

# 9 PM Current Affairs Weekly Compilation

For UPSC CSE mains examination



**1<sup>st</sup> Week**

Jan. 2025

**Features :**

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

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## India's economic challenges in 2025

**Source:** The post India's economic challenges in 2025 has been created, based on the article “**India 2025: Navigating an uncertain world**” published in “**Business Standard**” on 2nd January 2025

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

**Context:** The article discusses India's economic challenges in 2025, including slowing growth and the need for more reforms. It mentions global risks like trade wars and financial tightening that could impact growth. It also highlights the importance of strategic trade deals and domestic policy changes to improve economic conditions.

For detailed information on **Global Events Impacting India's Economic Outlook in 2025** [read this article here](#)

### What is the Current State of Affairs Economy?

#### A. Global Economy

1. The IMF forecasts a slowdown in global growth, projecting a baseline annual growth rate of 3.1% for 2024–2029, down from 3.7% during 2000–2019.
2. Key risks include conflict escalation, trade policy uncertainty, reduced migration, and tightening financial conditions.
3. Specific impacts are estimated as 0.5 percentage points reduction from conflicts and trade policies each, and 0.25 percentage points from lower migration and financial tightening each.

#### B. Indian Economy

1. India's economic growth dropped to 5.4% in Q2 FY25, after higher growth rates in previous years (8.7% in FY22, 7.2% in FY23, 8.2% in FY24).
2. Concerns include a lack of domestic private investment and peaking GCC investments.
3. Fiscal deficit is projected at 4.9% of GDP for FY25 with public debt at 83% of GDP.

For detailed information on **India's Economic Slowdown and Its Future Outlook** [read this article here](#)

### Why is India's Economic Growth Slowing?

1. **Investment Peaks:** The growth previously benefited from public capital expenditure and investments in global capability centers, which have now peaked.
2. **Lack of Private Investment:** There is a noticeable lack of revival in domestic private investment.
3. India struggles with red tape, labor, and land laws, which make it difficult to attract foreign investment despite subsidies like production-linked incentives (PLI). The ongoing issues with these regulations have prevented significant investment relocation from China, except for the production of iPhones.
4. **Impact of Global Risks:** Conflicts, trade policy uncertainties, and tighter financial conditions globally are expected to lower global growth further, affecting India indirectly.

### What Strategies Could India Adopt?

1. Despite challenges, India could potentially attract more foreign investment through a China+1 strategy if a US-China trade war intensifies.
2. To encourage investment, particularly in labor-intensive sectors, India needs to ease regulations and collaborate with state governments.
3. India could benefit from negotiating trade deals, such as with the US, to manage trade deficits and expand trade relationships.
4. Joining groups like the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) or the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) might increase deficits with China and complicate trade relationships.

### What is the Economic Outlook for 2025?

1. The RBI predicts India's growth will be around 6.7%, and the IMF forecasts 6.5% growth.
2. However, achieving a higher growth rate of 7.5-8% will require substantial reforms.
3. The upcoming budget is seen as a critical opportunity for implementing these necessary reforms.

### Question for practice:

Discuss how India's economic growth could be influenced by global risks such as trade wars and financial tightening in 2025.

## Economic challenges and necessary reforms in India, China, and the US

**Source:** The post economic challenges and necessary reforms in India, China, and the US has been created, based on the article “**Abandon myopic policies for the common global good**” published in “**Live mint**” on 2nd January 2025

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper3- Economy- growth and development and Effects of Liberalization on the Economy, Changes in Industrial Policy and their Effects on Industrial Growth.

**Context:** The article discusses the economic challenges and necessary reforms in India, China, and the US. It suggests India should focus on labor and land reforms, China needs to reduce government control, and the US should avoid protectionism to ensure sustainable growth and global economic stability.

For detailed information on **US protectionist policies** read [Article 1](#), [Article 2](#)

### What are India's economic challenges and necessary reforms?

1. **Excessive Populism and Policy Stagnation:** India's vibrant democracy often sees policies that favor short-term gains over long-term benefits.
2. **High Agricultural Employment with Low GDP Contribution:** Approximately 44% of India's labor force is employed in agriculture, which only contributes 17% to the GDP.
3. **Need for Labor and Land Reforms:** Shifting the workforce from agriculture to manufacturing requires significant land and labor reforms to improve industrial and infrastructural development.

4. **Fiscal Discipline and Freebie Rationalization:** To achieve sustainable growth, India must focus on fiscal responsibility and reduce dependency on government freebies.

5. **Engagement with Stakeholders:** Policymakers should work with businesses, civil society, and political opposition to promote necessary reforms for long-term development.

#### How is China's economic model affecting its growth?

1. **Centralization and Productivity Decline:** China's shift towards greater centralization under President Xi Jinping has coincided with a decline in total factor productivity growth, from 2.8% before the 2008 financial crisis to 0.7% afterwards.

2. **Investment and Consumption Issues:** Despite heavy investments, China's consumer spending remains low at 53.4% of GDP, indicating inefficiencies and a lack of domestic demand stimulation.

3. **Foreign Investment and Trade:** Foreign direct investment in China has fallen for 12 consecutive months up to May 2024, and trade growth is slow, with exports growing only 2.4% and imports by 0.3% in September.

4. **Policy Adjustments Needed:** To sustain growth, China should reduce government interference, promote market-based reforms, and enhance fiscal transparency to avoid debt issues and stimulate consumer spending.

#### What challenges does the US face with its protectionist policies?

1. **Increased Cost of Goods:** US protectionist policies, particularly tariffs, directly raise the cost of domestically produced goods. This increase places a financial burden on both consumers and businesses.

2. **Contradiction in Economic Goals:** The implementation of tariffs by the US aims to reduce the trade deficit. However, this is at odds with maintaining the US dollar as the world's reserve currency. Such conflicting goals can undermine the broader economic stability.

3. **Impact on Global Positioning:** By withdrawing from multilateral engagements and focusing on protectionism, the US risks losing its leadership role in the global economy, weakening alliances and international relations.

#### Question for practice:

Evaluate the effectiveness of US protectionist policies in achieving economic stability.

