

9 PM Current Affairs Monthly Compilation

For UPSC CSE mains examination



November
2024

Features :

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

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Urban Challenges in India and Globally

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

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

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

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

What are the global urban challenges?

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

How is urbanisation different in India?

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

What challenges do Indian cities face?

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 **Outdated Urban Planning:** Plans are not updated to match population growth.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

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

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

Why is governance a problem in Indian cities?

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

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

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

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

Why does World Cities Day matter for India?

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

Question for practice:

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

India-Iran Partnership Strengthens Through Strategic Cooperation at BRICS Summit

Source: The post India-Iran partnership strengthens through strategic cooperation at BRICS summit has been created, based on the article “**The BRICS summit boost to India-Iran ties**” published in “**The Hindu**” on 4th November 2024

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

Context: The article discusses the recent meeting between India and Iran at the 16th BRICS Summit. Both countries aim to strengthen their partnership, focusing on issues like the Gaza conflict, energy supplies, and military cooperation. The meeting emphasizes their untapped potential for collaboration.

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

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

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

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

Why Is Iran Important to India?

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

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

What Are the Key Areas of Cooperation?

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

How Can India and Iran Improve Their Relationship?

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

Question for practice:

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

India-Sri Lanka fishing dispute in the Palk Bay

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

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

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

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

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

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

What are India's efforts for a resolution?

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

How is Sri Lanka responding?

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

Why does India consider the issue humanitarian?

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

What environmental concerns are involved?

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

What possible solutions exist?

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

Question for practice:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

How has India progressed since independence?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

What should be done?

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

Question for practice:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

What should be done?

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

Question for practice:

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

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

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

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

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

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

What is the purpose of India's reservation system?

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

What are the issues with India's reservation system?

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

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

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

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

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

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

Conclusion

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

Question for practice:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

How does online harassment affect women differently than men?

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

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

What role do tech companies play in this problem?

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

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

Is technology empowering women, or is it causing harm?

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

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

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

Question for practice:

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

The climate goals and challenges

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

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS paper3 – Environment — Conservation.

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

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

What are the climate goals and challenges?

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

What are the funding issues faced by developing countries?

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

What is the debate over carbon markets?

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

Way forward:

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

Question for practice:

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

The toxic work culture in India's corporate sector

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

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

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

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

What sparked the conversation on toxic work culture in India?

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

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

How does this compare to global work cultures?

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

What role does management behavior play in toxicity?

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

Why do employees feel unfairly treated?

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

How does work culture differ in public sector firms?

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

What are potential solutions to improve work culture?

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

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

Question for practice:

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

India's progress in fighting tuberculosis

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

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

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

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

What is India's progress in tuberculosis control?

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

What are the challenges to TB eradication in India?

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

What role can government funding and health insurance play?

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

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

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

Question for practice:

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

Challenges in India's higher education

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

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

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

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

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

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

How Can India's Education System Improve?

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

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

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

What Role Can Collaboration Between Institutions Play?

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

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

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

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

How Will These Changes Benefit India?

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

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

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

Question for practice:

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

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

Source: The post tensions between Canada and India over the killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar has been created, based on the article "On India-Canada diplomatic relations" published in "The Hindu" on 6th November 2024

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

Context: The article talks about tensions between Canada and India over the killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar. India accuses Canada of sheltering Khalistani extremists. Cultural misunderstandings, legal issues, and media roles have strained relations. Both countries view the situation differently.

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

Why are Canada and India in Conflict?

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

What is the Historical Background?

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

Do Sikhs in Canada Hold Political Power?

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

Are There Cultural Misunderstandings Between India and Canada?

Misunderstandings exist on both sides.

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

Why Does Canada Deny India's Extradition Requests?

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

What Role Has the Media Played?

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

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

Is Freedom of Expression a Factor?

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

Question for practice:

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

Balancing Privacy and Justice: Aadhaar Access for Identifying Unidentified Bodies

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

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

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

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

What is the Current Policy on Biometric Data Access?

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

What Challenges Arise from this Restriction?

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

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

What should be done?

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

Question for practice:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

What is the significance of the ruling?

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

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

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

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

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

Question for practice :

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

Significance of the 2024 BRICS Summit in Kazan, Russia

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

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

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

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

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

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

How has BRICS evolved over time?

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

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

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

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

4. Expansion and Growth:

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

What are the key verticals of BRICS?

A. Political and Security Cooperation

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

B. Economic and Financial Cooperation

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

C. Cultural and People-to-People Cooperation

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

What role does BRICS play for India?

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

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

Question for practice:

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

Redevelopment plan for the Musi River

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

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper1- society-developmental issues

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

What is the redevelopment plan for the Musi River?

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

What is the current state of the Musi River?

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

What are the Concerns with the Government's Approach?

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

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

Question for practice:

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

Sustainable Cooling: Combating Heatwaves Through Global and National Initiatives

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

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

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

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

What is the Importance of Sustainable Cooling?

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

How Are Global Efforts Addressing Cooling-Related Emissions?

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

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

What Challenges Do Developing Countries Face with Cooling?

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

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

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

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

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

What Can Be Done Through a Mission-Mode Approach?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Question for practice:

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

Changed in the RBI's Currency Policy

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

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- Indian Economy

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

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

What Has Changed in the RBI's Currency Policy?

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

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

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

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

Why is the RBI's Increased Intervention Problematic?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

What Are the Consequences of the Current Policy?

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

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

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

Question for practice:

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

Issues with borrowing powers of States

Source: The post Issues with borrowing powers of States has been created, based on the article "**States and the Centre's fetter of 'net borrowing ceiling'**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 11th November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2- Polity-issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure, devolution of powers and finances up to local levels and challenges therein.

Context: The article discusses Article 293 of the Indian Constitution, focusing on borrowing powers of States. It highlights Kerala's challenge to borrowing restrictions imposed by the Centre, arguing that these limits affect fiscal autonomy, cooperative federalism, and balanced financial management.

What is the issue with Kerala's borrowing limits?

1. In 2023, the central government imposed a **Net Borrowing Ceiling (NBC)** on Kerala, capping borrowing at **3% of the projected GSDP for FY 2023-24**. This limit covers loans from the open market, financial institutions, and State-owned enterprises.
2. Kerala claims this restriction harms its financial position, reducing its ability to fund developmental and welfare activities.
3. The State challenged the NBC in the Supreme Court, arguing that it infringes on its fiscal autonomy under **Article 293** of the Constitution.

For detailed information on **Kerala's Protest Against Net Borrowing Ceiling (NBC)** [read this article here](#)

What are the constitutional provisions related to borrowing?

A. Historical Context:

1. Article 293 is derived from **Section 163 of the Government of India Act, 1935**.
2. **Section 163(4):** Prevented the Federation from unreasonably refusing, delaying, or imposing arbitrary conditions on loans.
3. This safeguard was not adopted in the Indian Constitution post-Independence, as a national government replaced the colonial administration.

B. Present Provisions:

Article 292: Allows the Centre to borrow on the security of the Consolidated Fund of India.

Article 293(1): States can borrow within India on the security of their Consolidated Fund.

Article 293(3): Requires Centre's consent for State borrowings if past loans from the Centre are outstanding.

Article 293(4): Empowers the Centre to impose conditions on States' borrowing.

For detailed information on **Article 292 and 293 of Indian Constitution** read [Article 1](#), [Article 2](#)

How has fiscal discipline evolved in India?

1. **FRBM Act, 2003:** Established to reinforce financial restraint, setting targets like eliminating revenue shortfall and reducing the fiscal deficit.

2. Fiscal Deficit Targets: Set a cap of **3% of GDP** for the Centre's annual fiscal deficit, aiming to maintain economic stability.

3. State Compliance: States developed their own legislation to align with the Centre's fiscal deficit limits.

4. FRBM Amendment Act, 2018: Tightened regulations by requiring the central government to keep the fiscal deficit under **3% of GDP** and public debt below **60% of GDP**, fiscal deficit to below **4.5% of GDP by 2025-26**.

What are Kerala's main arguments in the Supreme Court?

1. Violation of Fiscal Autonomy: Kerala claims the Centre's borrowing cap of **3% of projected GSDP for FY2023-24** restricts its constitutional right under **Article 293** to manage finances.

2. Impact on Development: The restrictions hinder Kerala's ability to fund developmental and welfare projects, worsening its financial position.

3. Arbitrary Conditions: Kerala argues that **Article 293(4)** grants the Centre excessive powers to impose borrowing conditions without adequate safeguards.

What should be done?

1. Form a Borrowing Commission: Create a commission akin to the Finance Commission, as suggested by Ananthasayanam Ayyangar (in constituent Assembly debate), to address disputes and assess borrowing needs of States and the Centre's fiscal goals.

2. Adopt Transparency and Consultation: Implement guidelines ensuring transparency in decision-making, equity, and consultations with States before imposing borrowing restrictions, as highlighted in the article.

3. Revisit Historical Safeguards: Consider provisions from Section 163(4) of the **Government of India Act, 1935**, which discouraged unreasonable delays, conditions, or refusals in borrowing approvals.

4. Strengthen Fiscal Autonomy: Balance borrowing restrictions with developmental needs, as Kerala faces financial challenges under the **3% GSDP borrowing cap** for FY2023-24.

5. Ensure Uniform Treatment: Apply borrowing rules equally across all States to uphold cooperative federalism and avoid favoritism.

Question for practice:

Discuss the constitutional provisions and challenges related to the borrowing powers of States in India, with a focus on Kerala's stance against the Net Borrowing Ceiling (NBC).

Why Won't India Travel to Pakistan for the Champions Trophy?

Source: The post Why Won't India Travel to Pakistan for the Champions Trophy has been created, based on the article "**Distant neighbours: India and Pakistan seem incapable of normal sporting ties**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 11th November 2024

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

Context: The article discusses India's decision not to travel to Pakistan for the 2025 Champions Trophy. It highlights security concerns, political tensions, and alternative arrangements like playing in the UAE. India-Pakistan cricket remains restricted to neutral venues or ICC events.

Why Won't India Travel to Pakistan for the Champions Trophy?

India has officially told the ICC it cannot travel to Pakistan for the 2025 Champions Trophy. The decision is due to political tensions and security concerns. India has not toured Pakistan since the 2008 Asia Cup.

What Are the Key Issues?

- 1. Security Concerns:** India cites safety fears due to the 2009 Lahore attack on the Sri Lankan team. Despite resumed tours by other teams, India remains cautious.
- 2. Political Tensions:** Relations between India and Pakistan have worsened since the 2008 Mumbai attacks, halting bilateral cricket matches.
- 3. Past Avoidance:** India avoided playing in Pakistan during the 2023 Asia Cup, opting for Sri Lanka.
- 4. Neutral Venue Preference:** India suggests hosting 2025 Champions Trophy matches in the UAE.
- 5. Cricketing Loss:** Players like Virat Kohli have missed playing Tests against Pakistan since bilateral matches stopped in 2008.

Question for practice:

Discuss the reasons why India has decided not to travel to Pakistan for the 2025 Champions Trophy.

Issue with Women Gig Workers in India

Source: The post Issue with Women Gig Workers in India has been created, based on the article "Calling out exploitative labour dynamics on platforms" published in "The Hindu" on 11th November 2024.

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- Economy-Employment

Context: The article highlights women gig workers' exploitation in India, focusing on their "Black Diwali" digital strike led by GIPSWU. It discusses poor wages, unsafe conditions, digital patriarchy, and calls for better labor rights, security, and fair treatment in platform jobs.

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

What is the Issue with Women Gig Workers in India?

- 1. Exploitation of Wages:** Discounts offered by platform companies during festivals are sourced from workers' reduced wages, resulting in exploitative conditions.
- 2. Patriarchal Job Assignments:** Women gig workers are confined to roles like beauticians, cooks, and housekeepers, perpetuating traditional patriarchal norms.

3. Job Insecurity: Workers' employment depends on ratings and accepting "auto-assigned" jobs. Refusing tasks often leads to blocking or termination, which is equivalent to "illegal termination."

4. Lack of Social Security: Workers face high transportation costs, platform fees, and a lack of essential benefits, leaving many financially strained.

5. Economic Contribution: Informal economy workers contribute over 60% of India's GDP, yet their efforts are undervalued.

6. "Black Diwali" Strike: Women gig workers organized a digital strike under the **Gig and Platform Services Workers Union (GIPSWU), India's first women-centric gig workers' union.** They protested against low wages and harsh working conditions exacerbated by festive season discounts offered by platform companies.

7. Digital Patriarchy: AI-driven platforms exploit women by setting unrealistic targets while claiming to offer "freedom" and flexibility.

What Was the Outcome of the Digital Strike?

1. The strike garnered significant media attention and public support. It empowered workers, showing the strength of grassroots organizing.

2. Women gig workers demanded stricter regulations for platform companies and called for secure employment with living wages.

What Are the Future Goals for GIPSWU?

1. GIPSWU aims to continue its fight for better labor conditions through grassroots organizing and advocating for policies that ensure fair wages, safe working conditions, and job security for gig workers.

2. This approach aims to change how platform companies operate and treat their workers.

Question for practice:

Examine the challenges faced by women gig workers in India and the outcomes of their "Black Diwali" digital strike.

Reforming India's Public Distribution System (PDS)

Source: The post Reforming India's Public Distribution System (PDS) has been created, based on the article "**Public Distribution System must be reformed to fix leakage, invest in farming**" published in "**Indian Express**" on 11th November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3-Public Distribution System objectives, functioning, limitations, revamping; issues of buffer stocks and food security.

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

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

What is the Problem with Free Food Distribution?

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

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

What Reforms are Suggested for the PDS?

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

Conclusion

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

Question for practice:

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

Need to value care work in India

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

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

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

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

What is the current state of care work in India?

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

What challenges do caregivers face?

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

What should be done?

1. **Reward Care Workers:** Policies must reform tax brackets, wage rates, and retirement ages for women to address this imbalance.
2. **Social Security for Frontline Workers:** Workers like ASHAs and Anganwadi staff bear the burden of pollution and pandemics. Ensure fair wages and social security packages for them.
3. **Public and Private Care Infrastructure:** Strengthen childcare, social pensions, and provide subsidies to businesses/cooperatives offering care services.
4. **Value Care as a Skill:** Practical education in caregiving can instill empathy and foster civic responsibility.

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

Question for practice:

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

India's recent peace efforts with China

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

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

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

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

What happened recently between India and China?

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

What challenges remain at the border?

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

Why did China act aggressively in 2020?

