption. It highlights B.R. Ambedkar's concerns about inequality and fraternity, assesses progress on equality, and discusses challenges like caste politics, institutional erosion, and the ongoing responsibility to uphold constitutional values.

For detailed information on **Significance of the 75th anniversary of the Constitution of India** [read this article here](#)

What Did Dr. Ambedkar Say on Constitution Adoption?

1. Importance of Implementers: Dr. Ambedkar said that a good Constitution could fail if implemented by bad leaders, while a bad Constitution could succeed with capable leaders.

2. Need for Social Transformation:

a. Dr. Ambedkar highlighted the contradiction between political equality (one person, one vote) and social and economic inequality.

b. He stressed that liberty, equality, and fraternity are interdependent. Without fraternity, equality and liberty could not flourish naturally and would require enforcement.

c. Fraternity, defined as a sense of common brotherhood, was hindered by caste and religious divisions, which he called "anti-national."

d. He argued that fraternity would lead to solidarity and help erode caste and social hierarchies.

3. Responsibility Post-Independence: Ambedkar reminded Indians that after independence, they could no longer blame the British for failures and must take responsibility for their actions.

How Has India Progressed on Equality, Fraternity?

A. Progress on Equality

- 1. Abolition of Untouchability:** Untouchability has been legally abolished, promoting equality in principle.
- 2. Affirmative Action:** India implemented one of the world's oldest reservation systems for Scheduled Castes and Other Backward Classes (OBCs).
- 3. Challenges:** Social and economic equality is still incomplete, as seen in demands for caste-based opportunities and a caste census.
- 4. Economic Inequality:** Inequalities in wealth and outcomes remain significant, causing political and social unrest.

B. Progress on Fraternity

- 1. Nationhood Strengthened:** Events like the Kargil War and cricket matches show a growing sense of national unity.
- 2. Challenges:**
 - a. Caste-based politics and reservations undermine fraternity.
 - b. Dr. Ambedkar's vision of caste annihilation has not been realized, as caste remains entrenched in public life.
- 3. Limited Social Unity:** Divisions based on caste, creed, and region persist.

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

What Challenges Remain for the Constitution?

- 1. Institutional Weakening:** Parliament and judiciary face pressures, reducing their effectiveness.
- 2. Global Perception:** The V-Dem Institute labeled India an "electoral autocracy," indicating concerns about democratic practices.

Way Forward

Dr. Ambedkar reminded us of the responsibility independence brings. India must reduce societal and political contradictions, strengthen institutions, and follow constitutional principles to ensure true democracy.

Question for practice:

Examine Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's concerns about the relationship between liberty, equality, and fraternity, and their relevance to India's progress since the Constitution's adoption.

Significant contributions of women in drafting the Indian Constitution

Source: The post significant contributions of women in drafting the Indian Constitution has been created, based on the article "**Feminist ideology in India's constitutional discourse**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 26th November 2024.

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

Context: The article highlights the significant contributions of women in drafting the Indian Constitution. It criticizes the patriarchal neglect of their role, addresses their fight for gender equality through constitutional provisions, and laments the ongoing struggles for women's rights in independent India.

Who Were the Founding Mothers of the Indian Republic?

1. The article highlights the contributions of women in the Constituent Assembly, referring to them as the "founding mothers."
2. They worked alongside B.R. Ambedkar to ensure the Constitution addressed gender equality.
3. Prominent women like Amrit Kaur, Hansa Mehta, and Begum Aizaz Rasul challenged the patriarchal systems embedded in Indian society.

How Did Women Influence the Constitution?

- 1. Advocated for Gender Equality:** Women in the Constituent Assembly, including Hansa Mehta and Amrit Kaur, fought to ensure the Constitution addressed gender equality, particularly in areas of Fundamental Rights.
- 2. Pushed for Uniform Civil Code (UCC):** Hansa Mehta and Amrit Kaur demanded the UCC be part of Fundamental Rights to counter patriarchal power in religion and family. When it was relegated to the Directive Principles, they worked to strengthen its significance by introducing a prelude declaring the Directive Principles fundamental to governance.
- 3. Challenged Religious Freedom:** Amrit Kaur and Hansa Mehta argued against absolute freedom of religion, warning it could perpetuate harmful practices like child marriage, purdah, polygamy, and sati.
- 4. Pioneered Secularism:** Begum Aizaz Rasul described secularism as the Constitution's most significant feature, supporting efforts to limit religion's control over women's rights.
- 5. Elevated Directive Principles:** The efforts of women helped secure a legal framework that recognized Directive Principles' importance in achieving social justice in later jurisprudence (1980s).

Conclusion

1. The founding mothers of the Indian Constitution played a crucial role in embedding gender equality, yet their contributions remain overlooked.
2. Despite this, patriarchal compromises allowed discriminatory personal laws, undermining women's equality.
3. The *1974 Towards Equality* report revealed that even two decades later, gender equality was unachieved.
4. The Uniform Civil Code, designed to ensure justice, remains unimplemented, reflecting a failure to honor their vision.
5. Women's representation in power remains low, hindering feminist constitutionalism in India.

Question for practice:

Discuss the contributions of women in the Constituent Assembly toward promoting gender equality and their impact on the Indian Constitution.

Satellite Tracking of Stubble Burning in Delhi

Source: The post Satellite Tracking of Stubble Burning in Delhi has been created, based on the article “On stubble burning and satellite data” published in “The Hindu” on 26th November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- Environment

Context: The article discusses the issue of farm fires in Punjab and Haryana, which worsen air quality in Delhi. It highlights how satellites are used to track these fires, the controversy over their timing, and the government's response to air pollution and stubble burning.

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

Why is Delhi's air quality worsening after Deepavali?

1. Delhi's air quality has remained poor despite implementing GRAP Stage IV measures and the Supreme Court's intervention.
2. Paddy stubble burning in Punjab and Haryana is a major cause.
3. Farmers burn stubble after harvesting rice to prepare for wheat sowing. The smoke drifts to Delhi, worsening air quality due to seasonal winds.

How Are Farm Fires Detected?

- 1. NASA Satellites:** Farm fires are tracked using NASA's Aqua and Suomi-NPP satellites. These satellites use MODIS and VIIRS instruments to detect fires through visible and infrared imaging.
- 2. Satellite Overpass Timing:** The satellites pass over each location at 1:30 p.m. and 1:30 a.m., capturing images of fires during these times.
- 3. Aerosol Tracking:** Suomi-NPP's Ozone Mapping and Profiler Suite measures aerosol levels to track smoke from fires and its pollution contribution.
- 4. Alternative Satellites:** South Korea's GEO-KOMPSAT 2A provides additional data. It captured images showing more fires occurring after NASA's satellites had completed their overpass.

What is the new controversy?