### Rising Gas Costs Impact City Gas Sector

**Source:** The post Rising Gas Costs Impact City Gas Sector has been created, based on the article "Gas price rise and Trump's expected policies" published in "Indian Express" on 2nd January 2025

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

**Context:** The article discusses challenges in the city gas distribution sector, primarily due to reduced allocations of cheaper, regulated gas and increased reliance on more expensive gas sources. This is leading to higher costs and reduced profitability, potentially driving consolidation among companies in the sector.

For detailed information on **India's gas policy has protected the consumer from global price volatility** [read this article here](#)

#### What Are the Main Challenges Faced by the City Gas Distribution Sector?

1. The city gas distribution (CGD) sector is struggling with reduced allocations of cheaper, administered price mechanism (APM) gas, falling from 72% to 44%.
2. This reduction forces companies to depend on more expensive gas sources like high-pressure high-temperature (HPHT) gas or imported regasified liquified natural gas (RLNG), costing up to twice as much as APM gas.

#### How Are Rising Costs Impacting Sector Profitability?

1. Increased reliance on costlier gas sources is expected to raise costs by Rs 5 per standard cubic meter or Rs 7 per kg, significantly impacting profitability.
2. The domestic piped natural gas (D-PNG) and compressed natural gas (CNG) segments, which account for two-thirds of the sector's volume, are particularly affected.
3. This shift may result in a projected loss of Rs 2,300 crore in sector profits next year.

#### What Competitive Pressures Exist in the Market?

1. CNG is losing its cost advantage over diesel, which is particularly impactful in the commercial vehicle sector.
2. With potential U.S. policy changes favoring more drilling and thus possibly reducing diesel prices, CNG's competitiveness may further diminish.
3. Additionally, the rise of electric buses under the PM e-Bus Seva scheme is cutting into CNG's market share.

#### What Does the Future Hold for the CGD Sector?

1. The sector is ripe for consolidation, driven by financial strain and competitive challenges.
2. Larger, financially robust companies might absorb smaller players struggling with high costs and limited access to cheaper gas.
3. This consolidation trend is particularly likely in areas where companies lack strong financial backing, indicating a significant shift in the landscape of the CGD sector.

#### Question for practice:

Discuss how the reduction in cheaper gas allocations and increased reliance on costlier gas sources are affecting the profitability and competitive dynamics of the city gas distribution sector.

### Indian banking sector's improvements and challenges

**Source:** The post Indian banking sector's improvements and challenges has been created, based on the article "Express View on Indian banking system: In good health" published in "Indian Express" on 2nd January 2025

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

**Context:** The article discusses the Indian banking sector's improvements and challenges. It mentions a reduction in bad loans and higher profits but highlights increasing stress in unsecured retail loans and microfinance. It also points out issues like rising household debt and potential vulnerabilities in large borrower segments.

For detailed information on **Factors that contributed to the stability of India's banking sector** [read this article here](#)

### What is the Current State of Bank Asset Quality?

1. As of September 2024, Indian banks have seen their bad loans drop to a 12-year low at 2.6%. This improvement spans across all sectors, showing a healthier banking environment.
2. Banks have also increased their profitability, maintaining high provision coverage ratios and strong capital positions.
3. Stress tests by the RBI indicate that even under adverse economic conditions, most banks would remain well-capitalized, although four banks might struggle to meet the minimum capital requirement.

### Where are the Problems in the Banking Sector?

1. There are increasing concerns in the unsecured retail loan sector, where there has been a significant rise in write-offs. More than half of the new bad loans in this segment stem from unsecured loans.
2. The micro-finance sector, which serves low-income households, is showing signs of stress with a high share of stressed loans and high impairment rates among borrowers with multiple loans.
3. Additionally, consumer credit data reveals that 11% of borrowers with personal loans under Rs 50,000 were overdue, and 60% had taken more than three loans in the current financial year, indicating growing household debt.
4. Gold loan non-performing assets increased by 30% to Rs 6,696 crore by June 2024 from Rs 5,149 three months earlier, highlighting rising distress in this segment.

### Are There Concerns with Large Borrowers?

1. While bad loans among large borrowers have decreased from 4.5% in March 2023 to 2.4% in September 2024, there is an observed increase in loans overdue between 31 and 90 days.
2. The total unhedged external commercial borrowings as of September 2024 stood at \$65.48 billion, pointing to potential financial exposure and vulnerabilities that need close monitoring.

### Question for practice;

Discuss the potential risks associated with the increasing stress in unsecured retail loans and microfinance in the Indian banking sector.

## Preparing India's Workforce for Technological Job Changes

**Source:** The post Preparing India's Workforce for Technological Job Changes has been created, based on the article "Let's act now to create a resilient, adaptable and skilled workforce" published in "Live mint" on 2nd January 2025

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper3-Growth, development and employment.

**Context:** The article discusses the need for India to prepare for job changes due to technology advancements. It highlights the need to update education, enhance government-industry partnerships, and promote international skill mobility to ensure the workforce adapts and thrives in the evolving job market.



For detailed information on **India's Role in the Global Job Market** [read this article here](#)

### What is the Current State of the Global and Indian Job Market?

1. The global job market will see 83 million jobs disappear and 69 million new ones emerge in the next five years.
2. In India, to utilize its demographic advantage, about 7.85 million jobs need to be created annually until 2030 in the non-farm sector.

### How are Different Sectors Transforming?

1. **Manufacturing:** Integration of AI and IoT is reshaping the industry. Example: In Howrah, AI is used in predictive maintenance for Indian Railways' Vande Bharat trains, detecting 22 faults.
2. **FMCG:** Transition to data-driven roles. Hindustan Unilever runs over 13 billion AI computations daily to predict consumer behavior.
3. **Healthcare:** Increased use of AI for diagnostics. Apollo Hospital uses an AI-based system to assist in clinical decisions.
4. **Energy:** Focus on renewable sources. India's aim for 500GW of renewable capacity by 2030 is expected to create 3.4 million clean-energy jobs.