1. **Xi Jinping's Territorial Policy:** In 2014, Xi announced a policy to claim “every inch” of Chinese territory. This led to aggressive actions in several regions, including Taiwan, South China Sea, and along the India-China border (Ladakh, Sikkim, and Arunachal Pradesh).

2. Counter to India-U.S. Partnership: China aimed to remind India of its continental challenges, despite growing maritime ties with the U.S. India's 3,500-km boundary with China remains a key concern.

3. Opposition to Indian Infrastructure: China reacted to India's construction of roads, tunnels, and villages near the LAC, including the Daulat Beg Oldie (DBO) airstrip and other strategic projects.

4. Response to Jammu and Kashmir Reorganization (2019): China protested India's revocation of Jammu and Kashmir's special status. Beijing criticized Ladakh's reorganization, claiming it affected "Chinese territory."

What other diplomatic efforts have been made?

1. Elections in Jammu and Kashmir: India held elections in Jammu and Kashmir, signaling a step toward political stability. The government may restore Statehood and transfer more powers to the region.

2. Addressing Ladakhi Protesters: Protests led by Sonam Wangchuk ended after the Home Ministry promised discussions on Statehood, tribal status, local employment guarantees, and parliamentary representation. A meeting is scheduled for December.

3. Engagement with Pakistan: External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar attended the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) meeting in Islamabad. This marked a significant move as previous SCO meetings were attended virtually.

4. India-China Summit: The October 2024 Kazan summit between Modi and Xi Jinping focused on peace efforts, troop disengagement, and reducing tensions.

What steps are needed for transparency?

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

Question for practice:

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

Prison discrimination and inequality

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

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2-Governance- Prison Reforms

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

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

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

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

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

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

What about the classification of political prisoners?

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

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

What is the way forward for prison reforms?

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

Question for practice:

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

COP16's efforts to halt biodiversity loss by 2030

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

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

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

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

What was the focus of COP16?

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

What were the achievements of COP16?

A. Inclusive Decision-Making:

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

B. Biodiversity Funding:

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

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

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

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

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

What were the challenges of COP16?

A. Financial Commitments

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

B. Monitoring and Implementation

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

What was India's role at COP16?

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

What lies ahead for biodiversity conservation?

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

Question for practice:

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

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

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

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

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

Who is Indonesia's new president?

1. **Prabowo Subianto** became Indonesia's president on October 20, succeeding Joko Widodo (Jokowi).
2. Jokowi’s son, Gibran Rakabuming Raka, is the new vice president, providing political continuity.
3. Prabowo is a nationalist with a controversial past, including allegations of human rights abuses.

4. Prabowo's grandfather founded **Bank Negara Indonesia**, briefly Indonesia's central bank.
5. His father served as a minister under both Sukarno and Suharto, showing political flexibility.
6. Prabowo himself served in elite military roles under Suharto but lost favor after Suharto's ouster in 1998.

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

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

What are India and Indonesia's ties?

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

Why is Indonesia important for India?

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

Question for practice:

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

Causes and impacts of strained India-Canada ties

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

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

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

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

What caused the strain in India-Canada relations?

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

What are the impacts strain relations?

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

Way forward

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

Question for practice:

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

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

Source: The post progress and challenges of the India-Middle East-Europe Corridor (IMEC) has been created, based on the article “A mixed report card for the IMEC” published in “The Hindu” on 13th November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2 – International Relations – Bilateral, Regional and Global Groupings and Agreements involving India and/or affecting India’s interests.

Context: The article discusses the progress and challenges of the India-Middle East-Europe Corridor (IMEC). It highlights delays in the western segment due to conflicts in West Asia and steady progress in the eastern segment, driven by India-UAE trade relations and connectivity efforts.

What is the IMEC and why is it important?

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

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

What progress has been made on the IMEC?

1. Western Segment Challenges

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

2. Eastern Segment Developments

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

3. Virtual Trade Corridor

- India and the UAE have launched the Virtual Trade Corridor to streamline trade by reducing administrative processes and costs.

- This initiative is expected to serve as a model for other countries in the IMEC to enhance cross-border trade efficiency.

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

What Can India Do During the Delay?

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

Question for practice:

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

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

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

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

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

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

What is the Main Concern of the World Bank Report?

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

How Serious is the Problem of NCDs in India?

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

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

What Impact Do Social Security Schemes Have?

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

What are the Challenges in Regulating Healthcare Costs?

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

Conclusion

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

Question for practice:

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

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

Source: The post decline of multilateralism, especially with Donald Trump's re-election has been created, based on the article “**C Raja Mohan writes: India, Trump, and the crisis in multilateralism**” published in “**Indian Express**” on 13th November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2 – International Relations – Bilateral, Regional and Global Groupings and Agreements involving India and/or affecting India’s interests.

Context: The article discusses the decline of multilateralism, especially with Donald Trump's re-election. It highlights India's need to adapt by focusing on bilateral trade, technology development, and smaller coalitions like the Quad, as global cooperation faces growing challenges and geopolitical divides.

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

What challenges do multilateral institutions face today?

Multilateral institutions are struggling due to **rising geopolitical tensions and declining trust. Donald Trump's re-election has further weakened their relevance.** For example, Trump's "America First" policy prioritized unilateralism, withdrawing the US from key agreements like the Paris Climate Accord and WHO.

How Does Trump's Presidency Impact Global Agreements?

1. Withdrawal from Multilateral Agreements: Trump withdrew the US from key agreements like the Paris Agreement on climate change, the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), UNESCO, WHO, and the UN Human Rights Council during his first term (2017-2021).

2. Impact on Climate Cooperation: He plans to leave the Paris Agreement again and remove restrictions on energy production, prioritizing hydrocarbon development. This undermines global climate efforts and could inspire other nations to reduce commitments.

3. Weakened Trade Frameworks: Trump's administration weakened the World Trade Organization (WTO) and intensified the US-China trade war with proposed 60% tariffs on Chinese imports. This challenges global trade norms.

4. Strain on Economic Forums: Forums like APEC and G20 face heightened tensions. For example, Trump's earlier withdrawal from TPP disrupted economic integration across the Asia-Pacific region.

5. Focus on National Interests: Trump's "America First" policy prioritizes national over global interests, reducing US leadership in global governance and creating a crisis in multilateralism.

How is India adapting to the decline of multilateralism?

1. Bilateral Trade Agreements: India is focusing on new bilateral trade deals to strengthen its economic ties, reducing dependence on multilateral trade systems.

2. Minilateral Groups: India is actively participating in smaller coalitions like: **The Quad** (focusing on regional security and technology), **Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence** (for AI innovation), **Mineral Security Partnership** (ensuring resource security), **Artemis Accords** (collaboration in space exploration).

3. National Energy Solutions: India has invested significantly in renewable energy to address climate challenges independently, as global cooperation weakens.

4. Technology Leadership: India is working with like-minded countries to develop new technologies and establish global norms for their use.

Question for practice:

Evaluate how Donald Trump's re-election could impact India's strategy in global diplomacy and trade?

Women's representation in politics

Source: The post women's representation in politics has been created, based on the article “**It's 2024 — we need more women in politics**” published in “**Indian Express**” on 13th November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper1-Society-Social empowerment

Context: The article discusses women's representation in politics, emphasizing their growing influence in shaping policies and elections. It highlights India's progress, including the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, and advocates for women's active participation to advance democracy and gender equality.

For detailed information on **Political Empowerment of Women** [read this article here](#)

What is the Significance of Women's Representation in Politics?

1. Women's participation in politics is **crucial for a vibrant democracy**.
2. It ensures that the interests and issues of half the population are represented and addressed.

Why Do Symbolic Gestures Fail to Gain Voter Support?

1. Symbolic actions often lack substantive outcomes, leading voters to prioritize value-based decisions over superficial gestures.
2. In the U.S., Kamala Harris's historic nomination symbolized diversity but failed to resonate with all voters; many African Americans and White women voted for Donald Trump.
3. In India, voters focus on impactful policies like Sukanya Samridhi Yojana and Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, showing a preference for meaningful change over mere representation.
4. Voter behavior reflects a demand for action-oriented politics.

How Are Women Transforming Electoral Politics in India?

1. Women in India have moved beyond symbolic representation to actively shape electoral politics and policies.
2. Programs like **Sukanya Samridhi Yojana**, **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao**, and **Jan Dhan Yojana** have empowered women and made them key contributors to policy formulation.
3. Women-centric policies have enhanced skills, employability, and empowerment, driving social and electoral change.
4. The **Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam Bill**, passed in a special session of Parliament, demonstrates India's commitment to increasing women's participation in governance.
5. Women leaders in the past, like **Uda Devi Pasi** and **Dakshayani Velayudhan**, played critical roles in India's independence and constitution-making.

Question for practice:

Discuss the significance of women's representation in politics and how it has transformed electoral politics in India.

Challenges of delimitation in India

Source: The post challenges of delimitation in India has been created, based on the article “**The perfect cocktail of layered discrimination**” published in “**The Hindu**” on 14th November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS paper2- polity- issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure.

Context: The article discusses the challenges of delimitation in India. It highlights how reallocating Lok Sabha seats based on population growth could harm non-Hindi states. Solutions include freezing delimitation, decentralizing power, or balancing representation to preserve federalism and unity.

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

What is Delimitation?

Delimitation is the process of redrawing the boundaries of electoral constituencies based on population. Article 82 of the Constitution mandates this after every Census. However, the process was frozen in 1976 and 2001 to avoid penalizing states that controlled population growth. This freeze ends in 2026 unless extended.

Why is Delimitation Controversial?

- 1. Disparity in Population Growth:** States with lower Total Fertility Rates (TFR), such as Kerala and Tamil Nadu (1.6-1.8), have successfully controlled population growth. In contrast, Hindi-speaking states like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar have TFRs around 3.5, leading to potential shifts in representation.
- 2. Reduction in Representation:** If delimitation occurs, the proportion of Lok Sabha seats from southern states may drop from 25% to 17%, while Hindi-speaking states' representation may rise from 40% to 60%.
- 3. Economic Contribution vs Representation:** States like Karnataka, Maharashtra, and Tamil Nadu contribute far more to direct taxes but receive only 30% of their contributions in return. In contrast, states like Bihar and Uttar Pradesh receive 250%-350% of their contributions.
- 4. Imbalance in Political Power:** Southern states would lose influence, while Hindi-speaking states, dominated by the BJP, would gain electoral dominance, leading to skewed policymaking at the Union level.
- 5. Ethno-Linguistic Shift:** Since 1947, Hindi speakers' population proportion has risen from 36% to 43%, nearing a majority. This could threaten India's federal structure, designed to balance diverse ethno-linguistic groups.

For detailed information on **Revised delimitation exercise** [read this article here](#)

What are Possible Solutions?

1. Extend the freeze on delimitation: Continue the approach of Indira Gandhi and Atal Bihari Vajpayee by postponing delimitation for another 25 years to maintain current political stability.

2. Permanently freeze seat redistribution: Avoid inter-state redistribution of Lok Sabha seats to prevent political imbalances.

3. Balance delimitation with decentralization: Implement delimitation but expand the State List, abolish the Concurrent List, and transfer more powers from the Union to the States.

4. Increase the number of seats in each state: Preserve current proportions while increasing total seats to address population growth, reducing representational disparities.

These solutions aim to preserve federalism and prevent regional dominance.

Question for practice:

Evaluate the potential impact of the delimitation exercise on India's federal structure and regional representation.

Sustainability challenges in India's agricultural exports

Source: The post sustainability challenges in India's agricultural exports has been created, based on the article "India's tea, sugar exports raise sustainability concerns at home" published in "The Hindu" on 14th November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS paper3-Agriculture – Marketing of agricultural produce.

Context: The article discusses the sustainability challenges in India's agricultural exports, focusing on tea, sugar, and millets. It highlights ecological, social, and economic issues, emphasizing the need for better practices to balance exports, resource use, and worker welfare.

For detailed information on **Challenges facing agriculture exports from India** [read this article here](#)

What is the importance of agricultural exports in India?

1. India's agricultural exports were valued at \$53.1 billion in 2022-2023, up from \$8.7 billion in 2004-2005.
2. Exports strengthen the economy by increasing revenue, foreign exchange, and transaction options.
3. The rapid growth of exports raises sustainability concerns in production, processing, and distribution.

When is an agricultural commodity sustainable?

1. Sustainability depends on **three pillars:** ecological, economic, and social factors.
2. Good governance and policies are necessary for sustainable systems.
3. Sustainability extends across all stages: pre-sowing, on-farm production, and post-harvest.
4. Tea and sugar illustrate these challenges well.

What are the sustainability challenges in tea production?

1. **Human-wildlife conflicts:** 70% of tea plantations are near forests, leading to frequent interactions with elephants.

2. Chemical pesticide use:

- 85% of pesticides used are synthetic, increasing chemical residues like DDT and Endosulfan in tea.
- These chemicals pose risks of cancer, diabetes, and neurotoxicity.

3. Labour issues:

- Over 50% of workers are women, often underpaid and working in hazardous conditions.
- Regulations under the **Plantations Labour Act (1951)** are poorly enforced.

What are the sustainability challenges in sugar production?

A. Water consumption:

- Producing 1 kg of sugar requires 1,500–2,000 kg of water.
- Sugarcane occupies 25% of India's cropped area but uses 60% of irrigation water.
- Increased cultivation in Maharashtra and Karnataka has stressed groundwater and ecosystems.
- Drip irrigation could reduce water use by 40-50%.

B. Labour concerns:

- Workers face poor conditions, long hours, and rising temperatures, harming their physical and mental health.
- Many workers are trapped in debt cycles.

How can millets contribute to sustainable agriculture?

1. Millets are seen as a sustainable alternative because they require fewer resources and are resilient to harsh conditions.

2. They also help in maintaining soil health and ensuring nutritional security.

3. Millet exports have been growing, with \$75.45 million worth exported in 2022-2023, showing their potential in sustainable agriculture.

What is needed to improve sustainability in agriculture?

1. There is a need for better management practices, stricter regulations, and a focus on reducing the environmental impact of agriculture.

2. This includes enhancing water management, reducing pesticide use, and improving labor conditions to create a more sustainable and inclusive agricultural system in India.

Question for practice:

Examine the sustainability challenges faced by India's agricultural exports, with specific reference to tea, sugar, and millets.

CoP 29's agreement on carbon markets under Article 6 of the Paris Pact

Source: The post CoP 29's agreement on carbon markets under Article 6 of the Paris Pact has been created, based on the article "CoP's hasty decision on carbon credits could do more harm than good" published in "Indian Express" on 14th November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS paper3- Environment

Context: The article discusses CoP 29's agreement on carbon markets under Article 6 of the Paris Pact. It sets rules for emissions trading but faces criticism for ignoring double accounting, project risks, and community impacts, risking a repeat of Kyoto Protocol failures.