- 1. Timing of Stubble Burning:** Farmers in Punjab and Haryana may be burning stubble after NASA satellites Aqua and Suomi-NPP complete their overpasses (1:30 p.m.), avoiding detection. This was suggested by NASA scientist Hiren Jethva based on satellite observations.
- 2. Contradictory Observations:** GEO-KOMPSAT 2A satellite data showed smoke thickening later in the day, implying more fires after Aqua and Suomi-NPP's scans.
- 3. Aerosol Levels:** Aerosol quantities remain unchanged compared to previous years, despite claims of fewer fires, indicating undetected burning.
- 4. CAQM's Stance:** The Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) was created in 2020 to address air pollution in the NCR. It claims a 71% reduction in fires in Punjab since 2020. However, Punjab government data shows the burnt area increased by 24% between 2022 and 2023, and IARI data shows a 15% increase.
- 5. Farmer Awareness:** Meeting records (March 2024) and farmer accounts reveal instructions to burn stubble after 4 p.m.

What are the challenges in resolving stubble burning?

- 1. Timing of Fires:** Farmers may burn stubble after satellite overpasses to avoid detection. Data from NASA's Aqua and Suomi-NPP satellites shows fewer fires than expected, while other satellites like GEO-KOMPSAT 2A show increased smoke later in the day.
- 2. Satellite Limitations:** ISRO's INSAT-3DR and RESOURCESAT satellites can track fires but have limitations. INSAT-3DR's data resolution is coarse, while RESOURCESAT-2A has better imaging but lower coverage. GISAT-1, a satellite launched in 2021, failed to reach orbit, leaving limited domestic resources for precise monitoring.
- 3. Economic Constraints:** Burning stubble is cheaper and quicker for farmers than alternative methods. Despite government efforts, cost-effective solutions remain scarce.
- 4. Inconsistent Data:** The CAQM claims fires have reduced, but data from Punjab and the Indian Agricultural Research Institute show increases in burnt areas, indicating discrepancies in reporting.

Question for practice:

Discuss the role of satellite technology in tracking stubble burning and its effectiveness in addressing air pollution issues in Delhi.

Disappointment of the 29th UN climate conference (CoP 29)

Source: The post disappointment of the 29th UN climate conference (CoP 29) has been created, based on the article "**Express view: Disappointment at CoP — developing countries left unheard**" published in "**Indian Express**" on 26th November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- Environment

Context: The article discusses the disappointment of the 29th UN climate conference (CoP 29). Developing countries need \$1.3 trillion annually for climate action, but a \$300 billion deal was reached instead. The article highlights the failure to meet funding goals and calls for more creative solutions.

For detailed information on **COP 29 Outcomes** [read this article here](#)

What was CoP 29 expected to achieve?

CoP 29 in Baku was labeled the "Finance CoP" It aimed to secure at least \$1.3 trillion annually for developing countries to combat global warming. This funding was crucial as reports showed the planet could exceed the 1.5°C warming limit.

What challenges did developing countries face?

1. Developing nations criticized the lack of equity and ambition. While the \$300 billion could act as a seed fund for larger investments, history offers little hope.
2. Even the OECD acknowledged the need for new, effective financing strategies post-2025, but CoP 29 failed to provide a clear roadmap.
3. Initiatives like the International Solar Alliance (ISA), led by India, reflect the Global South's efforts to address climate challenges independently. However, these efforts cannot replace the funding commitments from developed nations.

What needs to be done?

1. Developing nations must unite at global forums to pressure wealthy countries into fulfilling their financial obligations.
2. Creative and sustainable solutions are essential for achieving the necessary \$1.3 trillion target.

Question for practice:

Discuss the implications of the \$300 billion climate finance deal reached at CoP 29 on developing countries.

Challenges faced by the High Seas Treaty

Source: The post challenges faced by the High Seas Treaty has been created, based on the article “**Between hope and hurdles on the high seas**” published in “**The Hindu**” on 27th November 2024

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

Context: The article discusses the High Seas Treaty, signed by India, aiming to protect marine biodiversity and regulate resources beyond national jurisdictions. It highlights challenges like weak enforcement, geopolitical tensions, and gaps in aligning high-seas governance with coastal regulations.

What is the High Seas Treaty?

1. The High Seas Treaty, officially known as the Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) Agreement, aims to protect marine ecosystems and promote sustainable use of resources in areas beyond national jurisdictions.
2. It is the third implementing agreement under UNCLOS, after treaties on deep-sea mining and fisheries management.
3. Key goals include: Conserving marine biodiversity, sharing benefits from marine genetic resources, Requiring environmental impact assessments (EIAs) for harmful activities.

For detailed information on **The UN High Seas Treaty** [read this article here](#)

What are the challenges to the High Seas treaty?

1. **Low Ratification Levels:** Out of 104 signatories, only 14 have ratified the treaty, far from the required 60 for enforcement.
2. **Maritime Disputes:** Territorial conflicts, like in the South China Sea, delay consensus on Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). Coastal states worry MPAs may harm local economies and livelihoods.
3. **Marine Genetic Resources:** Wealthier nations might underreport profits from marine genetic resources, undermining the global sharing fund.
4. **Overlapping Regulations:** The treaty may conflict with the Convention on Biological Diversity, creating enforcement gaps and disadvantaging smaller nations.
5. **Limited Technology Transfer:** Low-income nations lack resources for maritime research. The treaty offers no enforcement mechanisms for equitable partnerships.

6. Overlooked Ecosystem Interconnections: Pollution and overfishing in Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) affect international waters, as seen in the 2021 X-Press Pearl disaster and overfishing in West Africa.

7. Weak Enforcement Framework: EIAs are required for planned activities but the treaty excludes harmful practices like oil and gas exploration. Coastal states often avoid international review of EIAs. Weak institutions and conflicting legal standards make enforcement difficult, especially in developing regions.

How can the treaty succeed?

1. Align Coastal and High-Seas Governance: Integrate regulations to address ecosystem interconnections, such as overfishing in West Africa depleting high-seas stocks.

2. Support Global South: Provide technical and financial aid for equitable participation in ocean research.

3. Commitment from Wealthier Nations: They must provide technical and financial aid.

Question for practice:

Examine the challenges faced by the High Seas Treaty in achieving its goals and suggest measures to ensure its successful implementation.

India's Inequality and Neoliberal Reforms Versus Constitution

Source: The post India's Inequality and Neoliberal Reforms Versus Constitution has been created, based on the article "From a republic to a republic of unequals" published in "The Hindu" on 27th November 2024

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

Context: The article discusses how India's Constitution aims for an egalitarian society through state intervention, but neoliberal reforms have widened economic and social inequalities. It highlights rising wealth concentration, overlapping with caste-based inequality, threatening the Constitution's vision of equality.

For detailed information on **Status of Inequality In India** [read this article here](#)

How does the Constitution promote an egalitarian society?

1. Egalitarian Vision: The Constitution seeks to minimize inequalities in income, status, and opportunities, aiming for an egalitarian society. Article 38(2) and Article 39(c) emphasize reducing wealth concentration and ensuring equality.

2. Affirmative Action: Policies like reservations and treating unequals unequally were introduced to bridge historical and social gaps.