### How Can India Prepare Its Workforce?

To effectively prepare its workforce for future challenges, India can:

1. **Update Educational Curricula:** Integrate skills such as AI, automation, IoT, and critical thinking into educational and vocational training systems.
2. **Strengthen Government-Industry Collaboration:** Utilize initiatives like the Skill India Mission and National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme to align training with dynamic industry needs. Programs like PM Vishwakarma Yojana bridge traditional skills with modern technologies.
3. **Enable International Skill Mobility:** Offer globally recognized certifications to help the workforce compete internationally.

### Why Is This Important?

1. Adapting to these changes is essential for India to stay competitive globally.
2. It transforms demographic challenges into opportunities and positions India as a leader in shaping the future job market.
3. Immediate and collaborative efforts are necessary to maximize India's demographic dividend and turn it into a global economic advantage.

### Question for practice:

Examine how the integration of advanced technologies like AI and IoT in sectors such as manufacturing, FMCG, and healthcare is transforming the job market in India.

## Tackling Delimitation by Reversing Population Control

**Source:** This post on **Tackling Delimitation by Reversing Population Control** has been created based on **Tackling delimitation by reversing population control** published in **The Hindu** on **2<sup>ND</sup> January 2025**.

**UPSC Syllabus topic:** GS -2-Issues Relating to Development and Management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

**Context:** The article delves into the complexities of the proposed delimitation exercise in India and its implications for political representation, particularly in southern states such as Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. These states, which have successfully implemented fertility control measures and achieved lower population growth, are now facing the potential loss of parliamentary seats.

### Why are the Chief Ministers of Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu concerned about delimitation?

1. The Chief Ministers are concerned because the proposed delimitation exercise could reduce the number of parliamentary seats for southern States like Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu.
2. This is due to their success in fertility transition, leading to a smaller share of the national population compared to northern States. Success in “family planning” might reduce their political representation in Parliament.

### What policy changes has Andhra Pradesh considered regarding population control?

1. Andhra Pradesh is considering reversing its earlier law that barred people with more than two children from contesting local body elections.
2. The State is now contemplating rewarding families with more children to counteract declining fertility.

### Can fertility decline be reversed effectively through state intervention?

1. Fertility decline is generally irreversible through interventions, though minor natural reversals are possible.
2. Efforts in countries like China, Japan, and South Korea to incentivize higher fertility have largely failed.

### What lessons can be learned from China's one-child policy?

1. China's one-child policy led to significant issues such as an imbalanced marriage market, a high dependency ratio, and extremely low fertility rates.
2. Forced reproductive regulations often result in demographic and social crises, showing the importance of balancing population control measures.

### How does population momentum affect regional demographics in India?

While fertility rates are converging across Indian States, population momentum has kept the demographic divide wide between regions, with northern States having higher populations compared to the southern States.

### Is population count a fair criterion for political representation in India?

1. Relying solely on population count for political representation could be unfair to regions that have achieved development through population control.
2. A balanced approach, incorporating educational and demographic characteristics, is needed.

### What are the challenges women face in reversing fertility trends?

1. Encouraging women to have more children imposes a significant personal cost, as the state's support for additional children and compensation for reproductive responsibilities is often inadequate.
2. Fertility decline, while beneficial at a macro level, has not adequately addressed the personal challenges faced by women.

### Can migration address regional population imbalances?

1. Migration could help address immediate regional population imbalances.
2. However, long-term solutions require revising political representation criteria to value capability characteristics rather than solely population counts.

### What is the ultimate solution to the delimitation issue?

1. Instead of reversing fertility, the solution lies in revising count-based political representation.
2. This would ensure fairness for States that have succeeded in population control and development.

## State of India's Parliamentary Proceedings

**Source:** This post on State of India's Parliamentary Proceedings has been created based on "The sorry state of India's parliamentary proceedings" **published in The Hindu on 2<sup>ND</sup> January 2025.**

**UPSC Syllabus topic:** GS-2 Parliament and State Legislatures

**Context:** The article offers a critical analysis of the current state of India's parliamentary functioning and its implications for democracy.

What was the state of the recent winter session of Parliament?

1. The winter session was marked by frequent adjournments, minimal discussions, and negligible work accomplished.
2. Competitive disruptions by both the Opposition and the Treasury benches made the session a travesty.
3. A new low was reached with duelling demonstrations on the steps of Parliament, leading to accusations of assault and injury on both sides.
4. The session ended with widespread disillusionment, as many felt the legislature had failed the people of India.

What are the reasons behind the decline in Parliament's functioning?

### 1. Precedent of Disruptions

- i. Disruptions have become normalized as part of Indian parliamentary practice.
- ii. Past Speakers like Somnath Chatterjee were reluctant to enforce strict rules for fear of being labeled undemocratic.
- iii. Expelling unruly MPs was avoided, even by subsequent Speakers like Meira Kumar, who sought all-party consensus before taking such steps.

## 2. Acrimonious Relations Between Government and Opposition

- I. Historically, a sense of civility existed between government and Opposition, with instances of mutual respect, such as Jawaharlal Nehru's courtesy towards Atal Bihari Vajpayee.
- II. Presently, both sides treat each other as enemies rather than adversaries, eroding trust.
- III. The ruling party now condemns disruption, a tactic it extensively used when in Opposition.
- IV. A "tit-for-tat" mentality pervades, reflecting the golden rule of Indian politics: "Do unto them what they did unto you."

## 3. Diminished Public Expectations

- I. Earlier, skilled orators and debaters commanded respect for their parliamentary performances.
- II. Today, electability depends more on constituent services and local political influence than parliamentary skills.
- III. MPs are now evaluated based on party loyalty and disruptive tactics rather than reasoned debate.

How has the quality of parliamentary representation changed over time?

1. Skilled debaters like Ram Manohar Lohia and George Fernandes once acquired prominence through their contributions in Parliament.
2. Modern MPs prioritize television appearances over parliamentary debates.
3. Performance in Parliament no longer affects re-election prospects, leading to a decline in the quality of representation.

What are the consequences of these trends for Indian democracy?

1. Parliamentary standards have been declining for generations, with disruptions replacing debates.
2. The legislature's diminishing importance erodes the democratic process, reducing Parliament to a mere formality.
3. The loss of Parliament as a consultative body could ultimately weaken Indian democracy itself.

## The Race for Fighters

**Source:** This post on The Race for Fighters has been created based on The race for fighters: the IAF's dilemma published in The Hindu on 2<sup>ND</sup> January 2025.