For detailed information on **India's Opportunities and Challenges in Carbon Markets** [read this article here](#)

What is Article 6 of the Paris Pact?

1. Article 6 enables carbon markets where polluting entities can offset emissions by purchasing credits from less polluting ones.
2. The aim is to reduce the cost of implementing Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) by \$250 billion annually, according to Azerbaijan at CoP 29.

For detailed information on **Article 6 of the Paris Agreement** [read this article here](#)

What was agreed at CoP 29 in Baku?

1. Countries reached a consensus on methodologies for carbon market standards, resolving transparency concerns.
2. The agreement seeks to streamline emissions trading and clarify operational mechanisms.

What criticisms does the agreement face?

1. Experts say the decision was rushed, with inadequate deliberation on key issues.
2. It does not address "double accounting," where emissions reductions are counted by multiple parties.
3. It ignores risks like carbon reversal in natural sinks (e.g., forests) and displaced community livelihoods from green projects.

Why are carbon markets controversial?

1. Historically, carbon markets like the Clean Development Mechanism under the Kyoto Protocol failed due to a lack of trust among parties.
2. Critics fear developed countries may use offsets to avoid genuine decarbonization, shifting the burden to developing nations.

Question for practice:

Discuss the criticisms faced by the agreement on carbon markets under Article 6 of the Paris Pact reached at CoP 29 in Baku.

India's need for an equitable energy transition to meet rising power demand

Source: The post India's need for an equitable energy transition to meet rising power demand has been created, based on the article "The green transition India needs" published in "Indian Express" on 14th November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS paper3-infrastructure-energy

Context: The article highlights India's need for an equitable energy transition to meet rising power demand. It highlights seven shifts, including decentralizing energy, focusing on operational costs, investing in climate resilience, and integrating digital technologies and circular economy practices, with people at the core.

For detailed information on **Energy Transition: Challenges and Solutions** [read this article here](#)

What Are the Key Shifts Needed for India's Energy Transition?

1. Shift to Decentralized Energy Systems:

- a. India aims to solarize 10 million households, adding 30 GW of clean energy through rooftop solar installations.
- b. However, rooftop solar remains expensive for low-income groups. A **Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW)** study found that ~30% of India's rooftop solar potential lies in the 0-1 kW category, which is still costly even after subsidies.
- c. Community solar models or partnerships can make solar energy more accessible.

2. Adopt Operational Expenditure Models:

- a. Transitioning from capital expenditure (capex) to operational expenditure (opex) can lower barriers for clean energy adoption.
- b. Examples include utilities setting up solar systems and charging pay-as-you-go, district cooling services, and sustainable mobility models like per-kilometer payments for clean transportation.

3. Invest in Climate-Resilient Systems:

- a. Over 80% of India's population resides in climate-vulnerable districts, as highlighted by a CEEW study.

b. Investments in resilient energy systems and climate-proofing infrastructure are critical to avoid macroeconomic shocks.

4. Integrate into Global Supply Chains:

a. India should focus on collaborating in solar PV and green hydrogen supply chains instead of adopting protectionist industrial policies.

b. Participation in global supply chains promotes energy security through interdependence and collaboration.

5. Combine Decarbonization and Digitalization:

a. With 820 million active internet users, over half from rural areas, India can merge digital and energy systems.

b. Prepaid smart meters and AI systems optimize energy distribution, making renewable integration more efficient.

6. Promote Circular Economy:

a. By 2030, India's solar energy waste may reach 600 kilotonnes, equivalent to 720 Olympic-sized swimming pools.

b. Recycling minerals like silicon and cadmium from this waste supports environmental sustainability and energy security.

7. Center Policies Around People:

a. Financing small-scale consumer needs, such as electric two-wheelers or rooftop solar, can create aggregated market opportunities.

b. This approach shifts focus from power developers to end-use consumers.

Question for practice:

Discuss the key shifts needed for India's energy transition to meet its rising power demand, as highlighted in the article.

Significance of India's PM visit to Nigeria

Source: The post significance of India's PM visit to Nigeria has been created, based on the article "**Leverage similarity, complementarity in Nigeria**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 15th November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS paper2- International Relations-Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

Context: The article discusses Prime Minister Modi's visit to Nigeria, highlighting shared challenges, strong bilateral ties, and opportunities. It emphasizes collaboration in hydrocarbons, defense, and trade while addressing Nigeria's economic reforms and India's declining trade engagement.

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

Why is PM Modi's Visit to Nigeria Significant?

1. PM Modi's visit to Nigeria is his first and comes after 17 years.
2. Nigeria is Africa's most populous country and second-largest economy.
3. India and Nigeria share historical ties as Commonwealth members. Both are large, multi-ethnic democracies facing similar challenges like governance, corruption, and terrorism.

What is the Current State of India-Nigeria Relations?

1. India is Nigeria's second-largest trading partner, with bilateral trade at \$7.9 billion, though it is half its peak a decade ago.
2. Over 150 Indian companies operate in Nigeria, investing \$27 billion.
3. The Indian diaspora in Nigeria, numbering nearly 50,000, is the largest non-African group and contributes significantly to the economy.
4. India has no upstream hydrocarbon assets in Nigeria despite being a top buyer of Nigerian crude.
5. India channels its development assistance to Nigeria through the African Union, limiting direct bilateral engagement.
6. The last meeting of the bilateral joint commission took place after 13 years.

How Can India Help Nigeria?

- 1. Defense:** Nigeria faces challenges like Boko Haram, piracy, and oil theft. India can offer defense supplies, training, and remote sensing technology to tackle terrorism (e.g., Boko Haram) and piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. Seven Nigerian Presidents since 1960 were trained in India as defense officers.
- 2. Economic Stabilization:** Nigeria faces foreign exchange shortages and inflation (32%). Strategic initiatives such as partnerships in hydrocarbon sectors and infrastructure development can help stabilize Nigeria's economy. India can offer large financial facilitations and consider barter arrangements to ease Nigeria's foreign exchange shortage.
- 3. Trade Enhancement:** Bilateral trade stands at \$7.9 billion, but India's exports fell 29.7% in 2023-24. India can increase exports to Nigeria, including essential commodities like pharmaceuticals, foodstuffs, and textiles, leveraging the potential for rupee-based trade to boost bilateral trade from the current \$7.9 billion.
- 4. Capacity Building:** Offering expertise in IT, healthcare, and education can support Nigeria's infrastructure and human resource development.

What Lessons Can Be Drawn from History?

1. Historical links date back to the 1500s with Baba Ghor, a gem merchant from Kano, Nigeria, settling in Gujarat, India.
2. This shared history can inspire modern India-Nigeria relations to become stronger and mutually beneficial.

Way forward

India should enhance bilateral ties with Nigeria by leveraging its \$27 billion investments and \$7.9 billion trade relationship. Frequent high-level engagements, diaspora empowerment, and strategic initiatives in hydrocarbons, defense, and economic partnerships can boost trade. Supporting Nigeria's reforms and offering rupee-based trade options will strengthen ties.

Question for practice:

Examine how India can leverage its historical and economic ties with Nigeria to address shared challenges and enhance bilateral relations.

Reasons and Impacts of the Discontinuation of Canada's SDS Visa

Source: The post reasons and impacts of the discontinuation of Canada's SDS Visa has been created, based on the article "Will the end of SDS Visa derail Indian students' Canadian dreams?" published in "The Hindu" on 15th November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS paper2-International Relations-Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests, Indian diaspora.

Context: The article explains the discontinuation of Canada's SDS visa, a popular streamlined option for Indian students. It highlights challenges like longer visa processing times, higher fees, and complex procedures, impacting Indian students' education plans and immigration prospects in Canada.

What was the SDS Visa?

1. The Study Direct Stream (SDS) visa was introduced in 2018 to simplify study permit applications for certain countries, including India. It provided faster processing, lower application fees, and required fewer documents.
2. Indian students were the biggest beneficiaries, with over 189,000 using the SDS visa in 2022.
3. The approval rate for SDS applicants was 63%, compared to just 19% for non-SDS applicants.

Why was the SDS Visa discontinued?

Canada discontinued the SDS visa on November 8, 2024, citing several challenges:

- 1. System abuse:** Some applicants misused the SDS program to gain permanent residency.
- 2. Housing crisis:** A rising number of international students increased the housing shortage, especially in cities like Toronto and Vancouver.
- 3. Resource strain:** Public services like healthcare and education were under pressure due to the growing student population.

4. Policy reassessment: Canada aimed to strengthen immigration integrity and ensure fairness for all applicants. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau noted a 35% reduction in study permits in 2024 and announced a further 10% cut for 2025.

How does this impact Indian students?

The SDS visa's discontinuation has created multiple challenges:

- 1. Longer processing times:** Students now face delays in visa approval, affecting academic schedules.
- 2. Higher costs:** Standard visa application fees are higher than those for SDS.
- 3. Complex process:** Students must provide more documents, like proof of funds and detailed study plans, which can cause errors and delays.
- 4. Uncertain immigration paths:** The SDS visa was a key route to permanent residency, which is now less accessible.

For detailed information on **Causes and impacts of strained India-Canada ties** [read this article here](#)

What alternatives do Indian students have?

1. Indian students can still apply for a traditional student visa.
2. They need proof of funds, language test scores, and admission to a Designated Learning Institution (DLI).
3. Planning early and consulting immigration experts can help navigate the process.

Conclusion

The SDS visa's discontinuation has created obstacles for Indian students, but careful planning can mitigate challenges. As Canada adjusts its immigration policies, Indian students must stay informed and prepared for new opportunities.

Question for practice:

Evaluate the impact of the discontinuation of Canada's SDS visa on Indian students' education and immigration prospects.

Bhagwan Birsa Munda's legacy

Source: The post Bhagwan Birsa Munda's legacy has been created, based on the article "**President Droupadi Murmu writes: Birsa Munda's enduring legacy**" published in "**Indian Express**" on 15th November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS paper1-History-The Freedom Struggle — its various stages and important contributors/contributions from different parts of the country.

Context: The article highlights Bhagwan Birsa Munda's legacy as a tribal leader, freedom fighter, and healer. It emphasizes his fight for justice, tribal rights, and cultural identity. It also discusses government efforts to honor and support tribal communities today.

For detailed information on **Bhagwan Birsa Munda** [read this article here](#)

Who was Bhagwan Birsa Munda?

1. Bhagwan Birsa Munda was a tribal leader born in Ulihatu, Jharkhand, who lived only 25 years (1875–1900).
2. He led the “Ulgulan” or Munda Rebellion in the late 1890s against British exploitation and landlord atrocities.
3. He was called “**Dharti Aba**” (**Father of the Earth**) and fought for tribal justice, land rights, and cultural identity.
4. His ideals of freedom, justice, and dignity inspire not only tribal communities but all youth in India. His legacy reminds the nation to work for the development of Scheduled Tribes.

Why is Bhagwan Birsa Munda remembered?

1. **Leader of Tribal Resistance:** Led the “Ulgulan” (Munda Rebellion) in the 1890s against British exploitation and landlord oppression.
2. “**Dharti Aba**”: Revered as the “Father of the Earth” for championing tribal rights and cultural identity.
3. **Healer and Social Reformer:** Gained fame for his healing touch, helping sick villagers selflessly.
4. **Symbol of Tribal Justice:** Advocated for tribal land ownership and preservation of customs.

How are tribal contributions celebrated today?

1. **Janjatiya Gaurav Divas:** November 15, Bhagwan Birsa Munda’s birth anniversary, is celebrated annually since 2021 to honor tribal freedom fighters.
2. **Showcasing Tribal Legacy:** “Janjatiya Darpan,” a gallery in Rashtrapati Bhavan Museum, highlights tribal art, culture, and their role in nation-building.
3. **Government Initiatives:**
 - a. **Dharti Aaba Janjatiya Gram Utkarsh Abhiyan improves infrastructure in 63,000 tribal villages.**
 - b. **PM-JANMAN focuses on 11 key interventions for effective tribal welfare.**
4. **Recognition of PVTGs:** Representatives from 75 Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) were invited to Rashtrapati Bhavan for an interaction.

Question for practice:

Discuss the legacy of Bhagwan Birsa Munda and the ways in which tribal contributions are celebrated today.

Delhi's worsening air pollution, despite reduced farm fires

Source: The post Delhi's worsening air pollution, despite reduced farm fires has been created, based on the article “**Delhi’s continuing severe air pollution challenge**” published in “**Indian Express**” on 15th November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS paper3-Environmental pollution and degradation.

Context: The article highlights Delhi's worsening air pollution, despite reduced farm fires. It criticizes ineffective measures like smog towers and water sprinklers. It urges the CAQM to focus on data-driven, long-term solutions and regional coordination for sustainable pollution control.

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

Why is Delhi's air pollution worsening despite reduced farm fires?

1. Delhi's air quality has deteriorated, with the AQI reaching "severe" for the first time this season. 2. This is the most delayed occurrence of such pollution in 10 years.
3. Average PM 2.5 levels are the highest in five years.
4. Pollution persists even after the crop residue burning season in Haryana and Punjab has seen a decline.
5. Chandigarh, for example, recorded the second-worst air quality recently, showing the regional nature of the problem.

For detailed information on **Delhi's air quality crisis** [read this article here](#)

What measures has the Delhi government taken, and are they effective?

1. The government has used smog towers and water sprinklers, but their effectiveness is limited to small areas. There has been no emission audit for these devices.
2. Cloud seeding and drones are also being considered, but their impact remains unproven.
3. These measures are seen as temporary fixes and do not address long-term pollution control.

What role does the CAQM play in managing pollution?

1. The **Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM)**, established three years ago, has mainly acted as a regulatory body.
2. It has not prioritized data-driven, scientific methods to combat pollution.
3. Experts emphasize the need for solutions like airshed pollution management, which requires coordination between local and state agencies to identify and tackle pollution hotspots.

For detailed information on **Commission for Air Quality Management** [read this article here](#)

What long-term approach is needed to solve the problem?

1. Experts stress the need to move beyond seasonal approaches and emergency responses.
2. They recommend institutional reforms and better coordination between agencies.
3. The focus should be on sustainable measures that address local and regional pollution comprehensively, beyond just stubble burning or temporary solutions.

Question for practice:

Examine the reasons behind the worsening air pollution in Delhi despite a decline in farm fires and the effectiveness of the measures taken to address it.