3. Fundamental Rights and DPSP: Part III and Part IV ensure equality of liberties, opportunities, and addressing economic disparities, inspired by Rawls' egalitarian liberalism.

4. Judicial Interpretation: In *D.S. Nakara vs Union of India (1982)*, the Supreme Court emphasized socialism as ensuring social security and a decent life for all. In *Samatha vs State of Andhra Pradesh (1997)*, it affirmed that reducing income inequality and creating equal opportunities align with constitutional values.

What impact have neoliberal reforms had on inequality?

9 PM Compilation [Fourth Week] November 2024

1. Neoliberal reforms in the 1990s shifted India's focus from welfare policies to market-driven growth, widening inequalities.
2. The top 1% of earners increased their income share from 6% in the 1980s to 22.6% by 2022-23 (Chancel and Piketty).
3. Wealth concentration worsened; the top 1% owned 40.1% of total wealth in 2022-23, surpassing pre-Independence levels.
4. Economic and social inequalities overlap, with upper castes owning 90% of billionaire wealth by 2022-23, while Scheduled Tribes had none and OBC representation fell from 20% in 2014 to 10%.
5. Oxfam reported a rise in billionaires, from 9 in 2000 to 119 in 2023, highlighting extreme inequality.
6. This shift violates constitutional ideals of reducing inequality, as wealth concentration benefits a privileged few while marginalizing the majority.

What is the risk to constitutional democracy?

1. Neoliberalism undermines the Constitution's vision by increasing inequalities.
2. Social and economic inequalities risk political democracy, as warned by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar.
3. To honor the Constitution, India must critically evaluate its policies and refocus on equality.

Question for practice:

Examine how neoliberal reforms have impacted the Constitution's vision of an egalitarian society in India.

India's Growth: Strengths, Challenges, and Prospects

Source: The post India's Growth: Strengths, Challenges, and Prospects has been created, based on the article "Revival on the cards for Indian economy" published in "Indian Express" on 27th November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3-Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilisation, of resources, growth, development and employment.

Context: The article discusses India's economic growth, expected above 7% this year. It highlights positive indicators like strong GST collections, rising vehicle sales, and good crop prospects. Concerns remain about inflation and urban stress, but investment momentum is strong.

For detailed information on **India's Economic Growth and challenges** [read this article here](#)

What is the current state of India's economic growth?

1. India's economy is growing healthily, expected to achieve a growth rate above 7% this year.
2. **Purchasing Managers Index (PMI):** For the last three months, both services and manufacturing PMIs have been high, between 57-60, indicating expansion.
3. **GST Collections:** Collections have reached Rs 12.74 lakh crore in the first seven months of the year, surpassing last year's Rs 11.64 lakh crore.

4. Vehicle Sales: Two-wheeler sales are up by 16% this year. Car sales increased by 9% in October due to the festival season.

What challenges are affecting India's economic growth?

- 1. Urban Stress:** Some consumer goods companies report subdued consumption, partly due to the “shradh” period affecting sales.
- 2. Inflation Concerns:** Inflation is at 6.2%, driven by high food prices, especially onions and pulses.
- 3. Rural Demand Weakness:** Rural demand remains muted due to lower farm output and past inflation.
- 4. Uneven Investment Activity:** Consumer goods industries face underutilized capacity, limiting new investments.
- 5. Global Risks:** Potential global disruptions, like U.S. policy changes, could affect inflation and growth.

How is investment momentum performing?

- 1. Private Sector:** Investment is recovering, supported by bank credit and other financial instruments.
- 2. Government Spending:** Central and state government capex was slow initially due to elections, but it's picking up.
- 3. Infrastructure:** Sectors like metals, cement, and power, especially renewables, are seeing significant investment.

What Does the Future Look Like?

The Bank of Baroda forecasts a growth rate of 7.3-7.4% for the year, a slight decrease from last year's 8.2%. The RBI predicts a 7.2% growth rate, maintaining its anti-inflation stance with no immediate rate cuts expected.

Question for practice:

Discuss the factors contributing to India's economic growth and the challenges it faces in sustaining this momentum.

Trump's Tariffs and Their Impact on Trade

Source: The post Trump's Tariffs and Their Impact on Trade has been created, based on the article “**Trump's tariff plans could impact global trade — including India**” published in “**Indian Express**” on 27th November 2024.

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

Context: The article discusses Donald Trump's proposed tariffs on imports from Mexico, Canada, and China, aiming to boost U.S. manufacturing and address immigration issues. It highlights potential inflation, bipartisan protectionism, and India's need to adapt by attracting investments and reforming its economy.

What is Donald Trump's Tariff Proposal?

1. Donald Trump proposed a 60% tariff on Chinese imports and 10-20% on other countries during his campaign.

2. After his election, he announced a plan to impose a 25% tariff on all products from Mexico and Canada, and an additional 10% on China.

3. These tariffs aim to encourage U.S. manufacturing, rebalance trade, and improve government finances.

What Impact Could These Tariffs Have?

1. The tariffs could disrupt supply chains, lead to inflation, increase costs for consumers and businesses, and affect interest rates.

2. Economists at the Peterson Institute of International Economics suggest that these tariffs could cost U.S. households more than \$2,600 annually.

How Have Tariffs Been Received Politically?

1. Trump's tariff policies have received support from both Republicans and Democrats. His administration imposed tariffs on various products in 2018 and 2019.

2. The Biden administration has largely kept these tariffs and introduced additional hikes, indicating a shift towards protectionism in U.S. trade policy.

For detailed information on **Decline of multilateralism, especially with Donald Trump's re-election** [read this article here](#)

What is the Situation with India?

1. India was not initially targeted by Trump's tariffs, despite him previously labeling India as a "tariff king" and a "trade abuser."

2. India needs to use its diplomatic channels to negotiate with the U.S. and should work towards making its economy more open and less protectionist to attract more investments.

3. This could help India capitalize on the opportunities arising from Trump's trade policies.

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

Question for practice:

Discuss the potential impacts of Donald Trump's proposed tariffs on the U.S. economy and global trade.

Concern over worker deletions under MGNREGA

Source: The post concern over worker deletions under MGNREGA has been created, based on the article "**The right to work deleted**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 28th November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2-Governance-Public Distribution System- objectives, functioning, limitations, revamping.

Context: The article highlights a sharp increase in worker deletions under MGNREGA, with over 10.43 crore deletions in four years. In 2022-23 alone, 5.53 crore workers were deleted, marking a 247% surge from 2021-22. This trend raises concerns over procedural fairness, transparency, and the right to work, as many deletions lack proper verification and violate guidelines. The surge coincides with Aadhaar-based payment compliance, suggesting potential misuse of deletion protocols

For detailed information on **Social Audit in MGNREGA & MGNREGA Challenges** [read this article here](#)

What Are the Guidelines for Deleting Job Cards?