**UPSC Syllabus topic:** GS 3- Security

**Context:** The article delves into the critical challenges faced by the Indian Air Force (IAF) in modernizing its fighter fleet amidst an escalating technological race in the aviation domain, particularly with China's advancements. It highlights the stark contrast between China's rapid strides in defense and aerospace technology and India's delayed modernization efforts, shedding light on the implications for regional security and India's strategic readiness.

What has China achieved in fighter aircraft technology?

1. China has fielded two fifth-generation fighter jets, the **J-20** and **J-35**, making it the only country apart from the U.S. with more than one fifth-generation fighter.
2. Recently unveiled two additional stealth jets with tail-less configurations:
  - A large, delta-wing design with three engines (likely for long-range missions).
  - A smaller, twin-engine jet with swept wings.
3. Videos of these aircraft, developed by **Chengdu Aircraft Corporation** and **Shenyang Aircraft Corporation**, surfaced on social media, but no official confirmation has been provided.

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4. U.S. reports state that China is rapidly approaching U.S.-level technology, with a large fourth-generation fleet transitioning to fifth-generation capabilities.

How does the IAF compare to China?

1. The **Indian Air Force (IAF)** currently has **31 fighter squadrons**, far below its sanctioned strength of 42.
2. India has no fifth-generation fighter in development that will be operational within the next decade.
3. While the IAF is focusing on indigenously developed platforms like the **LCA-Mk1A**, **LCA-Mk2**, and **AMCA**, their delivery timelines are delayed or uncertain.
4. Two MiG-21 squadrons are still operational due to delays in LCA-Mk1A deliveries.

What is India's modernisation plan for the IAF?

India plans to acquire **500+ fighter jets**, predominantly indigenously designed and manufactured, with the following priorities:

- **LCA-Mk1A**: 83 on order (delivery delayed due to supply chain issues with GE-404 engines).
- **LCA-Mk2**: Development expected to conclude by December 2027.
- **AMCA (Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft)**: Fifth-generation fighter with a development timeline stretching into the next decade.
- **MRFA (Multi-Role Fighter Aircraft)**: 114 jets under consideration for procurement, intended to include significant technology transfer.

What are the key challenges in IAF's procurement plans?

1. **Delays in engine deliveries:**
  - GE-404 engines for the LCA-Mk1A delayed by COVID-related supply chain issues.
  - License manufacturing of GE F-414 engines is still under negotiation.
2. **Aging fleet:**
  - MiG-29s and Jaguars will start retiring by **2027-28**, with Mirage-2000s and early Su-30MKIs phasing out by the early 2040s.
3. **MRFA project delays:**
  - RFI issued in 2019; no significant progress has been made.
  - Jets may not be available in significant numbers until the mid-2030s.
4. **Dependence on foreign engines:**
  - Despite plans for license manufacturing, India remains reliant on the U.S. and France for critical aero-engine parts.

What is India's strategy for self-reliance in aviation?

1. India aims to increase indigenous production through HAL and DRDO initiatives.
2. Indigenous production rates:
  - **24 LCA jets annually**, scaling to **30 per year** once engine supplies stabilize.
3. Collaboration with France to co-develop a **110KN engine** for the AMCA Mk2.
4. Despite efforts, a fully indigenous aero-engine remains a distant goal.

How does the IAF plan to meet its short-term needs?

1. A **major upgrade program for Su-30MKI** jets is in the approval stages.
2. Procurement of 12 additional Su-30MKIs to replace losses due to accidents.
3. Prolonging the operational life of aging aircraft to address immediate gaps.

What are the potential consequences of delayed timelines?

1. Even with planned acquisitions, the IAF is projected to have only **35-36 squadrons** by the mid-2030s.
2. Delays in delivery and development of platforms like the LCA-Mk1A, LCA-Mk2, and MRFA could leave significant capability gaps.
3. Urgent alternatives may need to be explored if timelines slip further.

### **Improvement in School Dropout Rates at the National Level**

**Source:** This post on The Race for Fighters has been created based on The race for fighters: the IAF's dilemma published in The Hindu on 2<sup>ND</sup> January 2025.

**UPSC Syllabus topic:** GS-2- Issues Relating to Development and Management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

**Context:** The article highlights the evolving trends in school dropout rates across various states in India between 2019 and 2024. While the overall data indicates a positive improvement in the percentage of students continuing their education without dropping out, there are concerning disparities at the state level. The analysis focuses on upper primary and secondary education and reveals stark contrasts in educational outcomes across different regions and genders.

**How has the overall school dropout rate in India changed from 2019 to 2024?**

1. There has been a marked improvement. In 2024, over 80 out of every 100 girls completed secondary education without dropping out, compared to 73.5 in 2019.
2. Among boys, 77.2 completed secondary education in 2024 compared to 72.4 in 2019.

**Which states have seen an increase in dropout rates between 2019 and 2024?**

1. Bihar, Assam, Karnataka, Rajasthan, Gujarat, and Haryana have experienced an increase in dropout rates.  
In Bihar, the number of girls completing secondary education fell from 51.6 in 2019 to 40.3 in 2024. Among boys, it declined from 51.2 to 38.8.
2. In Karnataka, the number of girls completing secondary education declined from 79.3 in 2019 to 76.5 in 2024. For boys, it dropped from 73.6 to 70.7.

**Which states have shown remarkable improvement in dropout rates?**

1. Kerala and Tamil Nadu have shown significant improvements.
2. In Kerala, 99.6 out of 100 boys completed upper primary in 2019, which improved to 100 in 2024. Among girls, the number remained at 100 in both years.
3. For secondary schooling, boys' completion rate rose from 88.3 in 2019 to 95.7 in 2024, and girls' rate improved from 93.2 to 97.5.
4. In Tamil Nadu, the upper primary completion rate for boys increased from 99 in 2019 to 100 in 2024.
5. Among girls, it improved from 97.5 to 100. For secondary education, boys' completion rate increased from 81.3 to 89.2, while girls' rate rose from 89.4 to 95.6.