Supreme Court clarifies the interpretation of Article 30 and its implications for minority institutions in India

Source: The post Supreme Court clarifies the interpretation of Article 30 and its implications for minority institutions in India has been created, based on the article “Universities are different from religious institutions” published in “The Hindu” on 16th November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS paper2-Constitution of India —historical underpinnings, evolution, features, amendments, significant provisions and basic structure.

Context: The article discusses the Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) case, focusing on a 2024 Supreme Court judgment. It overrules the 1967 Azeez Basha case, clarifying AMU's status as a minority institution. The article highlights different judicial views and the evolving interpretation of Article 30.

For detailed information on **Minority Institutions in India- Determination Criteria, Benefits and Challenges** [read this article here](#)

What is the Background of the AMU Case?

1. Foundation of AMU: Sir Syed Ahmad Khan founded the M.A.O. College in 1877, which later became the Aligarh Muslim University (AMU). It was seen as a key effort in Muslim education post-1857.

2. Controversy on Minority Status: In 1967, the Supreme Court in *S. Azeez Basha* declared that AMU was neither established nor administered by Muslims. The university was not heard during the judgment.

3. Role of M.A.O. College: AMU inherited all debts, rights, and privileges of M.A.O. College, recognized as a minority institution. Historical evidence, such as the 1912 letter from Harcourt Butler, confirmed that ₹30 lakh was raised to establish AMU.

What Was the Supreme Court's Decision in AMU judgment 2024?

1. The Supreme Court overruled the **1967 S. Azeez Basha judgment**, recognizing Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) as a minority institution.

2. A seven-judge Supreme Court Bench, in a 4-3 majority, introduced a “**holistic and realistic**” test to assess an institution’s minority status, leaving AMU's case to a smaller Bench.

3. The court emphasized a broad interpretation of Article 30, extending protection to pre-constitutional-era institutions like AMU.

4. The judgment rejected arguments that governmental control or governance structures negate minority status, supporting AMU's historical and legal continuity with M.A.O. College.

5. The court affirmed that the right to administer is a consequence of establishment, ensuring AMU's place as a minority institution of national importance.

What are the other important cases related to the interpretation of Article 30?

1. T.M.A. Pai Foundation Case (2002)

- The 11-judge Bench clarified the administrative rights of minority institutions under Article 30.
- It identified rights such as selecting students, fixing fees, choosing governing bodies, and disciplining employees.
- The case limited governmental interference while ensuring educational standards.

2. Xaviers Case (1974)

- This case highlighted the importance of “choice” in the establishment and administration of minority institutions under Article 30.
- Justice M.H. Beg ruled that any law indirectly forcing minorities to give up their rights would be void.
- It emphasized a balance between administrative rights and general educational standards.

3. Kerala Education Bill Case (1958)

- The Court reiterated that “choice” is a key element under Article 30 for minorities to establish and administer institutions.
- It emphasized that these rights cannot be curtailed arbitrarily.

4. Basheshar Nath Case (1959)

- This case ruled that **fundamental rights cannot be waived**.

Conclusion:

The Supreme Court's decision supports AMU's role as a significant minority institution, capable of contributing to national importance while maintaining its foundational identity. This aligns with the vision of its founders and the broader goals of Article 30.

Question for practice:

Examine how the Supreme Court's 2024 judgment on Aligarh Muslim University clarifies the interpretation of Article 30 and its implications for minority institutions in India.

India lacks a world-class public policy institution

Source: The post India lacks a world-class public policy institution has been created, based on the article “**India needs a globally recognised public policy school**” published in “**The Hindu**” on 16th November 2024

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

Context: The article explains why India lacks a world-class public policy institution. It highlights centralized executive power, weak policy influence, and political instability. It suggests creating a school focused on India's unique dynamics, promoting empathy, and fostering non-partisan collaboration.

For detailed information on **Public policy education in India** [read this article here](#)

Why Doesn't India Have a World-Class Public Policy Institution?

1. Centralized Decision-Making: In India, the executive branch holds significant decision-making power, which is concentrated within a small political elite. This limits the roles of public policy institutions as their influence on policy is minimal compared to institutions in countries like the U.S., where Congress has significant legislative powers.

2. Limited Legislative Oversight: The limited oversight role of the legislature in India compared to the U.S. means that public policy institutions have fewer opportunities to influence policy through a decentralized and deliberative process.

3. Political Dynamics and Stability: The influence of public policy experts in India is heavily dependent on the current political leadership. This leads to instability, as shifts in power can sideline key decision-makers and experts.

4. Lack of Influence of Policy Groups: In India, unless policy groups align closely with the political priorities of the top leadership, they struggle to exert influence. This is different from more institutionalized democracies where think tanks and advocacy groups can maintain influence regardless of the political party in power.

How Can India Develop a Top-Tier Public Policy School?

1. Understand India's Unique Power Dynamics: Unlike the U.S. Congress, India's centralized executive dominates decision-making, reducing policy experts' influence. A policy school must train students to navigate this centralized structure.

2. Focus on Informal Networks: Teach students to work within India's informal networks, caste hierarchies, regional elites, and grassroots movements, as power is often opaque and unevenly distributed.

3. Emphasize Empathy: The curriculum should focus on understanding people's lived realities to avoid top-down policies that can harm local communities.

4. Address Political Instability: Build a non-partisan space for policy interventions that remain relevant despite regime changes, unlike the current system tied closely to executive power.

Question for practice:

Discuss how centralized executive power and political instability in India impact the development and effectiveness of public policy institutions.

Reimposition of AFSPA in Manipur

Source: The post reimposition of AFSPA in Manipur has been created, based on the article “**Express View: AFSPA is a blunt instrument – address political failure Manipur instead**” published in “**Indian Express**” on 16th November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS paper3- Internal Security

Context: The article discusses ethnic conflicts in Manipur, worsened by government inaction, distrust, and the reimposition of AFSPA. It highlights historical opposition to AFSPA, poor governance, and unresolved tensions between communities, urging better political solutions instead of relying on military measures.

For detailed information on **Manipur unrest and its impact on regional security** [read this article here](#)

What is the Current Situation in Manipur?

1. Manipur has experienced 19 months of ethnic conflict, resulting in deaths and displacements. 2. The recent violence prompted the reimposition of the Disturbed Area status under AFSPA in six police stations, which has historically faced opposition in Manipur and other Northeast areas.

What Are the Root Causes of the Conflict?

1. The conflict originated from the Meitei community's demand for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status and opposition by the Kuki-Zomi community.
2. Ethnic identities have long influenced socioeconomic and political dynamics in Manipur, leading to entrenched divisions and conflict.

What is the major concern regarding the conflicts in Manipur?

- 1. Ineffective Governance:** The state government focuses on blaming outsiders and imposing internet bans, with no effective solutions.
- 2. Uncontrolled Weapons:** Over 5,000 looted weapons remain unaccounted for, worsening security concerns.
- 3. Administrative Failures:** The issue is viewed only through law and order, ignoring underlying political problems.

What is the History of AFSPA in Manipur?

- 1. Initial Imposition (1958):** AFSPA was first imposed in the Naga-dominated districts of Senapati, Tamenglong, and Ukhrul.
- 2. Extension to New Areas (1960s):** The Act was extended to Kuki-Zomi-dominated Churachandpur district.
- 3. Statewide Implementation (1979):** The entire state came under AFSPA due to armed insurgency in Meitei-dominated Imphal Valley.
- 4. Major Protests:** Activist Irom Sharmila protested against AFSPA for 16 years, starting in 2000.
- 5. Review and Recommendations:** The Jeevan Reddy Committee in 2005 and the Second Administrative Reforms Commission recommended repealing AFSPA, calling it "highly undesirable."
- 6. Recent Rollbacks Elsewhere:** AFSPA has been reduced in other parts of the Northeast due to declining militancy, but Manipur remains an exception.

Question for practice:

Evaluate the effectiveness of government measures, including the reimposition of AFSPA, in addressing the ethnic conflict and security concerns in Manipur.

Indian Ocean Brown Cloud

Source: The post Indian Ocean Brown Cloud has been created, based on the article "We knew what caused air pollution 25 years ago – but governments still won't act" published in "Indian Express" on 16th November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS paper3-Environment (Pollution)

Context: The article discusses the **Indian Ocean Experiment (INDOEX)**, which discovered the Indian Ocean Brown Cloud caused by biomass and fossil fuel burning. It highlights India's ongoing air pollution crisis, its sources, health impacts, and the need for scientific, long-term solutions.

What is the Indian Ocean Brown Cloud?

1. In 1999, the Indian Ocean Experiment (INDOEX) studied haze over the Indian Ocean, led by V Ramanathan.
2. They discovered a giant "Indian Ocean Brown Cloud," later renamed "Atmospheric Brown Cloud with a Focus on Asia."
3. It was caused by biomass and fossil fuel burning, affecting temperatures, rainfall, agriculture, and health.
4. Governments in South Asia ignored the 2002 United Nations report on the findings.

How severe is India's air pollution?

1. A thick haze, up to 3 km, covers the Indo-Gangetic Plains, affecting lives, livelihoods, and the economy.
2. Most Indian cities fail to meet national ambient air quality standards, which are lenient compared to WHO guidelines.
3. India emits 52 lakh tonnes of PM2.5 annually, excluding dust from natural and man-made sources.
4. Major contributors to PM2.5 pollution: Biomass burning (55%), including cooking fuels and stubble burning (6.5%), Industry and power plants contribute 37%, mainly from coal burning, Transport contributes 7%.
5. Health and economic impacts: Indoor pollution from biomass cooking fuels causes 8,00,000 premature deaths annually.

What are the key solutions to reduce air pollution?

1. Energy transition in households:

Shift to LPG, biogas, or electricity for cooking to reduce PM2.5.

Targeted policies like a new PM Ujjwala Yojana can help low-income households.

2. Cleaner industry practices:

Encourage MSMEs to adopt electric boilers and clean technologies.

Strengthen pollution control boards to enforce industrial norms.

3. Stubble burning control:

Mandate harvesters that cut closer to the ground to leave less stubble.

Provide incentives like Haryana's ₹1,000 per acre for stubble management.

4. Improving transport: Scale up electric vehicles and public transport with clear targets.

5. Managing local pollution sources: Strengthen local bodies to control road dust, garbage burning, and construction activities.

Question for practice:

Discuss the various sources of air pollution in India as identified in the Indian Ocean Experiment (INDOEX) and their associated health and economic impacts.

Open-eyed Justitia statue sparks debate on inclusivity and representation

Source: The post Open-eyed Justitia statue sparks debate on inclusivity and representation has been created, based on the article “Universities are different from religious institutions” published in “The Hindu” on 16th November 2024.

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2- Judiciary

Context: The article discusses the new open-eyed Justitia statue at the Supreme Court of India, its historical context, interpretations, and public reactions. It questions the inclusivity of justice representation, linking it to caste, gender, religion, and judiciary perceptions.

What is the New Justitia Statue in the Supreme Court?

The Supreme Court of India installed a six-foot white statue of Justitia, a sari-clad, ornamented goddess-like figure without a blindfold. It holds scales in one hand and the Indian Constitution in the other. Former CJI D.Y. Chandrachud unveiled it in October 2024, stating it symbolizes justice that "sees everyone equally."

For detailed information on **The unveiling of a new statue of 'Lady Justice' in India and its significance** [read this article here](#)

What is the Historical Context of Justitia's Imagery?

- 1. Roman Times (1st-2nd Centuries):** Justitia was depicted as open-eyed on Roman coins, symbolizing her ability to evaluate cases clearly and based on merit.
- 2. Introduction of the Blindfold (Late 15th Century):** A 1494 wood engraving depicted Justice with a blindfold, initially seen as a symbol of impaired judgment and helplessness.
- 3. Transformation of the Blindfold (By 1530):** The blindfold evolved to signify impartiality, neutrality, and equality before the law, resisting biases or distractions.

Why is the Statue Controversial?

- 1. Open-Eyed Representation:** The open-eyed Justitia deviates from the traditional blindfolded imagery that symbolizes impartiality and neutrality. **Critics argue it may signify bias.**
- 2. Religious and Cultural Imagery:** The sari-clad, goddess-like figure resembles Hindu iconography, **raising concerns about promoting one religious tradition in a secular judiciary.**
- 3. Public Perception:** Social media users **claim the statue implies justice is influenced by caste, religion, or political identity.**

Why is Justice Representation Important?

1. The justice representation includes themes of protest, resistance, and struggle, emphasizing inclusivity and challenging judicial biases.

2. It Calls for greater representation of marginalized communities in the judiciary.
3. It warns against allowing decolonization to perpetuate old or new forms of discrimination.

What Can Be Learned from this Debate?

1. Justice iconography should promote equality, independence, and inclusivity.
2. Art and symbols must represent feminist, anti-caste, secular, and egalitarian ideals.
3. Avoiding precolonial or postcolonial discrimination is key to achieving fairness.

Question for practice:

Examine how the new Justitia statue at the Supreme Court of India reflects debates on inclusivity, impartiality, and cultural representation in the judiciary.

Bulldozer Justice: Supreme Court's Verdict and Democratic Challenges

Source: The post Bulldozer Justice: Supreme Court's Verdict and Democratic Challenges has been created, based on the article "Two cheers for the top court's 'bulldozer' judgment" published in "The Hindu" And the article "SC verdict is welcome — but the ideological, political bulldozer remains" published in "Indian Express" on 16th November 2024.

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2- Judiciary

Context: The article discusses the Supreme Court's ruling against "bulldozer justice," where homes were demolished as punishment for alleged offenses. It highlights issues like delayed judicial action, lack of compensation for past victims, and the misuse of building laws to justify demolitions. The article criticizes deeper problems in democracy, such as majoritarianism, craving for strong leaders, and elected officials misusing power. It warns against the rise of "bulldozer ideas," which undermine democratic norms, procedures, and institutions, posing a threat beyond physical demolitions.

For detailed information on **SC Verdict to prevent 'Bulldozer Justice'** [read this article here](#)

What is "Bulldozer Raj" and the Supreme Court's Judgment?

1. Definition: "Bulldozer Raj" refers to the practice of demolishing homes of accused individuals, often in communal or protest-related contexts, as a form of vigilante justice.

2. Origins: It began during the Citizenship Amendment Act-National Register of Citizens protests and spread across India.

3. Targeted Actions: Often focused on marginalized communities; demolitions were celebrated by politicians as instant justice but justified as action against "illegal constructions."