- 1. Legal Basis:** Job card deletions are governed by Schedule II, Paragraph 23 of the MGNREGA Act and Master Circulars issued by the Ministry of Rural Development.
- 2. Permitted Reasons:** The MGNREGA MIS dropdown menu lists 12 reasons for deletion. Some of the prominent reasons include; permanent household migration, discovery of duplicate job cards, or if the job card was obtained using forged documents.
- 3. Due Process:** Deletions require independent verification by the Programme Officer and must be documented and reported to the Gram Sabha or Ward Sabha.
- 4. Updating Records:** All deletions must be updated in the MGNREGA Management Information System (MIS) to maintain accurate and transparent records.
- 5. Mandatory Adherence:** The Act and the circular emphasize the necessity of adhering to these protocols to ensure fairness and accountability in the deletion process.

Why Did Deletions Surge in 2022-23?

- 1. Aadhaar-Based Payment System (ABPS):** The surge coincided with mandatory ABPS implementation, requiring Aadhaar-linking to job cards. Strict compliance measures led to rushed deletions.
- 2. Procedural Violations:** Many deletions, like "Not willing to work" (83% in 2022-23), occurred without Gram Sabha discussions or worker knowledge.
- 3. Regional Impact:** No MGNREGA funds were released to West Bengal since December 26, 2021, halting all work in the state. For example, in Mayureshwar-I block, deletions jumped from 550 workers in 2021-22 to 31,861 in 2022-23, largely due to lack of funds.
- 4. Documentation Gaps:** Reasons like "Village becomes urban" were inconsistently applied, with partial deletions in some cases.

What Problems Persist in the Deletion Process?

- 1. Arbitrary Deletions:** Many deletions lacked worker knowledge or Gram Sabha approval.
- 2. Inconsistent Reasons:** Some deletions used invalid reasons, such as "Village becomes urban," but only part of the village was affected.

How Can Deletion Issues Be Addressed?

1. Adhere to verification processes.
2. Involve Gram Sabhas in deletions.
3. Conduct independent audits and grievance redress.
4. Train Panchayats for fair inquiries.
5. Ensure public consultations and transparency.

6. MGNREGA must maintain its goal of employment and justice by preventing arbitrary deletions and improving accountability.

Question for practice:

Examine the factors contributing to the surge in worker deletions under MGNREGA in 2022-23 and the procedural lapses associated with it.

Integration of social security schemes with e-Shram

Source: The post Integration of social security schemes with e-Shram has been created, based on the article “ORGANISING THE UNORGANISED” published in “Business Standard” on 28th November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2 – Governance - Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources

Context: The article discusses the integration of social security schemes with India’s e-Shram portal. This aims to provide unorganised workers seamless access to welfare benefits. Challenges include low worker registration, lack of incentives, and difficulties in integrating state schemes.

For detailed information on **eShram – One Stop Solution** [read this article here](#)

What is the e-Shram Portal?

1. The e-Shram portal is a comprehensive database for India’s unorganised workers launched in August 2021.
2. It registers details like name, occupation, and skills of workers. As of now, 303 million workers across 400 occupations are registered.
3. There are about 500 million unorganised workers in India. As of now, 303 million have already been registered on the portal in over 400 different occupations classified under 30 broad occupation sectors.
4. Top categories include: Agricultural workers: 158.6 million, Domestic workers: 28.7 million, Construction workers: 27.3 million, Apparel workers: 19.7 million
5. Uttar Pradesh leads with 83.7 million registrations, followed by Bihar (29.5 million), West Bengal (26.4 million), and Madhya Pradesh (18.34 million).

What Does Integration Entail?

1. The e-Shram portal integrates data from **12 central welfare schemes**, including One Nation One Ration Card, MGNREGA, and PMAY-Gramin.
2. It aims to provide seamless access to **health, insurance, pension, housing**, and other benefits.
3. **State schemes** are also being onboarded to ensure broader coverage.
4. Integration with the **Gati Shakti portal** is planned to reduce skill gaps and help agencies plan workforce needs effectively.
5. It creates a **unified database** for workers and employers. Workers gain easier access to various social security benefits, while employers find it simpler to comply with legal requirements. The portal is also Aadhaar-seeded to prevent duplicate entries.

What are the challenges faced?

- 1. Lack of Incentives:** Workers hesitate to register due to no immediate benefits.
- 2. State Scheme Integration:** Political and financial barriers delay inclusion of state-run welfare schemes.
- 3. Technological Limitations:** The portal requires upgrades to seamlessly manage existing and new schemes.
- 4. Gig Worker Coverage:** Issues like data confidentiality and funding complicate inclusion of gig workers.
- 5. Previous Failures:** Similar initiatives, like the 2008 Unorganised Workers Social Security Act, were abandoned mid-way.

Question for practice:

Discuss the integration of social security schemes with the e-Shram portal and the challenges faced in its implementation.

India's FTA Challenges and Strategic Trade Solutions

Source: The post India's FTA Challenges and Strategic Trade Solutions has been created, based on the article "Standards on trade: India must aim to adapt" published in "Business Standard" on 28th November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2- International Relations

Context: The article discusses India's ongoing FTA negotiations with the UK and EU, challenges like environmental and labour standards, and global trade barriers. It suggests India improve domestic policies, lower tariffs, and adapt to global norms for better integration and benefits.

For detailed information on **India-UK FTA and India's FTA 2.0 approach** read this article [here](#)

Why are the FTAs important for India?

1. India is not a part of major regional trade agreements. FTAs can unlock opportunities for market access and global integration.
2. About 70% of global trade happens through value chains.
3. India's share in global exports is just 2%.

What are the key demands in the India-UK FTA?

- 1. India's demands:** Increased mobility for its skilled labour force.
- 2. UK's demands:** Better access to Indian markets and lower tariffs on goods.

What challenges do environmental, and labor standards pose?

- 1. Non-Tariff Barriers:** Developed countries use environmental and labor standards as non-tariff barriers, restricting imports from developing countries.
- 2. EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM):** Aims to reduce "carbon leakage" by imposing higher costs on carbon-intensive products like cement, steel, aluminum, and fertilizers.

3. Impact on India: Higher tariffs could reduce competitiveness for Indian exports.

4. Contradicts Climate Principles: CBAM undermines "common but differentiated responsibilities" by imposing stringent standards on developing nations despite historical emissions by developed countries.

What is the WTO's role in these issues?

1. There is debate on whether mechanisms like CBAM comply with WTO rules.
2. However, WTO's dispute-resolution mechanism is currently dysfunctional. This leaves concerns about trade fairness unresolved.

What should India do to address these challenges?

- 1. Lower tariffs:** A review of Customs duty rates, announced in the Budget, should involve domain experts.
- 2. Enhance standards:** Improve labour conditions and reduce carbon intensity to align with global norms.
- 3. Focus on integration:** Better alignment with global value chains can improve India's trade share.
- 4. Strategic negotiations:** Protect India's interests without resorting to retaliatory tariffs.

Question for practice:

Examine the challenges posed by environmental and labour standards in India's FTA negotiations with developed countries and suggest measures to address them.