**How do states compare in the degree of improvement in dropout rates?**

1. States like Uttarakhand and Maharashtra showed improvement, but Uttarakhand's rise was steeper.

2. For instance, Uttarakhand's girls' secondary completion rate rose from 83.5 in 2019 to 92.8 in 2024, improving its rank from 11th to 4th. Maharashtra's corresponding figure improved from 83.5 to 90.5, moving its rank from 12th to 7th.

#### Which states have seen their rankings drop significantly?

1. Haryana, which was in the top 10 across all school levels and genders in 2019, dropped out of the top 10 in 2024.
2. Gujarat remained stagnant at the bottom of the rankings in both years.

### India Plans Tax Reforms to Reduce Debt

**Source:** The post India Plans Tax Reforms to Reduce Debt has been created, based on the article "Next steps in fiscal management" published in "Business Standard" on 3rd January 2025

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper3- Economy- mobilisation of resources

**Context:** The article discusses India's government plans to manage its finances better by reducing the national debt and fiscal deficit. It mentions expected changes in tax policies and improvements in the goods and services tax system to support these goals.

For detailed information on **India's debt burden- Explained Pointwise** [read this article here](#)

#### What is the status of Fiscal Deficit in India?

1. The fiscal deficit target for India in 2025-26 is set at 4.4% of GDP, aligning with medium-term objectives post-pandemic.
2. This target is crucial as it aims to keep the central government debt on a downward trajectory relative to GDP.
3. Central government debt is projected to fall from 58.1% of GDP in 2023-24 to 56.8% in 2024-25.
4. Despite the reduction, the debt level remains about 17 percentage points higher than the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Review Committee's recommendation from 2017, indicating ongoing challenges in achieving optimal fiscal health.
5. State government debts also exceed recommendations, with total state debt at 28.5% of GDP in 2023-24, which is over 8 percentage points above the advised level by the FRBM Review Committee.

#### What Changes Are Expected?

1. The government is currently reviewing the Customs duty structure and the Income Tax Act, which might lead to policy changes soon.
2. The goods and services tax (GST) system might see changes aimed at simplifying it and adjusting rates to achieve a revenue-neutral level of 15-15.5%. The current average GST rate is 11.6%, which is below the optimal level, contributing to revenue shortfalls.
3. The government intends to revisit its disinvestment strategy to help manage fiscal pressures without cutting down on necessary capital expenditures. This could make the fiscal adjustment process smoother.

4. An expert group may be essential to devise a more effective strategy for further reducing the central government's debt. Similarly, it is imperative for state governments to align with central practices and adopt similar frameworks to effectively manage and reduce their debt levels.

**Question for practice:**

Examine how the proposed changes in tax policies and improvements in the goods and services tax system are expected to support India's goals of reducing the national debt and fiscal deficit.

**Global Conflicts Challenge UN and India's Role**

**Source:** The post Global Conflicts Challenge UN and India's Role has been created, based on the article "In 2025, India must play the role of peacemaker" published in "Live mint" on 3rd January 2025

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper2- International Relations-Important International institutions, agencies and fora – their structure, mandate.

**Context:** The article discusses global conflicts and violence, mentioning events in New Orleans, Gaza, Russia, Ukraine, Sudan, Myanmar, and Syria. It highlights the failure of international efforts at peace, criticizing the United Nations and stressing the need for India to play a stronger role in global diplomacy. It also refers to upcoming challenges, like a possible US-China trade war and issues over Taiwan.

For detailed information on **Role of the UN in maintaining peace** [read this article here](#)

**What Recent Conflicts Have Occurred?**

Recent global conflicts include:

1. A terror attack in New Orleans, USA, killing at least 15 civilians.
2. Continuous Israeli bombings in Gaza, affecting children and babies.
3. Ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine, with threats of nuclear strikes.
4. Conflicts in Sudan and Myanmar escalating.
5. The conflict in Syria possibly ending.

**What Was the Impact of These Conflicts?**

These conflicts:

1. Threatened to expand into wider regional wars.
2. Involved major powers like the US and Russia using heavy weaponry.
3. Saw involvement from groups like Hamas, IS-Khorasan, and North Korean troops.
4. Resulted in massive casualties, like the attack in Crocus City, Russia, where 145 were killed.

**How Have International Efforts at Peace Been?**



1. The United Nations has been ineffective in preventing or resolving these conflicts. For example, ongoing wars in places like Gaza and Ukraine continue despite UN involvement.
2. Upcoming US leadership under Donald Trump might weaken UN efforts further, as he is known for his skepticism towards the UN.
3. There is need to restructure the UN, with India playing a significant role due to its neutrality and historical involvement in peacekeeping.

#### What Are the Future Concerns?

1. A possible trade war between the US and China could heighten global tensions.
2. Taiwan's situation is precarious, potentially triggering another area of conflict.
3. There is a call for a stronger, restructured United Nations to effectively manage these emerging challenges, emphasizing the need for robust diplomacy to sustain global peace.

#### Question for practice:

Evaluate the effectiveness of the United Nations in resolving recent global conflicts.

### Impact of Donald Trump's economic policies on U.S. growth and inflation

**Source:** The post impact of Donald Trump's economic policies on U.S. growth and inflation has been created, based on the article “**The good, the bad and the uncertainty of the year ahead**” published in “**Live mint**” on 3rd January 2025

**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 the potential impact of President-elect Donald Trump's economic policies on U.S. growth and inflation. It highlights both positive and negative effects of his proposals, such as tax cuts, deregulation, and trade policies, and considers the balancing role of market and regulatory factors.

For detailed information on **Donald Trump's return as U.S. President and its impact** read [Article1](#) and Article 2

#### What Are the Positive Effects of Trump's Policies?

1. **Pro-Business Environment:** Trump's administration aims to create a pro-business environment, potentially unleashing "animal spirits" that drive investment, innovation, and growth.
2. **Tax Policy:** Extension of corporate and personal income tax cuts, set to expire in 2025, could further stimulate economic activity.
3. **Deregulation:** Reducing bureaucratic red tape may promote competition and lower prices over the long term.
4. **Energy Production:** Plans to increase oil and gas production by 3 million barrels per day could reduce energy costs, making domestic sectors more competitive.

5. **Tech Industry Support:** Growing backing from tech leaders could turbocharge industries like AI and robotics.