4. Supreme Court's Judgment:

- Declared demolitions without due process illegal.
- Mandated **15 days' notice**, personal hearings, and a right to appeal before demolitions.

- **Proportionality Clause:** Authorities must justify, in writing, why demolition is necessary and explore alternatives like regularization or partial demolition.
- **Accountability:** Officials involved in illegal demolitions will be held personally liable.

What are the issues with this Judgement?

1. Delay in Judicial Action:

The practice of vigilante demolitions began three years ago, during the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) protests. Despite multiple legal challenges, the Court acted only now, raising concerns about delayed protection of fundamental rights.

2. Lack of Clarity on Past Demolitions:

The judgment did not specify how to compensate victims of earlier demolitions. Although it held officials personally liable for illegal actions, mechanisms for redress remain unclear.

3. Avoidance of Direct Accountability:

The Court framed the issue hypothetically, avoiding clear acknowledgment of targeted demolitions, even when evidence showed selective demolitions and communal bias.

4. Exclusion of Vulnerable Groups:

The judgment excluded slums and informal settlements, leaving the poorest communities unprotected from demolitions.

5. Enforcement Concerns:

Previous guidelines on lynching and hate speech failed due to lack of enforcement. Similar risks exist for this ruling.

What are the deeper issues with democracy?

1. Majoritarianism: Democracy is reduced to majority rule, undermining negotiation and compromise. Numeric dominance often targets minority communities, as seen in communal demolitions and bulldozer justice.

2. Craving for Strong Leaders: There is growing demand for leaders who bypass procedures, celebrated as "tough." For example, banners glorified Maharashtra's Deputy CM after an encounter.

3. Misinterpretation of Elections: Elections are viewed as mandates, granting unchecked power. Leaders behave like kings, ignoring norms. Practices like "guardian ministers" reinforce this.

4. Erosion of Institutional Checks: A survey by Lokniti revealed 33% believed courts and institutions are unnecessary to check leaders' powers.

5. Bulldozing Procedures: Instant justice actions like demolitions bypass due process. For instance, notices were backdated to justify demolitions, targeting slums and marginalized groups.

Conclusion:

The Supreme Court's judgment on "bulldozer justice" highlights the importance of upholding the rule of law and protecting democratic values. Guidelines like notice, hearings, and proportionality aim to prevent misuse of demolitions. However, deeper issues remain, such as majoritarianism, impatience with democratic procedures, and the misuse of power by elected leaders. The "conceptual bulldozer" undermines democracy through excessive statism and populist governance, threatening citizens' rights and foundational norms.

Question for practice:

Examine how the Supreme Court's judgment on "Bulldozer Raj" addresses the misuse of power and the deeper challenges to democratic values in India.

Global rise in diabetes

Source: The post global rise in diabetes has been created, based on the article "**Growing epidemic: India has to scale up diagnosis to meet the 2030 WHO target for diabetes**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 16th November 2024

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

Context: The article highlights the global rise in diabetes, especially in India, due to unhealthy lifestyles and improved diagnosis methods. It emphasizes the role of tobacco in increasing diabetes risk and stresses the need for better diagnosis and glycaemic control in India.

For detailed information on **Lancet study: About a quarter of diabetics globally are in India** [read this article here](#)

What is the global diabetes trend?

1. Global diabetes cases quadrupled from 200 million in 1990 to over 800 million in 2022.
2. Adult diabetes prevalence rose from 7% to 14% in the same period.

Why is diabetes increasing in India?

1. **High Prevalence:** India has the highest number of diabetics globally, with 212 million cases, compared to China's 148 million.
2. **Undiagnosed Cases:** 133 million Indians over 30 years remain undiagnosed, the highest worldwide.
3. **Diet and Lifestyle:** Unhealthy diets rich in carbohydrates and saturated fats, along with sedentary lifestyles, are major contributors.
4. **Tobacco Use:** Smoking increases diabetes risk by 30%-40%, as nicotine impairs insulin production and causes resistance.
5. **Improved Diagnosis:** New methods, including glycated hemoglobin (HbA1c) tests, identify more cases, especially in South Asia, than earlier single-biomarker methods.

How can diabetes be managed?

1. Early diagnosis is critical. WHO's 2030 target aims for 80% diagnosis and good glycaemic control for diagnosed cases.
2. Managing gestational diabetes reduces the risk of diabetes in both mothers and children.
3. Avoiding tobacco lowers diabetes risk and improves heart health.

Question for practice:

Discuss the factors contributing to the rise of diabetes globally and in India, and the strategies for its effective management.

How greenhouse gases trap heat and cause global warming

Source: The post how greenhouse gases trap heat and cause global warming has been created, based on the article “**Why CO2 is the primary driver of climate change**” published in “**Indian Express**” on 16th November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 3-Environment

Context: The article explains how greenhouse gases trap heat and cause global warming. CO2 is the main contributor, responsible for 70% of warming. It stays in the atmosphere for centuries and has increased by 50% since industrial times, driving climate change significantly.

For detailed information on **All about Greenhouse gases and Effect** read this article here

Why is CO2 the main contributor to global warming?

- 1. Contribution:** CO2 is responsible for about 70% of global warming.
- 2. Radiative Forcing (RF):** Between 1750 and 2011, CO2 caused the highest heating effect compared to other GHGs.

How does CO2 compare to other GHGs?

1. CH4 is 80 times more powerful, and HFCs are thousands of times stronger, but CO2 is more abundant.
2. Since industrial times, atmospheric CO2 has increased by 50%, reaching 150% of its pre-1750 level.
3. CO2 stays in the atmosphere for centuries, unlike CH4, which lasts only a decade.

Why is water vapor not as impactful?

1. Water vapor is the most abundant GHG but has a short cycle of 10 days.
2. It does not build up in the atmosphere like CO2.
3. Rising temperatures cause more water to evaporate, amplifying warming.

What are the current global emissions trends?

1. Global CO2 emissions from fossil fuels will reach 37.4 billion tonnes in 2024, a 0.8% increase from 2023.
2. India's emissions are set to grow by 4.6% in 2024, the highest among major economies.

Question for practice:

Discuss why CO2 is considered the main contributor to global warming compared to other greenhouse gases.

Manipur Crisis: Constitutional Breakdown, Judicial Delays, and Government Inaction

Source: The post Manipur Crisis: Constitutional Breakdown, Judicial Delays, and Government Inaction has been created, based on the article “**Manipur as a case for imposing Article 356**” published in “**The Hindu**” on 19th November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2-Functions and responsibilities of the Union and the States, issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure

Context: The article discusses the ongoing violence in Manipur since May 2023. It argues that the constitutional machinery has failed, urging the President to invoke Article 356 for central intervention to restore peace, citing historical debates and constitutional obligations.

For detailed information on **Manipur unrest and its impact on regional security** [read this article here](#)

What is the current situation in Manipur?

1. Since May 2023, Manipur has faced severe ethnic violence.
2. Over **250 people have been killed**, and **more than a lakh displaced**. Houses, temples, and churches have been destroyed. On **November 9, 2024**, a mother of three was raped and killed, and 17 houses were burned.
3. Unlike insurgencies in Nagaland or Mizoram, violence in Manipur involves **ordinary people as both victims and perpetrators**. People are forced to defend themselves, escalating the unrest.

What is the meaning of the expression "failure of machinery"?

1. The term "failure of machinery" refers to a situation where the **State government is unable to function according to constitutional provisions**.
2. **Dr. B.R. Ambedkar** linked this phrase to the Government of India Act, 1935, indicating situations where governance collapses entirely.
3. **K. Santhanam** described it as the inability to maintain law and order due to internal disturbances or external aggression.
4. **Thakur Das Bhargava** explained it as a state where people lose basic liberties and peace.
5. **Alladi Krishnaswami Ayyar** stated it is the Union's duty to restore constitutional order.

What does the Constitution say about such situations?

1. **Article 356** allows the President to intervene when a State government cannot function as per the Constitution.
2. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar stated that this provision is essential during constitutional breakdowns.
3. **Article 355** obliges the Union to assist States in maintaining constitutional order.
4. The **President of India** can act under **Article 356** when a State's constitutional machinery fails.

How has the Supreme Court responded?

9 PM Compilation November 2024

1. On **May 8, 2023**, the Supreme Court recorded that violence had decreased temporarily but emphasized the need for **law and order** and **rehabilitation**.
2. By **July 2023**, the Court was alarmed by incidents like women being paraded naked.
3. Despite **27 hearings**, the Supreme Court's intervention has been criticized as slow and ineffective.

Why has the government been criticized?

1. **Prime Minister's Role:** The Prime Minister has been criticized for not taking decisive action to ensure **peace, harmony, and justice**.
2. **Constitutional Duty Ignored:** Article 355 obliges the Union to assist states during constitutional breakdowns, but it failed to fulfill this responsibility effectively.
3. Critics argue that the lack of proactive measures undermines citizens' fundamental rights to life, liberty, and dignity.

What are the key takeaways?

1. Manipur's situation highlights **constitutional failure, judicial delays, and government inaction**.
2. Immediate central intervention is required to restore peace, justice, and fundamental rights.
3. This crisis demands decisive leadership and proactive measures.

Question for practice:

Examine how the constitutional provisions and the roles of the judiciary and executive have been implemented or neglected in addressing the ongoing crisis in Manipur.

Challenges in India's Commitment to the Global South

Source: The post challenges in India's commitment to the Global South has been created, based on the article "**This time for Africa: India must take forward its commitment to Africa, the Global South**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 19th November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS paper2- International Relations-Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

Context: The article discusses Prime Minister Modi's visits to Nigeria, Brazil, and Guyana. It highlights India's commitment to the Global South, strong ties with Nigeria, defense cooperation, economic investments, and the need for active follow-through on global partnerships and forums.

For detailed information on **India and Global South** [read this article here](#)

What is the purpose of PM Modi's visits to Nigeria, Brazil, and Guyana?

1. **Strengthen Ties:** PM Modi's visits aimed to strengthen diplomatic and strategic relationships with Nigeria, Brazil, and Guyana, emphasizing India's commitment to the Global South.
2. **Economic Cooperation:** Modi discussed investments and economic cooperation, particularly in Nigeria where Indian companies have invested approximately \$27 billion in various sectors like healthcare and energy.

3. Addressing Common Challenges: The discussions covered shared challenges like terrorism and piracy.

4. Global Representation: In Brazil, during the G-20 Summit, Modi participated in discussions that included the induction of the African Union as a member, enhancing the representation of the Global South.

For detailed information on “**Development Compact**” Proposed by India [read this article here](#)

How is Nigeria significant to India?

1. Economic Importance: Nigeria stands as one of the top African economies in terms of GDP and has recently become a BRICS partner country, positioning it as a vital player in regional and global economic contexts.

2. Historical Cooperation: After Nigeria’s independence in 1960, India sent teachers and doctors to assist.

3. Shared Challenges: Both nations face issues like poverty, pollution, and population density, offering opportunities for collaboration.

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

What are the Challenges in India’s Commitment to the Global South?

1. While India has demonstrated a strong commitment to the Global South and South-South cooperation, especially appreciated in Africa, there have been criticisms regarding the lack of follow-through on such commitments.

2. The participation in the “**Voice of the Global South**” conference was not as enthusiastic as expected.

3. **Delayed Summits:** The India-Africa Forum summit has not been held since 2015, despite its importance for Africa-India relations.

What Future Actions are Anticipated?

1. There is an anticipation for India to host the overdue India-Africa Forum summit, last held in 2015.

2. The Foreign Secretary indicated plans to conduct this summit early next year, aiming to enhance cooperation and address global challenges like governance, food, energy, and health security across the developing world.

Question for practice:

Discuss the significance of Prime Minister Modi’s visits to Nigeria, Brazil, and Guyana in strengthening India’s commitment to the Global South.

RBI’s likely decision to keep interest rates unchanged

Source: The post RBI’s likely decision to keep interest rates unchanged has been created, based on the article “**For RBI, a choice: Vegetable prices, growth or currency**” published in “**Indian Express**” on 19th November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS paper3-Economy- inflation

Context: The article discusses the RBI’s likely decision to keep interest rates unchanged due to inflation concerns, weak domestic demand, and rupee pressures. It highlights growth slowdown, muted wages, weak private investment, and external factors like U.S. interest rates impacting policy decisions.

For detailed information on **The RBI decided to maintain interest rates but change its policy stance** [read this article here](#)

What is the RBI's Current Stance on Interest Rates?

1. The RBI is expected to keep interest rates the same because inflation is above their target range.
2. Even though food prices increased, especially for vegetables, the overall inflation without vegetables was low (3.3% in September and 3.6% in October).
3. The RBI fears food inflation could spill over into core inflation through a wage-price spiral.
4. The RBI maintains an optimistic growth forecast, but indicators show a slowdown. Real GDP growth is expected to fall below 7% this year, down from 8.2% last year. Nominal GDP growth could stay below 10% for the second consecutive year.

Why is the RBI's Concern About Food Inflation Affecting Core Inflation Misplaced?

The concern is misplaced for two reasons.

First, the recent food inflation surge is mainly due to vegetable prices, and excluding vegetables, inflation was only 3.3% in September and 3.6% in October.

Second, significant and persistent food price shocks are needed to affect core inflation, but there is no evidence of such shocks or a wage-price spiral. Labour markets remain weak, wages are subdued, and firm costs are low.

How does the global economy impact India's policy?

1. **Impact of US Fed Rates:** The US Federal Reserve cut short-term rates by 75 basis points since September. However, long-term US Treasury yields rose from 3.61% to 4.44%, strengthening the dollar.
2. **Capital Outflows:** Foreign investors withdrew \$14 billion from Indian stock markets in two months, putting pressure on the rupee.
3. **Rupee Depreciation:** A weaker rupee impacts firms with large foreign currency loans.
4. **Policy Constraints:** Cutting Indian interest rates could worsen capital outflows and rupee depreciation.
5. **Global Trade Policies:** Expectations of higher US tariffs under Trump may drive inflation and global uncertainty, complicating RBI's decisions.

What are the RBI's key challenges?

The RBI is balancing inflation concerns, growth slowdown, and rupee stability. Currency pressures and weak domestic demand dominate its considerations. The central bank may reassess its policy direction after December, as external and domestic factors evolve.

Question for practice:

Examine how the RBI balances inflation concerns, growth slowdown, and rupee stability in its monetary policy decisions.

India's Rs 1,000 crore venture capital fund for the space sector

Source: The post India's Rs 1,000 crore venture capital fund for the space sector has been created, based on the article “**Space, India’s final frontier and through the government, a gateway to the stars**” published in “**Indian Express**” on 19th November 2024

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

Context: The article discusses India's Rs 1,000 crore venture capital fund for the space sector. It supports startups, boosts innovation, creates jobs, and strengthens the economy. The fund aims to make India a global leader in space technology and exploration.