Seaweed in cattle feed reduces methane emissions

Source: The post Seaweed in cattle feed reduces methane emissions has been created, based on the article "Seaweed cure in sight for bovines' methane burps" published in "Live Mint" on 28th November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- Environment

Context: The article discusses using red seaweed in cattle feed to reduce methane emissions from bovine burps. Methane is a major greenhouse gas contributing to climate change. Research is ongoing to ensure safety, effectiveness, and feasibility for Indian livestock.

For detailed information on **Decarbonization of Agriculture Sector** [read this article here](#)

How significant is India's cattle population?

1. India has 303 million cattle, the largest globally, accounting for 19.5% of the world's cattle population.
2. It has 112 million buffalos, 54.6% of the global buffalo population.
3. Livestock contributes a third of methane emissions globally, with a single cow emitting 99 kg of methane annually.
4. Methane from livestock is a significant greenhouse gas, accelerating climate change.
5. Addressing emissions from India's cattle is critical for global climate goals.

Why is seaweed considered for cattle feed?

1. Seaweed has been used as livestock feed for thousands of years. It is nutritionally rich, offering minerals, carbohydrates with prebiotic properties, and fatty acids.
2. Norway began commercial production of seaweed meal from kelp in the 1960s, highlighting its value.
3. Agencies like Kochi University, Central Salt & Marine Chemicals Research Institute, and Gujarat Life Sciences are studying the effects of seaweed on methane emissions.
4. The **National Dairy Development Board (NDDB)** is exploring algal formulations for methane reduction.

What challenges exist in implementing this solution?

- 1. Safety Concerns:** Adding more than 5% seaweed to feed can make animals sick. Research is ongoing to find the right quantity.
- 2. Variability:** Different cattle breeds may respond differently to seaweed feed. Indian cattle, often free-range, may have different outcomes compared to cattle in ranches.
- 3. Economics:** Large-scale implementation must be cost-effective, especially since most Indian livestock is not confined like in Western countries.

Why is this approach important for the future?

1. By 2050, demand for animal products is expected to grow by 60-70%.
2. Livestock farming faces challenges like land degradation, feed shortages, and climate change.
3. Expanding feed options with sustainable solutions like seaweed can meet these challenges while reducing emissions.
4. Using seaweed in livestock feed aligns with global efforts to fight climate change. It also supports eco-friendly farming practices, meeting consumer demand for sustainable products.

Question for practice:

Examine how the use of seaweed in cattle feed can contribute to reducing methane emissions and address challenges in India's livestock sector.

India's PAN 2.0 project

Source: The post India's PAN 2.0 project has been created, based on the article "**PAN 2.0 must aim to end fraud via impersonation**" published in "**Live Mint**" on 28th November 2024

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

Context: The article discusses India's PAN 2.0 project, aimed at unifying platforms for PAN-related services into one. It highlights benefits like reduced confusion, enhanced security, and fraud prevention. It also stresses ensuring ease of use and preventing misuse of PAN details.

For detailed information on **PAN 2.0 Project** [read this article here](#)

What are the current challenges of PAN Cards?

- 1. Multiple Platforms:** Taxpayers face confusion due to three separate platforms for PAN-related services (UTIITSL, Protean e-Gov, and the e-filing portal).
- 2. Fraud and Misuse:** PAN details are often misused for loans and credit cards by fraudsters, causing identity theft issues.
- 3. Weak Data Security:** Private services, like furniture rental apps, collect PAN details, leading to risks of data breaches.
- 4. Volume Challenges:** Over **780 million PANs** and **1.4 billion Aadhaar IDs** make ensuring 100% security difficult.
- 5. Inadequate Protections:** QR codes on PAN cards help but are not fully effective in preventing misuse.

What is the PAN 2.0 Project?

1. The PAN 2.0 project is an initiative by India's Income Tax Department to unify and streamline all PAN-related services.
2. It aims to integrate three platforms: UTIITSL (for new applications), Protean e-Gov, and the e-filing portal.
3. PAN 2.0 cards look high-tech, like our Aadhaar cards, which not only have QR codes but are linked to back-end data-bases that embed biometric details.
4. It addresses fraud risks, such as misuse of PAN for loans or credit cards, which occur due to weakly regulated services and data leaks.

Conclusion

PAN 2.0 has the potential to ensure ease of use and prevent misuse, creating a more efficient and secure system for taxpayers. It is a much-needed step in India's digital governance.

Question for practice:

Discuss how the PAN 2.0 project addresses the current challenges associated with PAN cards in India.

India's National Mission on Natural Farming

Source: The post India's National Mission on Natural Farming has been created, based on the article "**Natural farming: Ambitious plan, but will it work?**" published in "**Live Mint**" on 29th November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- Agriculture

Context: The article discusses India's National Mission on Natural Farming. It promotes chemical-free farming using local inputs like manure and herbs. The scheme aims to improve soil health, cut costs, and diversify crops, with training and resources for farmers to adopt this method.

For detailed information on **Launch of National Mission on Natural Farming (NMNF)** [read this article here](#)

What is the National Mission on Natural Farming?

- 1. Objective:** Promotes chemical-free farming to improve soil health, reduce costs, and provide safe food.
- 2. Budget:** ₹2,481 crore to benefit 10 million farmers and cover 750,000 hectares in two years.
- 3. Support:** 10,000 bio-input centers, hands-on training on model farms, and deployment of 30,000 *krishi sakhis*.
- 4. Methods:** Encourages local inputs like livestock manure and biopesticides made from herbs.
- 5. Significance:** Targets 15,000 clusters to ensure wide adoption, addressing the demand for low-chemical residue produce.

How Does Natural Farming Differ from Organic Farming?

- 1. Certification:** Organic farming requires third-party certification, but natural farming does not.
- 2. Transition Period:** Organic farming needs a 2–3 year conversion period, while natural farming allows gradual transition.
- 3. Market Price:** Organic produce fetches higher prices due to certification. Natural produce faces marketing challenges.
- 4. Adoption Flexibility:** Natural farming lets farmers experiment with local inputs, ensuring no sudden yield drops.

Coverage: Organic farming covers 4.5 million hectares, while natural farming covers 0.65 million hectares.

Does natural farming affect yields?

1. A 2023 study by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research found mixed results.
2. Paddy yields were 4% higher, and costs were 5% lower in Andhra Pradesh. However, yields for crops like sugarcane and black gram were lower. More scientific studies are needed.

What is the Science Behind Natural Farming?

1. Natural farming believes that soil, air, and water naturally contain enough nutrients. By creating a healthy soil environment, these nutrients can be unlocked.
2. This is done by fermenting cow dung with urine, jaggery, and pulses flour to increase soil microbes. These microbes help deliver nutrients to plants, improve soil structure, and increase its ability to hold water.
3. Planting multiple crops together also helps improve soil fertility.

Question for practice:

Discuss the objectives, methods, and significance of the National Mission on Natural Farming (NMNF).