#### What Are the Negative Effects of Trump's Policies?

1. **Trade Policies:** Trump's high tariffs and potential trade wars, particularly with China, could lead to higher inflation by disrupting supply chains and increasing production costs.
2. **Immigration Restrictions:** Strict limits on immigration and mass deportations could drive labor costs up, leading to inflation and potential shortages in key sectors.
3. **Public Debt:** Permanent tax cuts without financial offsets might increase the U.S. public debt by nearly \$8 trillion over the next decade, stoking inflation and raising long-term interest rates, which would crowd out future investment.

#### How Could Market Forces and Regulation Mitigate Risks?

1. Market discipline, such as bond market reactions, could temper inflationary policies by raising interest rates.
2. The independence of the Federal Reserve might also help manage inflation risks by adjusting interest rates.
3. Trump's limited support in the House could restrict his ability to implement more radical policies.

#### What Is the Overall Impact Expected in 2025?

1. In 2025, Trump's economic agenda might have a neutral overall impact on growth, with economic expansion possibly slowing compared to 2024.
2. Despite potential policy-driven headwinds, strong market and regulatory mechanisms are expected to moderate any severe economic fluctuations.

#### Question for practice:

Examine the potential effects of Trump's economic policies on U.S. growth and inflation

### Boosting India's Economy through Innovation and Reform

**Source:** The post Boosting India's Economy through Innovation and Reform has been created, based on the article "Three wishes for 2025" published in "Business Standard" on 3rd January 2025

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper3- Growth and Development

**Context:** The article discusses the need for India to invest in innovation, scale up manufacturing, and focus on productivity through structural changes to achieve long-term economic growth. It also suggests reforming education, tourism, and improving political discourse to support these goals.

For detailed information on **Challenges and Opportunities in Indian Economy** [read this article here](#)

#### What Is the Need for Indian Industry?

1. **Investment in Innovation:** Indian industry currently invests only 0.3% of GDP in R&D, significantly lower than the global average of 1.5%.

2. **Comparison with Global Standards:** Indian firms spend \$7 billion annually on industrial R&D, compared to \$625 billion in the US and \$335 billion in China.

3. **Profit Reinvestment:** The top 10 successful Indian non-financial firms invest merely 2% of their profits in R&D, while firms in the US, China, Japan, and Germany reinvest between 29% and 55%.

### How Can India Enhance Its Economic Policy?

1. To achieve a developed economy status by 2047, India needs to grow its GDP per capita from the current \$2,700 to over \$14,000. This requires an annual growth rate increase to 8.5%.

2. Key strategies include boosting female labor force participation and transitioning workers from agriculture to higher productivity sectors in industry and services.

### What Changes Are Suggested for Structural and Political Reform?

1. **Reduction of Government Control:** Scrapping industrial licensing allows industries to invest without government restrictions. This change is modeled on the post-1991 economic reforms that led to significant growth.

2. **Tariff Reduction:** Lowering tariffs has historically forced Indian companies to compete with global firms, enhancing their competitiveness.

3. **Independent Institutions:** Allowing institutions to operate independently has improved regulatory frameworks, fostering a more robust business environment.

4. **Tax Reforms:** Reducing corporate and personal taxes since 1991 has enabled entrepreneurs to legally accumulate and reinvest wealth, contributing to economic growth.

### What Reforms Are Needed in Education and Tourism?

#### A. Education:

- Increase funding to improve school quality.
- Allow more autonomy for higher education institutions in selecting their boards and faculty.

#### B. Tourism:

- Ease land use regulations to allow more hotels.
- Improve air connectivity to attract more tourists. Currently, Dubai attracts twice as many tourists as all of India.
- Simplify visa processes to enhance foreign tourist entries, following examples from countries like Thailand and Malaysia.

### Question for practice:

Examine how the proposed structural and political reforms could enhance India's global competitiveness in the industrial sector.

## Linking of Aadhaar with Voter IDs

**Source:** This post on **Linking of Aadhaar with Voter IDs** has been created based on **Should voter ID be linked with Aadhaar to combat voter fraud?** published in The Hindu on 3rd January 2025.

**UPSC Syllabus topic:** GS -2- Polity

**Context:** The article discusses the debate surrounding the linkage of Aadhaar with voter ID cards in India, particularly in the context of combating voter fraud and ensuring electoral transparency.

### Can linking Aadhaar with Voter IDs eliminate duplicate voter registrations?

1. UIDAI was created to assign unique IDs, which could be merged with voter data to identify duplicates caused by factors like migration or address changes.
2. Aadhaar assigns a unique identity number and enables real-time authentication, preventing individuals from having multiple voter IDs.

### Does Aadhaar's lack of citizenship proof hinder its role in elections?

1. Aadhaar is not a proof of citizenship. The Election Commission of India (ECI) must confirm citizenship. However, linking Aadhaar can still help identify duplicate registrations.
2. The ECI must ensure that voters meet the eligibility criteria. Aadhaar helps authenticate individuals but does not validate citizenship.

### Are there privacy or security risks in linking Aadhaar with Voter IDs?

1. Voter ID data includes public information, so privacy concerns are minimal. However, linking Aadhaar might inadvertently expose phone numbers if they are shared voluntarily.
2. Aadhaar data, including biometrics, is secure and offline. Sharing a phone number is optional and used only for convenience, not embedded in the voter database.

### How does linking Aadhaar with Voter IDs address issues like missing voters?

1. Missing voters remain a challenge due to errors or deliberate actions by officials.
2. Linking Aadhaar can reduce duplication but not entirely prevent missing names caused by human errors or malpractices.

### Does Aadhaar ensure transparency in electoral rolls amidst political tensions?

1. Linking Aadhaar can address duplication but cannot resolve all issues. Voter roll manipulation, including fraudulent deletions and booth capturing, still requires stricter ECI oversight.
2. Aadhaar resolves duplication but cannot address problems rooted in human dishonesty or system flaws. Transparency also depends on the integrity and impartiality of officials.

### What about concerns raised by activists over the right to privacy?

1. Linking Aadhaar with voter IDs does not violate privacy. The Aadhaar system is designed to maintain data security and confidentiality.
2. While there are concerns about misuse of contact details, these are optional and not inherently linked to voter ID functionality.