For detailed information on **Venture Capital Fund** [read this article here](#)

What is the Rs 1,000 crore venture capital fund for the space sector?

1. The Indian government has approved a **Rs 1,000 crore venture capital (VC) fund** to support the private space sector.
2. **IN-SPACE (Indian National Space Promotion and Authorization Centre)** will oversee the fund, acting as a gateway for startups in space technology.
3. The fund will enable startups to develop and scale innovative ideas in a capital-intensive sector. For example, a startup like **StarTech** can use the fund to launch satellites for high-speed internet in remote areas, bridging the digital divide.
4. The fund is critical for creating a **multiplier effect**, attracting private investment, and retaining companies in India.
5. By fostering innovation, the fund aligns with **Atmanirbhar Bharat** and aims to grow India’s space economy to **\$44 billion by 2033**.
6. Countries like the UK, Japan, and Saudi Arabia have similar space-focused VC funds. India’s initiative aims to position it as a leader in global space technologies.

How will space technology impact different sectors?

1. **Supply Chain and Transportation:** Satellite data will optimize routes, reduce costs, and improve delivery efficiency. For example, logistics companies can navigate traffic and weather using satellite navigation.
1. **Food and Beverage:** Precision technology will enhance last-mile delivery. Space labs may develop nutrient-rich foods to fight malnutrition.
2. **Defense:** Satellites will improve intelligence and surveillance for national security.
3. **Retail and E-Commerce:** Satellite internet will enable online shopping in remote areas.
4. **Disaster Management:** Space-based systems will provide early warnings for natural disasters.
5. **Humanitarian Aid:** Satellites will monitor infrastructure and track human trafficking for better response efforts.

What challenges could limit growth?

- 1. Space Debris:** Increasing debris can pose risks to satellites and space missions, impacting efficiency and safety.
- 2. Regulatory Constraints:** Complex regulations could slow innovation and delay projects, affecting private sector participation.
- 3. High Costs:** The space sector is capital-intensive, requiring sustained investment. Without private funding, growth could be stunted.
- 4. Competition from Alternatives:** Terrestrial technologies, like fiber optics, could compete with satellite-based solutions.
- 5. Collaboration Issues:** Lack of standardization and harmonization between public and private stakeholders may hinder progress.

What is the significance of the VC fund?

- 1. Job Creation:** Each investment can create hundreds of direct jobs in engineering, software, and manufacturing. Thousands of indirect jobs will emerge in logistics, component manufacturing, and services.
- 2. Strengthens National Security:** Enhances defense capabilities through satellite-based intelligence and surveillance.
- 3. Global Leadership:** Positions India as a global leader in space technologies, competing with countries like the UK and Japan. This initiative supports long-term growth and global competitiveness in the space sector.

Question for practice:

Examine how the Rs 1,000 crore venture capital fund for the space sector will contribute to India's economic growth and global leadership in space technology.

India's foreign policy towards its neighbors

Source: The post India's foreign policy towards its neighbors has been created, based on the article “**Yogendra Yadav writes: Is India really ‘neighbourhood first’?**” published in “**Indian Express**” on 19th November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS paper2- polity-India and its neighbourhood- relations.

Context: This article discusses India's foreign policy towards its neighbors. It questions whether trying to dominate the region and using force is in India's long-term interest. It suggests that a more respectful and non-interfering approach might serve India better, focusing on trust and mutual respect.

For detailed information on **India's relationship with its neighboring countries** [read this article here](#)

What is India's Current Approach Towards Its Neighbours?

India's foreign policy often emphasizes dominance in the region. This includes flexing muscles and influencing political developments in neighboring countries like Nepal, Bangladesh, Maldives, and Sri Lanka. However, this has created mistrust and anti-India sentiments.

Why is India's Neighbourhood Policy Facing Challenges?

- 1. Hostile Regimes:** Countries like Nepal, Maldives, and Sri Lanka currently have leaderships critical of India. Nepal's PM K P Oli and Maldives' Mohamed Muizzu have opposed Indian influence.
- 2. Shift in Alliances:** Nepal and Bhutan are leaning towards China for counter-balancing India's dominance.
- 3. Perceived Interference:** India's role in Nepal's democratic transition, the 2015 blockade, and meddling in Nepalese domestic politics are viewed negatively.
- 4. Growing Anti-India Sentiment:** Anti-India narratives in Bangladesh, Maldives, and other nations are gaining traction, often exploited for political gains.
- 5. Strategic Failures:** India's interventions often lack clear benefits. For example, Indian agencies' alleged covert actions in Nepal are perceived poorly.
- 6. Competition with China:** China's growing economic and political influence challenges India's position in the region.

For detailed information on **Challenges in India's "Neighbourhood First" policy in 2024** [read this article here](#)

What should be done?

- 1. Follow "Neighbourliness First":** Respect sovereignty, avoid interference, and peacefully resolve disputes.
- 2. Adopt Gujral Doctrine:** India should accommodate its neighbors without expecting reciprocity, promoting goodwill and trust.
- 3. Address Mistrust:** Take responsibility for past actions, as seen in Nepal, and heal strained relationships.
4. The policy of respecting neighbors and prioritizing mutual trust could improve India's relations. Rather than trying to control its neighbors, India could focus on building goodwill, strengthening relationships, and promoting regional stability for long-term benefits.

For detailed information on **India's role in its neighboring countries' political developments** [read this article here](#)

Question for practice:

Evaluate whether India's approach of regional dominance has been effective in fostering trust and stability among its neighboring countries.

Managing High-Altitude Sickness

Source: The post **Managing High-Altitude Sickness** has been created, based on the article "**The dangers of high-altitude sickness**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 20th 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 high-altitude sickness, which occurs when the body can't adjust to high elevations. It highlights the need for better healthcare facilities, a tourist registration system, early intervention, and treatment strategies to prevent and manage high-altitude illnesses in the Himalayas.

What is High-Altitude Sickness?

- 1. Definition:** High-altitude sickness, also known as Acute Mountain Sickness (AMS), occurs when the body cannot adapt to reduced oxygen levels at high elevations, typically above 8,000 feet (2,400 meters).
- 2. Causes:** At high altitudes, the air pressure and oxygen levels drop, leading to hypoxia (oxygen shortage in body tissues). Rapid ascent without acclimatization increases the risk.
- 3. Symptoms:** Early symptoms include headaches, nausea, fatigue, and breathlessness. If untreated, it can progress to:
 - a. High-Altitude Pulmonary Edema (HAPE):** Fluid accumulates in the lungs, causing severe breathing difficulties.
 - b. High-Altitude Cerebral Edema (HACE):** Fluid collects in the brain, leading to confusion, hallucinations, and coma.
- 4. Body's Response:** The body tries to adapt by increasing breathing and producing more red blood cells, which thickens the blood and strains the heart.
- 5. Severity:** Both HAPE and HACE are life-threatening and require immediate medical intervention, often involving descent to lower altitudes.

What are Effective Treatment Strategies?

- 1. Immediate Descent:** Descending 300–1,000 meters is the most effective treatment for high-altitude sickness. Symptoms improve significantly after descent.
- 2. Supplemental Oxygen:** Oxygen therapy can provide relief for acute mountain sickness (AMS) and severe conditions like high-altitude cerebral edema (HACE).
- 3. Portable Hyperbaric Chambers:** These are useful for emergencies where descent isn't immediately possible.
- 4. Medications:** Drugs like Acetazolamide and Dexamethasone offer temporary relief.

What are Infrastructural Challenges?

1. In the Himalayan regions, beyond major towns, healthcare facilities are limited. This makes it difficult to treat high-altitude sickness effectively.
2. Some areas like Leh in Ladakh have specialized facilities, but many high-altitude places lack similar infrastructure.

What should be done?

- 1. Improve Healthcare Facilities:** Establish advanced medical centers in high-altitude regions like Leh, which have specialized facilities for such conditions.
- 2. Mandatory Tourist Registration:** Implement a system to monitor tourist movements and collect data for research on high-altitude sickness.
- 3. Preventive Measures:** Conduct health screenings at entry points, similar to the Inner Line Permit system in Kinnaur and Lahaul-Spiti. Provide preventive medications like Acetazolamide for at-risk travelers.

4. Promote Gradual Ascent: Encourage gradual climbs with rest days to help acclimatization.

5. Provide Emergency Services: Equip states with air-ambulances for quick evacuations. Equip regions with portable hyperbaric chambers and supplemental oxygen supplies.

6. Public Awareness: Share health and safety information online and at checkpoints.

Question for practice:

Discuss the causes, symptoms, and treatment strategies for high-altitude sickness.

India call EU's CBAM "discriminatory"

Source: The post India call EU's CBAM "discriminatory" has been created, based on the article "**How India could counter the CBAM**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 20th November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- Environment

Context: The article discusses the EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), which imposes carbon costs on imports. India criticizes it as discriminatory and suggests alternatives like Equity-based Accounting to ensure fairer climate responsibilities and support for developing nations' capacities.

For detailed information on **Challenges of EU's CBAM for India** [read this article here](#)

What is the EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM)?

1. The European Union's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) requires exporters to the EU to pay for the carbon emissions associated with the goods they sell.
2. This policy aims to level the playing field by ensuring that imported goods bear a similar carbon cost to those produced within the EU. It is scheduled to fully start on January 1, 2026.

Why does India call CBAM "discriminatory"?

- 1. Unfair Responsibility Under Production-Based Accounting:** The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) uses a production-based accounting principle. This makes exporting nations like India responsible for emissions from exported goods, even though these goods are consumed in importing nations like the EU. **India proposes alternatives like Equity-based Accounting**, which reflects fairer distribution based on per capita GDP and emissions.
- 2. Economic Impact on India:** The EU comprises 20.33% of India's merchandise exports, and 25.7% of these exports (iron, steel, aluminium, cement, and fertilizers) are affected by CBAM. Iron and steel alone account for 76.83% of these exports.
- 3. Revenue Inequality:** The EU plans to keep CBAM revenues (estimated at €5-14 billion annually by 2030) for its own programs like NextGenerationEU. India argues this revenue should support developing economies through technology transfer and capacity building.
- 4. Lack of Justice:** CBAM does not account for compensatory or distributive justice, ignoring historical contributions to climate change by developed countries. It imposes disproportionate responsibilities on developing nations.

5. Insufficient Preparation Time: The EU has had years to prepare for its emission reduction goals (e.g., 20% reduction by 2020 under the 2008 Climate Action Plan and 55% by 2030 under the Green Deal). Developing countries, however, are given minimal time to adapt.

Question for practice:

Examine the challenges posed by the EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) for India and India's criticisms of the policy.

Electronic Tracking: Solution for Prison Overcrowding

Source: The post Electronic Tracking: Solution for Prison Overcrowding has been created, based on the article "Prison tag: Tracking devices may be used if they aid bail, help free up jail space" published in "The Hindu" on 20th November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2-Governance- Prison Reforms

Context: The article discusses using electronic tracking devices for parolees and undertrials to reduce prison overcrowding. It highlights potential benefits, privacy concerns, and legal guidelines. Compact, cost-effective trackers could ensure safety, reduce costs, and prevent rights violations while addressing stigmatization.

For detailed information on **Issues Related to Prisons and Prison Reforms** [read this article here](#)

What is the Proposal for Electronic Tracking?

- 1. Purpose:** Introduce electronic tracking devices to monitor parolees and undertrials, reducing prison overcrowding.
- 2. Pilot Programme:** Supreme Court's Centre for Research and Planning suggests testing trackers for low risk undertrials.
- 3. Legislative Backing:** The Model Prisons and Correctional Services Act, 2023, allows parole if prisoners agree to wear trackers, with leave revocable for violations.
- 4. Odisha Example:** Odisha was the first state to propose tamper-proof trackers for undertrials accused of non-heinous offenses, aiming to reduce congestion.
- 5. Prison Overcrowding:** As of December 31, 2022, India's prisons housed 573,220 inmates, exceeding capacity by 31.4%.
- 6. Benefits:** Trackers can lower administrative costs, prevent violations, and improve safety, provided they are used with consent and safeguards for privacy.

What Are the Concerns with Electronic Tracking?

- 1. Privacy Violation:** The Supreme Court has raised concerns about privacy infringement. It disapproved of a bail condition requiring an accused to share their location via Google Maps earlier this year.
- 2. Lack of Guidelines:** There are no clear guidelines or minimum standards for using electronic tracking without violating prisoners' rights.
- 3. Potential Misuse:** Without proper safeguards, electronic tracking may lead to excessive surveillance or stigmatization.

How Could Electronic Tracking Be Implemented Effectively?

1. To avoid stigmatization and ensure compliance, trackers should be compact and discreet.
2. They should prevent parolees from approaching victims or crime-related locations, balancing safety and privacy rights.
3. Clear guidelines should address privacy and rights concerns. Pilot programs can test the technology's effectiveness.

Question for practice:

Evaluate the potential benefits and challenges of implementing electronic tracking devices for parolees and undertrials to address prison overcrowding.

Reasons for the mental health challenges faced by sex workers

Source: The post reasons for the mental health challenges faced by sex workers has been created, based on the article "A community on the margins, its hidden scars" published in "The Hindu" on 20th 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 mental health challenges faced by sex workers due to stigma, violence, economic pressures, and isolation. It highlights the lack of tailored mental health services and advocates for compassionate interventions, legal protection, and supportive policies to improve their well-being.

For detailed information on **Challenges of sex workers, bar dancers, and transgender- Invisible Indians** [read this article here](#)

What are the reasons for the mental health challenges faced by sex workers?

1. Sex workers experience various **mental health issues, including anxiety, depression, PTSD, and substance use disorders.**
2. These problems stem from violence, societal stigma, and economic pressures. For instance, many sex workers face **violence from clients and law enforcement, leading to trauma and PTSD.**
3. **Stigma** significantly affects sex workers' mental health by preventing them from accessing essential services. This exclusion from healthcare and support services increases their psychological distress.
4. **Economic necessity** often drives individuals into sex work. The instability of their income and lack of alternative job opportunities cause chronic stress and anxiety.
5. Many sex workers **use substances like drugs or alcohol** to manage stress and trauma. However, this often leads to addiction and worsens their mental health issues.
6. There are **limited mental health services for sex workers.** While initiatives like HIV prevention programs exist, mental health-focused efforts remain rare.

What should be done to overcome the mental health challenges faced by sex workers?