Importance and challenges of implementing NRIC in India

Source: The post Importance and challenges of implementing NRIC in India has been created, based on the article “Census 2025 as a comprehensive citizen registry” published in “The Hindu” on 29th November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper1-Population and Associated Issues

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Context: The article discusses the 2025 Census, which includes updating the National Population Register (NPR) as the first step toward creating the National Register of Indian Citizens (NRIC). The NRIC will help verify citizens, improve security, and support welfare programs, but also raises privacy and inclusion concerns.

For detailed information on **The Need of Conducting India's Delayed Census** [read this article here](#)

What is the NRIC, and why is it important?

1. The National Register of Indian Citizens (NRIC) is an official record of all Indian citizens, established under Section 14A of the Citizenship Act, 1955.
2. It aims to enhance national security by creating a verified citizen database, differentiating citizens from non-citizens.
3. The NRIC is crucial for reducing identity fraud and duplication by verifying individuals through biometric and demographic data.
4. It supports efficient delivery of government welfare programs, ensuring that benefits reach only eligible citizens.
5. The NRIC is a key step towards streamlining identification processes and reinforcing national security.

How did the NRIC concept evolve?

1. The idea originated with the 1951 Census but gained importance after the Kargil War (1999).
2. The **Subrahmanyam Committee** highlighted the need for a citizen database, leading to pilot projects like the Multi-Purpose National Identity Card (MNIC).
3. In Assam, a state-specific NRC update occurred in 2019 under the Assam Accord.

What is NPR, and how does it help?

- 1. Definition:** The National Population Register (NPR) collects demographic and biometric data on all usual residents of India as a precursor to the National Register of Indian Citizens (NRIC).
- 2. Purpose:** It helps differentiate citizens from non-citizens, ensuring accurate records for governance and security.
- 3. Data Collection:** During the 2011 Census, details such as name, gender, date of birth, nationality, and socio-economic indicators were recorded. The 2025 Census will update this data.

How is the NRIC different from Aadhaar?

1. Aadhaar is a biometric-based identification system for all residents, while the NRIC is a registry only for Indian citizens.
2. Aadhaar focuses on linking individuals to services, whereas the NRIC is about citizenship verification.
3. Both systems serve complementary roles.

What are the challenges and concerns?

- 1. Documentation Challenges:** Many rural and less-educated residents may lack required documents, as seen in Assam's NRC, where strict criteria excluded numerous eligible individuals.

2. Exclusion Risks: Communities with limited access to documentation fear exclusion, potentially leading to humanitarian issues.

3. Privacy Concerns: Collecting large amounts of demographic and biometric data raises concerns about misuse and lack of robust data protection, despite Supreme Court guidelines in the Aadhaar case.

4. Logistical and Administrative Issues: Verifying citizenship for millions is a complex task requiring streamlined procedures and adequate resources.

5. Lessons from Assam: Assam's 2019 NRC update faced criticism over fairness and accuracy, highlighting potential nationwide challenges.

6. Overlap with Aadhaar: Differentiating NRIC from Aadhaar requires public awareness to prevent confusion and ensure effective implementation.

Question for practice:

Examine the significance of the National Register of Indian Citizens (NRIC) and the challenges associated with its implementation.

ANI's Lawsuit Threatens Wikimedia's Safe-Harbour Protection

Source: The post ANI's Lawsuit Threatens Wikimedia's Safe-Harbour Protection has been created, based on the article "**Wikipedia and ANI's defamation suit**" published in "**THE Hindu**" on 29th November 2024

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

Context: The article discusses a defamation case filed by ANI against Wikimedia and Wikipedia editors. It explains Wikipedia's editing process, safe-harbour protections, and how forced disclosure of editor identities could harm Wikipedia's democratic structure and future reliability.

For detailed information on **ANI Vs Wikipedia Case** read [Article 1](#), [Article 2](#)

What is Wikipedia and how does it work?

A. About Wikipedia:

1. Wikipedia is a free, community-driven online encyclopedia available globally.
2. Volunteers from around the world contribute to and maintain its content.
3. It follows strict guidelines requiring all statements to be backed by reliable and verifiable sources.

B. How it works:

- 1. Content Creation:** Editors collaboratively write articles, ensuring original research is not included.
- 2. Quality Control:** Controversial pages are protected, such as ANI's page, which was placed under "extended confirmed protection." Only experienced editors can edit these pages.
- 3. Role of Wikimedia:** Wikimedia provides the technical infrastructure but does not influence content or editor selection.

4. Editor Selection: Editors become administrators through community elections based on their contributions.

Why did ANI file a defamation case?

1. ANI filed a defamation case against Wikimedia Foundation and three Wikipedia administrators.
2. ANI alleged that Wikimedia violated India's IT Act, 2000, and IT Rules, 2021, by preventing
3. ANI-associated editors from correcting defamatory statements.
4. ANI claims its Wikipedia page contains defamatory statements, such as: Accusations of being a "propaganda tool" for the central government, Allegations of spreading fake news via a network of websites, Misreporting events.
5. ANI argues these statements tarnish its professional reputation and are misleading.
6. ANI alleges its editors' attempts to correct the content were reversed by independent editors.
7. ANI claims Wikimedia violated safe-harbour protections by preventing further edits through "extended confirmed protection."

What did the court decide?

1. The Delhi High Court directed Wikimedia to disclose the identities of three Wikipedia administrators involved in editing ANI's page.
2. The court required Wikimedia to submit the administrators' subscriber details in sealed covers.

What are the potential effects of losing safe-harbour protection?

- 1. Threat to Editor Anonymity:** Disclosing editor identities, as ordered in ANI's case, may expose them to reprisals or legal risks.
- 2. Reduced Participation:** Editors may hesitate to contribute due to fear of consequences, affecting Wikipedia's democratic nature.
- 3. Impact on Content Quality:** Wikipedia relies on its community to maintain high-quality content. Fear of retaliation could weaken this structure.
- 4. Legal Risks for Wikimedia:** Loss of protection could hold Wikimedia accountable for user-generated content, despite its non-involvement in content decisions.
- 5. Global Credibility:** Judicial intervention in India could harm Wikipedia's reputation for reliability and neutrality.

Question for practice:

Examine the potential consequences of the Delhi High Court's decision to disclose Wikipedia administrators' identities on the platform's democratic structure and content reliability.

How Crises Improved Medical Waste Management Systems

Source: The post How Crises Improved Medical Waste Management Systems has been created, based on the article “**Stigma of HIV and birth of biomedical waste regulations**” published in “**THE Hindu**” on 29th November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3-Environment-Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation

Context: The article discusses the impact of the 1987 Syringe Tide in the U.S. and the HIV crisis on medical waste management. It highlights how fear and stigma drove reforms, leading to stricter waste regulations in the U.S. and later in India.

For detailed information on **Managing biomedical waste** [read this article here](#)

What was the Syringe Tide and its Impact?

1. In August 1987, used syringes and medical waste appeared on U.S. beaches, particularly in New Jersey and New York City.
2. This was caused by improper waste disposal in New York City’s landfills.
3. The incident occurred during the HIV/AIDS epidemic, intensifying public fear due to the stigma around syringes and disease transmission.
4. Tourism was affected, causing an economic loss of \$7.7 billion.