### What was the National Electoral Roll Purification and Authentication Programme (NERPAP)?

1. NERPAP, started in 2015, aimed to clean up electoral rolls using Aadhaar.
2. However, issues like missing voters persisted in 2018, highlighting challenges in maintaining accurate and complete voter rolls.

#### Can Aadhaar-linked voter IDs eliminate all electoral fraud?

1. While Aadhaar can prevent duplication, other forms of electoral fraud require systemic improvements and accountability from current ECI officials.
2. Aadhaar is a technological tool that solves specific issues like duplicate IDs but cannot address broader electoral challenges tied to human conduct.

### Evaluating the Legacy of Manmohan Singh's Leadership and 1991 Economic Reforms

**Source:** This post on **Evaluating the Legacy of Manmohan Singh's Leadership and 1991 Economic Reforms** has been created based on **Remembering the impactful legacy of wise leadership** published in The Hindu on 3rd January 2025.

**UPSC Syllabus topic:** GS -3- Economic Development

**Context:** The article is a reflective analysis on the economic and social transformations India underwent during the tenure of Dr. Manmohan Singh, first as Finance Minister during the 1991 economic reforms and later as Prime Minister from 2004 to 2014.

#### What was the significance of the 1991 economic reforms led by Manmohan Singh?

1. The 1991 economic reforms under Manmohan Singh as Finance Minister laid the foundation for India's economic transformation.
2. High-caliber professionals like Montek Singh Ahluwalia, C. Rangarajan, P. Chidambaram, and others supported these reforms.
3. The reforms unleashed "animal spirits," initiating structural changes that set the stage for high growth and development.

#### How did macroeconomic policies from 2004-2014 impact India's growth?

1. **Savings and Investment Surge:**
  - Savings/GDP ratio rose to 23% by 2003-04 and investment reached 24% of GDP.
  - Investment to GDP climbed to 38% by 2010, achieving the highest levels in India's history.
2. **GDP Growth:**
  - Growth averaged 8.5% annually (2004-2009) and 7.5% (2009-2014), totaling 7.8% p.a. for 2004-14.
  - Export growth (15%-18% annually) was maintained by stable exchange rates.
3. **Resilience to Crisis:**
  - A fiscal/monetary policy stimulus enabled recovery after the 2008-09 global crisis.

#### How did structural changes accelerate during this period?

1. **Sectoral Growth:**
  - All sectors, organized and unorganized, contributed to demand and job creation.
  - Non-farm jobs grew at 7.5 million per year, a record.
2. **Sector-Specific Gains:**
  - Construction jobs doubled from 26 million (2004) to 51 million (2012).
  - Manufacturing jobs rose from 52 million to 60 million, especially in labor-intensive industries.
  - Modern services like telecom, banking, and healthcare expanded significantly.

#### What were the key milestones in employment and poverty reduction?

1. **Rural Labor and Migration:**
  - Non-farm job growth reduced agricultural workers for the first time post-independence.
  - Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) supported rural employment.
2. **Wage and Consumption Growth:**
  - Real wages rose consistently until 2015, driving consumption of simple consumer goods.
3. **Poverty Reduction:**
  - The absolute number of poor fell for the first time; 138 million people rose above the poverty line between 2004-05 and 2011-12.

#### What factors led to economic challenges post-2015?

1. **Policy Shocks:**
  - Demonetization disrupted the unorganized sector and agriculture.
  - Poorly designed Goods and Services Tax (GST) harmed Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs).
  - A strict national lockdown during COVID-19 caused a 5.8% contraction in FY21.
2. **Economic Growth Slump:**
  - GDP growth averaged 5.8% p.a. over 2014-2024, significantly lower than the previous decade.

#### How did employment and structural changes regress after 2015?

1. **Unemployment Crisis:**
  - Unemployment rose to a 45-year high of 6.1% in 2017-18, with youth unemployment doubling from 6% (2011-12) to 11% (2022-23).
  - Job creation dropped by 61%, with youth returning to farming, reversing earlier gains.
2. **Manufacturing Decline:**
  - Manufacturing's share in GVA fell from 17% to 13% (2022), and 'Make in India' failed to generate significant jobs.
  - Labor-intensive industries like textiles and leather lost jobs and exports.

#### What are the broader implications of these economic challenges?

1. **Exports and Wage Growth:**
  - Merchandise exports slowed, growing only 1.5x from 2014-2022, compared to 4x between 2004-2014.
  - Regular salaried workers fell from 23.8% (2019) to 20.9% (2023), while unpaid family workers increased.
2. **Distress Indicators:**
  - Gold-based loans and defaults are rising, signaling financial strain.
  - Aggregate demand is constrained, threatening India's demographic dividend and its potential as a developed nation by 2040.

#### What lessons can be drawn from the contrasting decades of 2004-2014 and 2014-2024?

1. The 2004-2014 period demonstrated the transformative potential of strategic macroeconomic policies and inclusive growth.
2. The period after 2015 highlights the risks of poorly executed policies, stagnation in job creation, and reversal of structural progress.

## Air India's Rollout of In-Flight Wi-Fi Connectivity

**Source:** This post on **Air India's Rollout of In-Flight Wi-Fi Connectivity** has been created based on **Explained: How in-flight Internet works** published in The Hindu on 3rd January 2025.

**UPSC Syllabus topic:** GS -3- Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc.

**Context:** This article provides an in-depth overview of Air India's introduction of in-flight Wi-Fi services, making it the first airline in India to offer Internet connectivity on domestic flights. The context is centered on the evolving trend of onboard connectivity in the aviation industry and its implications for passengers and airlines.

**What is Air India's new Wi-Fi service?**

1. Air India has introduced Wi-Fi Internet connectivity services on select domestic and international flights, becoming the first Indian airline to offer this service on domestic routes.
2. Initially, Wi-Fi will be free for a limited introductory period.

**How can passengers access Wi-Fi on Air India flights?**

1. Enable Wi-Fi on your device.
2. Select the 'Air India Wi-Fi' network.
3. Open the device's default browser, which will redirect to the Air India portal.
4. Enter your PNR and last name.
5. Connect to the Wi-Fi network.