- 1. Provide Legal Protections:** Implement laws to protect sex workers from violence by clients, law enforcement, and others. This will reduce trauma and PTSD.
- 2. Offer Tailored Mental Health Services:** Establish specific interventions for sex workers' mental health. Initiatives like Kolkata's Sonagachi mental health database project are good examples.
- 3. Foster Peer Support:** Develop peer networks to provide emotional support. Reports from European countries highlight the importance of such networks.
- 4. Research and Advocacy:** Conduct research to co-design mental health interventions and push for supportive policies tailored to their needs.

Question for practice:

Examine the factors contributing to the mental health challenges faced by sex workers and the measures that can be implemented to address these issues.

China's role in global emissions and renewable energy

Source: The post China's role in global emissions and renewable energy has been created, based on the article "Why immediate emission cuts from China may not be all that good" published in "Indian Express" on 20th November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 3 - Environment

Context: The article highlights China's role in global emissions and renewable energy. China must reduce emissions to meet climate goals, but quick cuts could disrupt renewable energy supplies. It dominates clean energy manufacturing but remains heavily dependent on fossil fuels.

For detailed information on **China's climate commitment: How is it significant?** [read this article here](#)

Why is China Considered a "Developing" Country?

- 1. UN Classification:** The United Nations categorizes China as a "developing" country, granting it flexibility in emission reduction targets under international climate frameworks.
- 2. Historical Emissions:** In the 1990s, when the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change was finalized, China's emissions were just over **10% of global emissions**, much less than its current share.
- 3. Economic Transformation:** Despite becoming the second-largest economy, China leveraged its developing country status to prioritize growth over strict emission controls.
- 4. Global Contribution:** China now accounts for **over 30% of annual emissions** and has **11.5% of historical emissions**, matching the EU's contribution.
- 5. Unequal Responsibilities:** The Paris Agreement applies differentiated responsibilities, requiring less stringent short-term emission reductions from developing countries like China.

How Critical is China for Global Emission Reductions?

1. China's emission cuts are crucial to meet the Paris Agreement's 1.5°C target.
2. A Climate Action Tracker study suggests China must cut emissions by **66% by 2030** and **78% by 2035**.

3. Global emissions are projected to fall only 2% by 2030, far below the 43% required from 2019 levels.

What Are the Challenges and Contributions of China?

A. Challenges of China:

- 1. Highest Emissions:** China contributes over **30% of global emissions**, making it the largest emitter for over 15 years.
- 2. Heavy Dependence on Fossil Fuels:** Coal generates over **50% of electricity**, while renewable energy remains a small part of its energy mix.
- 3. Difficult Emission Targets:** Achieving **66% emission cuts by 2030** and **78% by 2035**, as per Climate Action Tracker, is unrealistic due to rising emissions.
- 4. Global Supply Chain Impact:** Rapid emission cuts could disrupt China's dominance in **solar panel (80%)** and **wind turbine (60%) production**, delaying global renewable energy transitions.

Contributions of China:

- 1. Renewable Energy Leadership:** Added over **300 GW of renewables in 2023** and achieved **1,200 GW renewable capacity** six years ahead of schedule.
- 2. Affordable Clean Energy:** China is the most cost-competitive manufacturer of renewable energy technologies: Costs are 10% lower than India, 20% lower than the US, and 35% lower than Europe.
3. China controls 80% of global solar panel manufacturing and 60% of wind turbine production. It dominates supply chains for clean energy technologies, including batteries and hydrogen electrolyzers.

Question for practice:

Discuss China's dual role as the largest emitter and a leader in renewable energy production, highlighting the challenges and contributions outlined in the article.

SEBI's efforts to regulate the securities market

Source: The post SEBI's efforts to regulate the securities market has been created, based on the article "**Tightening the norm**" and the article "**Free market needs free speech**" published in "**Indian Express**" on 21st November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2-Statutory, regulatory and various quasi-judicial bodies.

Context: The article discusses SEBI's efforts to regulate the securities market. It highlights SEBI's proposals to curb manipulation in SME IPOs, including stricter norms like increased lock-in periods for promoters and better fund monitoring. SEBI also seeks to regulate influencers and digital platforms, raising concerns over free speech and jurisdictional overreach.

For detailed information on **New SEBI Rules to Curb F&O Frenzy and Protect Small Investors** [read this article here](#)

Why is SEBI focusing on SME IPOs?

SEBI is addressing concerns about manipulation in small and mid-cap IPOs. Recent SME IPO data shows that 159 companies raised ₹5,700 crore in 2023-24, compared to 31 in 2021-22. SEBI proposed stricter norms, including:

- a. Increasing the minimum application size to attract informed investors.
- b. Raising the minimum investor base from 50 to 200 for better liquidity.
- c. Requiring promoters to lock-in their shares for five years to ensure accountability.
- d. Restricting IPO funds from being used to repay promoter loans.
- e. SEBI suggests appointing monitoring agencies for IPOs above ₹20 crore to ensure proper fund utilization. It has warned about promoters inflating business operations to boost stock prices. These measures aim to protect retail investors and maintain market integrity.

Why is SEBI targeting influencers on digital platforms?

1. SEBI is concerned about misleading securities-related content shared by influencers on platforms like YouTube and WhatsApp.
2. Misleading content can manipulate investors' decisions, impacting market integrity.
3. SEBI aims to regulate these platforms, requiring them to block false information, blacklist violators, and report regularly. For example, SEBI penalized unregistered influencers for sharing deceptive content and settled some cases with heavy penalties.
4. SEBI proposes that financial intermediaries only associate with registered influencers to ensure accountability.

What concerns arise from SEBI's move to regulate influencers?

- 1. Disruption to Price Discovery:** SEBI's regulation of speech could harm the price discovery process, which benefits from a mix of optimistic, pessimistic, and neutral views. For example, In the Adani-Hindenburg episode, short-sellers, Adani promoters, and analysts (including influencers) provided contrasting opinions, helping investors make informed decisions.
- 2. Existing Regulations Are Adequate:** SEBI already penalizes unregistered influencers under its existing powers. For example, it uses laws against fraudulent and manipulative practices and mandates that investment advisors and analysts register with SEBI.
- 3. Jurisdictional Overlap:** Digital platforms like YouTube and WhatsApp are regulated by MeitY under the IT Act. SEBI's involvement may lead to conflicts over jurisdiction.
- 4. Threat to Free Speech:** SEBI's proposals risk curbing free speech in the securities market, a fundamental right. The marketplace of ideas allows investors to evaluate different views and build trust.
- 5. Parliamentary Oversight is Necessary:** SEBI's attempt to expand its powers through a circular bypasses parliamentary approval. Expanding jurisdiction over non-securities entities requires legislative endorsement to avoid overreach.

Question for practice:

Discuss SEBI's proposed measures to regulate SME IPOs and their impact on market integrity and retail investors.

Report by the Access to Nutrition Initiative (ATNi)

Source: The post report by the Access to Nutrition Initiative (ATNi) has been created, based on the article "Should packaged food content be labelled?" published in "The Hindu" on 21st November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3-food security

Context: The article discusses a report by the Access to Nutrition Initiative (ATNi), which found that food companies sell less healthy products in low-and-middle-income countries (LMICs) compared to high-income countries (HICs). It highlights health risks, affordability, and the need for better food labeling in India.

What are the various reports related to food products?

1. ATNi report find:

- a. The Access to Nutrition Initiative (ATNi) analyzed 52,414 products from 30 top food companies.
- b. Products in low-and-middle-income countries (LMICs) were less healthy than in high-income countries (HICs).
- c. Products scored 1.8 in LMICs compared to 2.3 in HICs on a health star rating system.
- d. Only 30% of companies had strategies to make healthier products affordable for lower-income consumers.
- e. Micronutrient data was less available in LMICs compared to HICs.

2. In April 2024, a **report by Public Eye and IBFAN** found that Nestle's baby foods in India and LMICs had higher sugar content than in Europe. Nestle denied the claim, but the Indian government asked the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) to investigate.

Why is This Significant in India?

1. **NCD Burden:** India faces a high non-communicable disease (NCD) burden. Over 10.13 crore Indians have diabetes, and obesity affects 24% of women and 23% of men (NFHS-5 data).
2. **Dietary Impact:** The Economic Survey 2023-24 reported that unhealthy diets cause 56.4% of India's disease burden.
3. **Changing Diets:** The ICMR dietary guidelines (2023) highlight increased consumption of processed foods rich in sugar and fat, worsening obesity and micronutrient deficiencies.
4. **Affordability Issues:** Over 50% of Indians cannot afford a healthy diet (UN data). Meanwhile, spending on processed food is rising.

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

What About Food Labeling in India?

1. India lacks strong policies for food package labeling.

2. A 2017 National Action Plan addressed Non-Communicable Diseases but made little progress on front-of-package labeling.
3. In 2022, a draft regulation on labeling foods with high sugar, fat, and sodium was introduced but hasn't advanced.
4. Countries like Chile and Mexico have seen reduced consumption of sugary drinks after introducing mandatory front-of-pack labeling.

What should be done?

- 1. Implement Mandatory Nutrition Policies:** The ATNi report emphasizes mandatory policies, as voluntary efforts by companies have failed to ensure widespread improvement in nutrition.
- 2. Strengthen Advertising Regulations:** Limit the marketing of unhealthy foods, especially to children, as per WHA resolutions.

Question for practice:

Examine the findings of various reports on the nutritional quality of food products in low-and-middle-income countries (LMICs) and their implications for India's health and food labeling policies.

Delhi's persistent air pollution issue

Source: The post Delhi's persistent air pollution issue has been created, based on the article "Clearing the air on Delhi's pollution crisis" published in "The Hindu" on 21st November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3-Environment

Context: The article highlights Delhi's persistent air pollution issue, comparing it to Beijing's effective strategies. It critiques Delhi's ineffective measures, stresses dispersed pollution sources like vehicles, and calls for long-term, integrated plans with political and regional coordination.

What is the air pollution problem in Delhi and other cities?

1. Delhi faces severe air pollution, especially in October, despite long-term efforts since M.C. Mehta's 1984 PIL.
2. Air pollution remains a "wicked problem," needing long-term and coordinated solutions.
3. Other cities like Los Angeles and Beijing face similar issues, with 60% of pollution from vehicles, 20% from soil dust, and less than 20% from other sources.

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

Why have existing measures failed?

1. The **National Clean Air Programme (2019)** has had little impact despite focusing on monitoring, targets, and emergency measures.
2. The **Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM, 2021)** addresses symptoms but not the deeper, interlinked causes of pollution like urbanization and traffic.

What are the major causes of pollution?

- 1. Vehicles:** Account for 60% of pollution due to emissions and traffic congestion.
- 2. Photochemical reactions:** Sunlight and low temperatures create ozone from vehicle emissions.
- 3. Stubble burning:** Its share in Delhi's PM 2.5 was less than 1% on October 17, but it still draws disproportionate focus.
- 4. Dust:** Soil dust contributes 20%, prompting dust control measures.

How does judicial intervention help?

1. The **Supreme Court** emphasizes the right to clean air under the **fundamental right to life**.
2. It questions why compliance reports show minimal ground results and highlights coordination issues.
3. The court critiques Delhi for relying on "cosmetic steps" and shifting blame to Haryana and Punjab.

What lessons can Delhi learn from Beijing?

- 1. Monitoring:** Beijing uses 1,000 sensors to track high-emission areas.
- 2. Public transport:** Beijing operates over 30,000 low-floor buses, compared to Delhi's 6,000.
- 3. Warning systems:** Smog forecasts are issued 24 hours in advance.
- 4. Regional solutions:** Managing regional transportation and secondary pollutants like PM 2.5 is prioritized.

What Should be done?

1. Mandate the **Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP)** and create a long-term toxicity management plan.
2. Ensure proper budget and political support for effective implementation.
3. Focus on regional mechanisms and public awareness campaigns instead of quick-fix measures like smog towers.

Question for practice:

Discuss the reasons behind Delhi's persistent air pollution problem and the measures that can be adopted to address it effectively.

Challenges of indoor and outdoor air pollution

Source: The post challenges of indoor and outdoor air pollution has been created, based on the article "**Expert explains: What to know about indoor air quality and purification**" published in "Indian Express" on 21st November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3-Environment

Context: The article discusses the challenges of indoor and outdoor air pollution, focusing on the impact of PM2.5 on health. It explains how air purifiers can improve indoor air quality but highlights the inequities of relying on personal solutions instead of addressing outdoor pollution sources.

For detailed information on **On Air Quality Standard of India** [read this article here](#)

What is the Impact of Air Pollution on Different Groups?

- 1. Privileged Groups:** They stay indoors in homes, offices, and vehicles, where air quality can be controlled. They use N95 masks, air purifiers, and AC cars to reduce exposure.
- 2. Vulnerable Groups:** Street vendors, delivery workers, and laborers face prolonged outdoor exposure due to their work. They cannot afford air purifiers or sealed homes, making them more vulnerable to pollution.
- 3. Gendered Impact:** Women in poorly ventilated kitchens face high indoor air pollution from cooking with solid fuels, leading to severe health risks.

How Can Indoor Air Quality Be Improved?

- 1. Limit Entry of Pollutants:** Close windows and doors and seal gaps around them to reduce air leaks.
- 2. Use Air Purifiers:** Place HEPA-based purifiers in high-use areas like bedrooms. Closing doors enhances efficiency. Avoid purifiers emitting ozone, as it worsens air quality.
- 3. Improve Ventilation:** Ensure proper airflow, especially in kitchens, to prevent a build-up of cooking-related pollutants.
- 4. Monitor Air Quality:** Use low-cost sensors to check PM2.5 levels indoors.
- 5. Reduce Harmful Activities:** Avoid burning candles or incense, which release fine particles and harmful gases.

What are the Sources of Indoor Air Pollution?

- 1. Cooking with Solid Fuels:** Releases fine particulate matter and carbon monoxide. Kitchens often have the highest pollution levels, especially in poorly ventilated homes. Women face the greatest burden due to traditional gender roles.
- 2. Burning Incense and Candles:** Emits fine particles and volatile organic compounds, worsening air quality.
- 3. Poor Ventilation:** Traps pollutants indoors, even in homes with modern stoves.
- 4. Outdoor Pollution Infiltration:** Unsealed homes allow outdoor pollutants, like PM2.5, to enter easily.

For detailed information on **INDOOR AIR POLLUTION** [read this article here](#)

How Do Air Purifiers Help?