How Did the U.S. Respond to the Crisis?

1. The **Syringe Tide** in 1987 caused public outrage, with used syringes and medical waste washing up on beaches in New Jersey and New York.
2. This led to deserted beaches and tourism losses of **\$7.7 billion**, highlighting the need for immediate action.
3. In 1988, the U.S. enacted the **Medical Waste Tracking Act**, introducing stringent regulations for handling, transporting, and disposing of medical waste.
4. For the first time, hospital waste was categorized as hazardous, requiring systematic oversight.
5. These reforms reshaped public health policies and set new standards for environmental safety and waste management.

How Did India Address Biomedical Waste Management?

1. **Initial Steps:** In 1986, India enacted the **Environmental Protection Act**, its first major environmental protection law, but it did not recognize biomedical waste as hazardous.
2. **Missed Opportunity:** The **Hazardous Waste Rules of 1989** also ignored biomedical waste, leaving disposal to local authorities.
3. **Judicial Intervention:** The **1996 Supreme Court judgment in Dr. B.L. Wadehra vs. Union of India** criticized Delhi’s waste management, calling the city an “open garbage dump.”
4. **Legislative Reform:** In 1998, India introduced the **Biomedical Waste Rules**, marking the first recognition of hospital waste as hazardous.
5. **Regulatory Framework:** The rules empowered **Central and State Pollution Control Boards** to monitor and regulate biomedical waste.

6. Progress: Four amendments, including major updates in **2016**, have improved segregation, treatment, and disposal practices.

What Lessons Can Be Learned?

1. The Syringe Tide and HIV epidemic show that crises can drive critical reforms.
2. Public fear and outrage led to lasting improvements in healthcare safety and waste management.
3. As Winston Churchill said, "Never let a good crisis go to waste."

Question for practice:

Examine how the 1987 Syringe Tide and the HIV epidemic influenced medical waste management reforms in the U.S. and India.

Differing views on India's Constitution

Source: The post differing views on India's Constitution has been created, based on the article "**Constitution is steeped in India's civilisational values — but it's not stuck in the past**" published in "**Indian Express**" on 29th November 2024

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

Context: The article discusses differing views on India's Constitution. It highlights debates about its connection to India's civilizational heritage, its adoption of diverse ideas, and critiques of its values. It emphasizes the Constitution's forward-looking nature and its foundation in diversity and tolerance.

For detailed information on **Constitution@75** [read this article here](#)

What Are the Different Views on the Indian Constitution?

- 1. Prime Minister's View:** PM Modi describes the Constitution as a "living, continuously flowing stream" that reflects India's evolving aspirations and the spirit of the age.
- 2. Hindutva Critique:** M.S. Golwalkar (1966) dismissed it as lacking indigenous elements, calling it "nothing that can be called ours."
- 3. RSS Chief's Perspective:** In 2022, the current RSS chief stated that Hindutva aligns with the Constitution's values, showing varied opinions within the Hindutva ideology.
- 4. Civilizational Roots Emphasized:** Nehru and other framers highlighted India's 5,000-year-old civilization in the Objective Resolution. Purushottam Das Tandon referred to ancient assemblies for democratic discussions.
- 5. Criticism by Some Groups:** A section of the Constitution's critics argue it undermines India's indigenous values, equating indigenous identity solely with the Aryan narrative and dismissing the Adivasi history. They also oppose modern constitutional principles like secularism and individualism, drawing parallels with historical Indian texts that they believe already carried similar constitutional morals.

What Influence Did Other Constitutions Have on India's?

1. British Constitution: India adopted parliamentary democracy but replaced a hereditary head of state with an elected president, making India a republic.

2. American Constitution: Fundamental rights were borrowed but with restrictions added. The "due process" doctrine was rejected to suit Indian conditions.

3. Irish Free State Constitution: Influenced the naming of the Hindu Mahasabha's 1944 "Constitution of Hindustan Free State."

4. Indian Adaptations: Unlike other federations, governors are nominated by the Centre, and the focus is on separation of functions rather than strict separation of powers, aligning with India's ethos of Lakshman Rekha.

What Is the Future Direction of the Indian Constitution?

1. The Constitution sets a future-oriented agenda while learning from the past.
2. It balances pride in India's civilizational diversity with openness to global ideas.
3. It opposes fundamentalism and promotes tolerance, diversity, and acceptance, reflecting *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*.

Question for practice:

Examine how the Indian Constitution reflects both India's civilizational heritage and global influences.

Decline in male sterilisation (vasectomy) rates in India

Source: The post decline in male sterilisation (vasectomy) rates in India has been created, based on the article "Indians need to share contraceptive responsibility" published in "The Hindu" on 30th November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper1-Society-population and associated issues

Context: The article discusses the decline in male sterilisation (vasectomy) rates in India, highlighting gender disparities in family planning. It suggests improving awareness, offering incentives, and learning from other countries to increase male participation in sterilisation to achieve gender equality and better family planning outcomes.

Why is Male Sterilisation Declining in India?

A. Declining Rates: Male sterilisation rates fell from 80.5% in 1966-70 to 0.3% by NFHS-4 (2015-16) and remained constant in NFHS-5. Female sterilisation dominates, accounting for 37.9%.

B. Barriers:

1. **Social beliefs:** Men often think sterilisation is a woman's responsibility.
2. **Economic concerns:** Fear of losing wages discourages men from undergoing the procedure.
3. **Misconceptions:** Myths about libido and masculinity prevent acceptance.
4. **Lack of awareness:** Women and men are unaware of cash incentives for vasectomies.
5. **Service gaps:** Rural areas lack skilled providers and awareness among community health workers.

What should be done?

1. Improve Service Delivery: Train more healthcare providers, especially in rural areas, to perform no-scalpel vasectomies. Strengthen national health systems to align with goals.

2. Awareness campaigns: Peer-group discussions in schools and sustained communication can break myths and destigmatise vasectomies.

3. Cash incentives: Enhance monetary benefits for men undergoing vasectomies, as seen in Maharashtra's 2019 study where incentives boosted uptake. Madhya Pradesh's 50% increase in incentives in 2022 is an example to replicate nationwide.

4. Learn from Other Countries:

a. South Korea: High vasectomy rates due to progressive norms and gender equality.

b. Bhutan: Government-led vasectomy camps and quality services increased uptake.

c. Brazil: Mass media campaigns raised awareness, boosting rates from 0.8% to 5% over decades.

Question for practice:

Discuss the reasons for the decline in male sterilisation rates in India and the measures that can be taken to address this issue.

Changing Landscape of Liberal Arts Education

Source: The post changing landscape of Liberal Arts education has been created, based on the article "**A liberal arts degree is worth much more than realised**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 30th November 2024

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

Context: The article discusses the decline of liberal arts education in North America and Europe, its re-emergence in places like the UK and Hong Kong, and its growing importance in India. It highlights the value of soft skills, critical thinking, and preparing students for global citizenship.

What is the status of Liberal art education in the west?

1. Decline in Popularity: Liberal arts education in the West is facing a significant decline, especially in North America and Europe, after the 2008 recession.

2. Drop in Majors: In the United States, the percentage of humanities majors dropped from 14% in 1966 to 7% in 2010.

3. Criticism of Practicality: Liberal arts degrees are criticized for not equipping students with tangible, marketable skills and failing to offer financial returns.

4. Perception Issues: The *New Yorker* (2023) described liberal arts as a field for the elite, focused on unremunerative pursuits.

5. Renewed Interest in Europe:

- a. Liberal arts, once rooted in abstract ideas, now focus on reasoning, critical thinking, and interdisciplinary knowledge.
- b. The University of Nottingham introduced a liberal arts program in 2019, reflecting renewed interest in the UK.
- c. In Hong Kong, universities shifted to a U.S.-style four-year model, blending breadth and specialization.
- d. Asia often integrates liberal arts as part of specialized degrees, combining technical training with humanistic perspectives.

6. Evolution in Approach: While traditional liberal arts are shrinking, there is a shift towards integrating interdisciplinary and real-world skills.

What Is the Role of Liberal Arts in India?

1. India, traditionally focused on engineering and medicine, has seen rising interest in liberal arts.
2. Employers value skills like creativity, communication, and teamwork, which liberal arts students bring.
3. Critics question whether liberal arts can address societal problems like poverty, hunger, and inequality.
4. Indian liberal arts programs promote experiential learning and mentorship to attract young minds.

For detailed information on **Fixing idealism in humanities education in India** [read this article here](#)

How Do Liberal Arts Prepare Students for the Future?

1. Liberal arts develop soft skills such as critical thinking, research, and effective communication.
2. Employers praise liberal arts graduates for solving problems creatively and working in multidisciplinary teams.
3. These programs combine diverse content, technology, and mentorship to create global citizens.
4. Liberal arts graduates prove their relevance by addressing real-world challenges with creativity.

Question for practice:

Examine the evolving role and relevance of liberal arts education in addressing global and societal challenges across different regions.

Sharp slowdown in India's economic growth

Source: The post sharp slowdown in India's economic growth has been created, based on the article "**Express view: RBI's dilemma— with low growth, narrowing choices**" published in "**Indian Express**" and the article "**Deregulation, reforms key to spur growth: CEA Nageswaran**" published in "**Live mint**" on 30th November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- Economy-Growth

Context: The article discusses India's economic slowdown in the second quarter of the fiscal year 2024-2025 (FY25). GDP growth fell to 5.4%, below expectations. Key sectors like manufacturing and construction slowed,

and urban demand weakened. Reasons include high inflation, global factors, and excess rainfall. However, stronger rural demand and increased government spending may boost growth in the year's second half.

What is the Current State of Economic Growth?

1. India's GDP growth slowed by 270 basis points year-on-year to 5.4% in Q2 FY25, below the 6.5% forecast.
2. Sequentially, GDP growth eased by 130 basis points from 6.7% in Q1.
3. GVA grew 5.6% in Q2, down from 7.7% in the same period last year and 6.8% in Q1.

What factors impacted growth?

A. Domestic Factors:

1. **Urban Demand Slowdown:** Urban demand declined due to high food inflation and subdued real wage growth, as highlighted by the finance ministry.
2. **Rainfall Effects:** Excess rainfall reduced footfalls, impacting urban activity.
3. **Private Consumption Weakness:** Lower private demand further weakened growth momentum.

4. Sectoral Slowdown:

- a. **Mining** sector has contracted.
- b. **Manufacturing** grew only by 2.2%, a significant drop from 7% in the prior quarter.
- c. **Construction** and **utilities** (electricity, gas, and water supply) have also slowed down.
- d. **Services** such as finance, real estate, and professional services are growing more slowly.

B. Global Factors:

1. **Global Factors:** Import dumping and excess global manufacturing capacity impacted growth, as noted by V. Anantha Nageswaran.
2. **Geopolitical Uncertainty:** Risks surrounding the US presidential election heightened economic uncertainties.

What measures did the Chief Economic Adviser recommend?

1. **Deregulation:** Focus on reducing regulatory burdens to improve business efficiency and growth.
2. **Structural Reforms:** Prioritize long-term reforms to address domestic economic challenges.
3. **Strengthen Public Investment:** Shift expenditure from revenue to long-term growth-oriented investments.
4. **Reassess Hiring Practices:** Review hiring and compensation models in the private sector for better workforce management.
5. **Address Barriers to Capital Formation:** Examine impediments like excessive rainfall and election uncertainties.

6. **Boost Manufacturing:** Tackle issues like stagnant steel production despite rising consumption.

What are the projections for future growth?

1. India remains one of the fastest-growing economies. Growth is expected to rebound in the second half of FY25, driven by stronger rural demand after a good monsoon and harvest, as well as increased government spending.
2. The finance ministry anticipates higher capital expenditure in the coming months.

Question for practice:

Examine how the Chief Economic Adviser's recommendations aim to counteract the factors contributing to India's economic slowdown.

Benefits and Concerns of One Nation Subscription

Source: The post Benefits and Concerns of One Nation Subscription has been created, based on the article "ONOS bitten: Bringing down cost of access to research papers is only one of many issues" published in "The Hindu" on 30th November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2- Governance-Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Education

Context: The article discusses India's "One Nation, One Subscription" (ONOS) plan, which aims to make expensive research journals accessible to publicly funded institutes. However, it criticizes the plan for favoring foreign publishers, ignoring open-access models, and lacking transparency and consultation.

For detailed information on **One Nation One Subscription (ONOS) Scheme** [read this article here](#)

What is the "One Nation, One Subscription" (ONOS) plan?

1. The ONOS plan centralizes access to research journals for publicly funded institutes in India.
2. Approved on November 25, 2024, it replaces library consortia with government-negotiated deals.
3. The government allocated ₹6,000 crore for three years to provide access to journals from 30 major publishers.
4. ONOS aims to reduce costs for underfunded institutes and scholars.

What are the benefits of ONOS?

1. It makes research journals accessible to underfunded institutes.
2. Scholars at government-funded institutions can access research without extra costs.
3. It centralizes the subscription process to save resources.

What are the concerns of ONOS?

1. **Limited Scope:** ONOS benefits only publicly funded institutes, excluding private institutions and independent researchers. It continues to support commercial publishers who profit from publicly funded research.

2. It ignores alternative open-access models like: **Green Open Access:** Free public access by default. **Diamond Open Access:** Free for both authors and readers.

3. **Transparency Issues:** No clarity on journal selection or monitoring to remove irrelevant or predatory journals.

4. The stagnation of research and development spending, as a percentage of GDP, raises concerns about resource prioritization.

Question for practice:

Examine the benefits and concerns associated with India's "One Nation, One Subscription" (ONOS) plan.