- Air purifiers use a HEPA filter and a fan to trap PM2.5 particles.
- 2. Activated Carbon Filters:** Help capture gaseous pollutants.
- 3. Clean Air Delivery Rate (CADR):** Indicates purifier efficiency, especially for large rooms. DIY purifiers with HEPA filters and fans are cost-effective. Avoid purifiers that emit ozone, as they can worsen air quality.

What are the Ethical Issues With Air Purifiers?

1. Air purifiers benefit those who can afford them but highlight inequality. They address symptoms of air pollution, not the root cause.
2. This selective protection may reduce the urgency for systemic changes needed to improve overall air quality.

Question for practice:

Examine the ethical implications of relying on air purifiers to address indoor air pollution while neglecting systemic solutions for outdoor pollution.

India-UAE Bilateral Investment Treaty compared to India's Model BIT

Source: The post India-UAE Bilateral Investment Treaty compared to India's Model BIT has been created, based on the article "A bilateral investment treaty with a 'bit' of change" published in "The Hindu" on 22nd 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 key changes in the India-UAE Bilateral Investment Treaty compared to India's Model BIT. It highlights reduced waiting times for ISDS claims, clarified investment definitions, greater specificity in treaty violations, and continuity in excluding MFN and taxation issues.

For detailed information on **Bilateral Investment Treaties (BITs): India's Approach and Concerns** [read this article here](#)

What Are the Key Changes in the India-UAE BIT Compared to India's Model BIT?

The new India-UAE treaty includes several departures from the 2015 Model BIT:

1. Reduction in Waiting Period for ISDS Claims: The Model BIT required investors to exhaust local remedies for at least five years before filing an international claim. **The India-UAE BIT reduces this period to three years.** This change addresses concerns about India's slow judicial process and provides quicker access for foreign investors without increasing India's exposure to treaty claims.

2. Simplified Definition of Investment: The treaty clarifies that **investments must involve capital commitment, profit expectations, and risk assumption.** However, it removes the requirement that investments must be significant for the host state's development, a subjective criterion in the Model BIT. This reduces arbitral discretion and provides clearer protection for lawful investments.

3. Clarity on Treaty Violations: Article 4 of the **India-UAE BIT explicitly lists state actions that constitute treaty violations**, such as denial of justice or fundamental breaches of due process. Unlike the Model BIT, it does not reference customary international law, which reduces ambiguity and limits the discretion of ISDS tribunals.

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

What Continues from the Model BIT in the India-UAE BIT?

Despite the changes, the India-UAE BIT retains key elements from the Model BIT:

1. Exclusion of MFN Clauses: The treaty **does not include the most favoured nation (MFN) provision**, continuing India's policy to avoid this non-discrimination standard in investment treaties.

2. Exclusion of Tax Measures from ISDS: Tax-related actions are outside the treaty's scope. This ensures that foreign investors cannot challenge tax measures, even if they believe the measures are abusive.

3. Limitations on Reviewing Domestic Court Decisions: Article 14.6(i) bars ISDS tribunals from reviewing the "merits" of domestic court decisions. This could restrict investors from raising disputes already decided in domestic courts, but the exact scope of "merits" remains open to interpretation.

What New Restrictions Are Introduced?

The India-UAE BIT introduces additional provisions that were not present in the Model BIT:

1. Prohibition of Third-Party Funding: The treaty explicitly disallows third-party funding of ISDS claims, which could limit the financing options for investors.

2. No ISDS for Allegations of Fraud or Corruption: If an investor faces allegations of fraud or corruption, they cannot invoke ISDS under this treaty.

What Are the Implications of These Changes?

These changes highlight India's evolving approach to investment treaties. For example:

1. The reduction in the waiting period might please developed countries like the UK or EU, but concerns remain about excluding MFN and taxation from the treaty.

2. By simplifying definitions and limiting tribunal discretion, the treaty ensures greater clarity for both investors and states while protecting India's regulatory autonomy.

Question for practice:

Examine how the India-UAE Bilateral Investment Treaty addresses the concerns of foreign investors while maintaining India's regulatory autonomy.

India's urgent need for an Environmental Health Regulatory Agency (EHRA)

Source: The post India's urgent need for an Environmental Health Regulatory Agency (EHRA) has been created, based on the article "India needs an environmental health regulatory agency" published in "The Hindu" on 22nd November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 3 - Environment

Context: The article highlights India's urgent need for an Environmental Health Regulatory Agency (EHRA) to address pollution and health risks. It emphasizes integrating environmental and health data, adopting global best practices, and promoting sustainable policies for economic growth and public well-being.

What is the need for an Environmental Health Regulatory Agency (EHRA) in India?

1. India faces severe environmental health challenges due to pollution. The air, water, and soil pollutants are linked to many non-communicable diseases, affecting vulnerable groups like children and the elderly the most.

2. India's existing governance model, involving the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) and the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), lacks integration with health policies.

3. This results in poor coordination of environmental monitoring and health impact assessments.

How can an EHRA improve India's environmental and public health management?

- 1. Centralized Data Integration:** An EHRA can integrate environmental and health data, enabling policymakers to address pollution and health risks effectively. Currently, there is little coordination between the CPCB, MoEFCC, and MoHFW.
- 2. Learning from Global Models:** Successful frameworks like the U.S. EPA, Germany's UBA, and Japan's MOE demonstrate how integrated approaches to environment and health enhance governance. For example, the U.S. EPA links air quality control with health outcomes.
- 3. Addressing Regional Variations:** Pollution and health challenges vary across regions. An EHRA could work with state and local governments to implement localized solutions.
- 4. Promoting Economic Growth:** The U.S. EPA shows environmental regulation spurs innovation and green jobs. Similarly, an EHRA can support India's energy transition and sustainable practices.
- 5. Public Awareness and Accountability:** By involving citizens, NGOs, and media, an EHRA can promote awareness and advocate cleaner, healthier living conditions.
6. Additionally, it would help India align with international standards and commitments like the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals.

What challenges might arise with the establishment of an EHRA, and how could they be overcome?

A. Challenges in Establishing an EHRA

- 1. Bureaucratic Inertia:** Coordination between existing bodies like CPCB, MoEFCC, and MoHFW may face resistance due to overlapping responsibilities and lack of data sharing.
- 2. Industry Resistance:** Businesses might oppose stricter regulations, fearing increased compliance costs. For instance, industries could resist pollution control measures similar to those implemented by the U.S. EPA.
- 3. Operational Independence:** Ensuring the EHRA operates without political interference is critical for its effectiveness.

B. How to Overcome Challenges

- 1. Clear Frameworks:** Establish inter-ministerial coordination with measurable objectives for accountability.
- 2. Global Examples:** Learn from the EPA's success in promoting green jobs and sustainable practices while supporting economic growth.
- 3. Public Involvement:** Educate and empower citizens and NGOs to advocate for cleaner environments and hold industries accountable.

Question for practice:

Discuss the need for an Environmental Health Regulatory Agency (EHRA) in India and how it can address environmental and public health challenges effectively.

Concerns about social media's role in democracy

Source: The post concerns about social media's role in democracy has been created, based on the article “**Is social media doing more harm than good to democracy?**” published in “**The Hindu**” on 22nd November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- Security-Challenges to internal security through communication networks, role of media and social networking sites in internal security challenges

Context: The article discusses concerns about social media's role in democracy. It highlights how platforms like X (formerly Twitter) are becoming toxic due to ownership influence, like Elon Musk's. It debates the importance of social media for news sharing, the need for moderation to reduce harm, and the value of ethical platforms and decentralized systems for better democratic communication.

For detailed information on **Social media genie is out of the bottle, and we are all trapped** [read this article here](#)

What are the Concerns with Social Media Ownership?

1. Influence on Political Discourse: Ownership by individuals like Elon Musk raises concerns about bias. Musk uses X (formerly Twitter) as a personal tool to shape political narratives, evidenced by his posts being algorithmically amplified.

2. Toxic Environment: The Guardian left X, calling it "a toxic media platform." This highlights how ownership can affect the platform's overall environment.

3. Neglect of Content Moderation: Musk eliminated trust and safety teams on X. For instance, during Southport riots, he reposted harmful content, showing the risks of inadequate moderation.

4. Misinformation and Hate Speech: Platforms like X fail to moderate local content effectively. India, with its linguistic diversity, lacks adequate moderators, unlike Facebook, which performs slightly better.

5. Centralized Control: Monopoly ownership of platforms enables censorship and manipulation, restricting the free flow of unbiased information critical for democracy.

How Critical is Social Media for News Dissemination?

1. Social media is crucial for sharing information because it reaches millions. For example, X has about 350 million users.

2. However, the influence of a few large companies makes it easy for governments to censor information.

3. The decline in referrals from social media and search engines is changing how news is disseminated.

What Measures Should Be Taken to Reduce Social Media Toxicity?

1. Increase Moderation Staff: India, with its vast population and multiple languages, has one of the lowest moderator-to-population ratios. Platforms need more staff to monitor hate speech and harmful content effectively. For example, during riots in Sri Lanka, Facebook lacked local moderators and relied on staff in Hyderabad, leading to poor handling of content.

2. AI for Harmful Content Detection: AI systems should identify and prevent dangerous behavior. For instance, during England's Southport riots, harmful content spread unchecked on X, even reposted by Elon Musk.

3. Develop Ethical Platforms: Decentralized platforms like Bluesky and Mastodon offer safer alternatives, fostering healthy discussions and minimizing harmful content.

4. Promote Media Literacy: Schools should teach children how to analyze and verify information, reducing misinformation's impact on users.

How Can Social Media Support Democracy?

1. Social media can be beneficial for democracy when used ethically. Platforms like Facebook, with billions of users, help people connect and share information widely.

2. However, when these platforms are controlled by monopolistic entities, they can undermine democracy.

For detailed information on **The Rise of Social Media in Indian Politics** [read this article here](#)

Question for practice:

Examine how social media ownership influences political discourse and impacts democracy.

Reasons behind the frustration of India's farmers and scientists

Source: The post reasons behind the frustration of India's farmers and scientists has been created, based on the article "**Why farmers remain unhappy with the government**" published in "**Indian Express**" on 22nd November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 3 - Agriculture

Context: The article criticizes the government for its lack of meaningful agricultural reforms. It highlights policy failures like nano urea, ignored farmer concerns, and a lack of trust-building. It urges the government to prioritize farmers, seek diverse ideas, and rebuild trust.

Why are India's farmers and scientists frustrated?

1. Policy Inaction: The government has not introduced meaningful agricultural reforms, despite its intentions, leaving issues like biotech crops and natural farming underfunded and unresolved.

2. Failure of Nano Urea: Farmers rejected nano urea outright. Manufacturers had to increase its nitrogen content by 400%, exposing its ineffectiveness. Agricultural universities refuse to endorse it.

3. Unadopted Initiatives: Out of 109 climate-resilient seed varieties launched by ICAR, scientists expect less than five to be adopted commercially.

4. Distrust and Exploitation: Farmers face fertilizer shortages and are forced to buy nano urea to access subsidized fertilizers, eroding trust.

5. Ignored Feedback: Ministers remain inaccessible to farmers and scientists, missing opportunities for innovative solutions and feedback from the ground.

6. Political Priorities: Focus on controlling food inflation sacrifices long-term agricultural interests for electoral gains.

For detailed information on **Why are Farmer's Protesting Globally and in India** [read this article here](#)

What should be done?

1. The government must actively seek ideas from those outside the power structure, such as farmers and independent experts.
2. Listening to feedback can prevent policy failures.
3. Rebuilding trust with farmers is vital for reform success and long-term agricultural development.

Question for practice:

Discuss the reasons behind the frustration of India's farmers and scientists with government agricultural policies and suggest measures to address these issues.

Solutions to India's judicial inefficiencies

Source: The post solutions to India's judicial inefficiencies has been created, based on the article "**The judiciary is slow and clogged — it's time to get outside help to fix it**" published in "**Indian Express**" on 22nd November 2024

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2- Polity- Judiciary

Context: The article discusses solutions to India's judicial inefficiencies. It highlights court delays, staff shortages, and administrative burdens. Suggestions include measuring performance, delegating administrative tasks to retired officials, and learning from successful projects to improve case management and judicial efficiency.

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

What are the key issues facing the Indian judiciary?

1. Over 45 million cases are pending in subordinate courts, making up 85% of total cases.
2. District courts are burdened with poor infrastructure, such as a **21% shortage of judicial officers** and **27% shortage of non-judicial staff**. States like Bihar, Rajasthan, and Telangana have staff shortages nearing **50%**.
3. Routine tasks, like issuing summons and setting dates, take up **55% of a judicial officer's time** (as found by the Zero Pendency Courts project).
4. Half of the 90 cases listed daily in an average court get adjourned due to inefficient case-flow management.
5. Many district courts lack technology, such as video conferencing-enabled computers.

For detailed information on **Issues with the justice system in India** [read this article here](#)

What Solutions Did Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna Propose?

Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna suggested two main improvements:

- 1. Measuring Court Performance:** By categorizing judges into performance tiers like high, above average, and below average.
- 2. Positive Reinforcement:** Rewarding high-performing judges to encourage better outcomes.

What past models can inspire judicial reforms?

1. Cataract Blindness Project (1990s):

- a. **11 million surgeries** were conducted in five years across seven states.
- b. Retired armed forces personnel managed logistics, allowing surgeons to focus solely on surgeries.
- c. This demonstrated how delegating non-core tasks improved efficiency.

2. Delhi Magistrates in the 1960s:

- a. Magistrates balanced judicial, revenue, and law-and-order duties while disposing of **60 warrant cases monthly**.
- b. Regular performance scrutiny by the District Magistrate boosted efficiency.
- c. Monthly meetings encouraged accountability and improved case disposal.

3. Retired Officers for Administrative Tasks:

- a. Retired officers from the Controller of Accounts efficiently managed health and population-related tasks.
- b. This shows that retired officials, with expertise in workflow management, can handle administrative court duties.

What are the key takeaways?

1. Administrative reforms, not structural changes, can improve judicial efficiency.
2. Collaboration between state law secretaries, court registrars, and retired officials can bring quick results.
3. The goal is to allow judges to focus on judicial work, leading to a faster, fairer justice system.

Question for practice:

Examine how administrative reforms, inspired by past successful models, can address judicial inefficiencies in India.

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?

9 PM Compilation November 2024

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?

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?

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.

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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?

1. 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.
2. When satellites end their life cycle, they burn up and release pollutants into the atmosphere.
3. Research by NOAA shows that 10% of particles in the stratosphere contain metals like aluminum from satellite debris.
4. 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?

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: UTITSL (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

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.

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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.