**What technologies are used for in-flight Internet connectivity?**

Two primary technologies are employed:

1. **Air-to-Ground (ATG):**
  - Aircraft receive signals from cellular towers on the ground via an antenna on the plane's belly.
  - Effective over land but limited over large water bodies or sparsely populated areas.
2. **Satellite-Based Connectivity:**
  - Signals from ground stations are relayed to satellites and then to the aircraft via an antenna on top of the plane.
  - Offers wider coverage, ideal for flights over remote areas and oceans.

**How does in-flight Wi-Fi work?**

1. Devices in the cabin send signals to in-cabin Wi-Fi antennas.
2. Signals are routed to an onboard server.
3. **For Satellite-Based Systems:** Signals are transmitted to satellites, which relay them to ground stations and back to the aircraft.
4. **For ATG Systems:** Signals are sent directly to ground cellular towers and back to the aircraft.

**What are the limitations of in-flight Wi-Fi?**

1. Internet speeds are slower than those on the ground.
2. Connectivity in ATG systems depends on the availability of ground towers, limiting coverage over oceans or unpopulated areas.

**How expensive is this technology for airlines and passengers?**

1. **For Airlines:**

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- Installing antennae and equipment is costly.
  - Retrofitting older aircraft is challenging, but Air India is likely to incorporate Wi-Fi equipment during its ongoing \$400-million fleet retrofit program.
2. **For Passengers:**
- Currently free on Air India flights for a limited period.
  - Globally, airlines often charge for Wi-Fi, offering small free data packages or including it as a benefit for premium passengers or loyalty members.

#### Why is in-flight Internet gaining popularity?

1. Growing passenger demand for connectivity during flights.
2. Airlines view it as a potential ancillary revenue source.
3. Newer technologies are improving in-flight Wi-Fi speed and reliability.

### Decline in Suicides Among CISF Personnel

**Source:** This post on **Decline in Suicides Among CISF Personnel** has been created based on 'Suicides among CISF personnel dip 40% due to proactive measures' published in The Hindu on 3rd January 2025.

**UPSC Syllabus topic: GS -3- Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc.**

**Context:** This article provides an in-depth overview of Air India's introduction of in-flight Wi-Fi services, making it the first airline in India to offer Internet connectivity on domestic flights. The context is centered on the evolving trend of onboard connectivity in the aviation industry and its implications for passengers and airlines.

#### What is the significance of the decline in suicide rates among CISF personnel?

1. The Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) recorded a **40% reduction in suicide rates** among its personnel, bringing the rate down to **9.87 per lakh** in 2024, compared to the national average of **12.4 per lakh** in 2022.
2. This marks the first time in five years that the CISF rate has fallen below the national average.

#### Why is suicide among CISF personnel a critical issue?

Suicide remains a critical concern within **Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs)**, driven by factors such as: **Stress, Prolonged family separation, Work-related pressures** and **Personal issues**.

#### What measures were implemented by the CISF to address this issue?

##### 1. Personalised Engagement and Communication

- Commanding officers now conduct **regular visits** to duty posts.
- Daily "**briefing-debriefing**" sessions are held to identify and address signs of distress.

##### 2. Grievance Redressal: An **online grievance portal** was launched for:

- Timely monitoring and resolution of grievances.
- Escalation to higher authorities (up to DG level) when required.

##### 3. Mental Health Support



- 24x7 tele-counselling and personal counselling facilities were made available.
- Around 4,200 personnel benefited from these services till September 2024.

#### 4. Research and Implementation

- A comprehensive mental health study was conducted in collaboration with AIIMS, New Delhi.
- Recommendations from the study are being implemented at the unit level.

#### What do the NCRB data reveal about national suicide trends?

1. **National Suicide Rates (2017-2022):** Increased from 9.9 per lakh in 2017 to 12.4 per lakh in 2022.
2. CISF's decline contrasts with the rising national trend, showcasing the effectiveness of their proactive measures.

### New Political Strategy Targeting Women

**Source:** The post New Political Strategy Targeting Women has been created, based on the article "Rethinking the woman voter" published in "Business Standard" on 4th January 2025

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper1- Social Issues – Women Empowerment

**Context:** The article discusses how political parties in India target women voters by offering them benefits like cash grants, free transport, and safety measures. These initiatives aim to empower women and secure their votes, as women increasingly make independent voting decisions.

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

#### What is the New Political Strategy Targeting Women?

Political parties in India are focusing on women as a key voting group. They offer benefits like cash grants, free transportation, and safety measures to attract their votes.

#### Some Initiatives are:

1. **Free Bicycles for Girls (2005-06):** Introduced by Nitish Kumar in Bihar, this initiative significantly boosted his political support among women.
2. **50% Reservation in Panchayati Raj (2006):** Also by Nitish Kumar, aimed to empower women in local governance, although some proxy decision-making by men was reported.
3. **Direct Cash Transfers:** Schemes like Madhya Pradesh's Laadli Behna, Maharashtra's Ladki Bahin, and similar programs across about 10 Indian states provided direct financial benefits to women.
4. **Ujjwala Yojana:** The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) launched this scheme to provide cooking gas connections to women, aiming for national outreach and impacting numerous households across India.
5. **AAP's Women's Safety Campaign in Delhi:** The Aam Aadmi Party launched initiatives to improve lighting in public spaces and enhance overall safety, specifically targeting women's security in the capital city.
6. **Free Public Transport:** Implemented in several states including Tamil Nadu, Delhi, and Karnataka, increasing women's participation in the workforce by reducing their dependence on family members for transportation.

### How Do Women Respond to These Initiatives?

- 1. Increased Financial Autonomy:** The percentage of women with their own bank accounts increased significantly from 53% in 2015-16 to 79% in 2019-21, demonstrating greater financial independence.
- 2. Decision-Making in Earnings:** Women's participation in decisions about their earnings rose slightly from 82% to 85% over the same period.
- 3. Mobile Phone Ownership:** More women now own mobile phones, with 54% having personal access, and 71% of those can read text messages independently.

### What are the Challenges?

- 1. Cultural and Social Factors:** Traditional roles and low financial literacy can lead to mismanagement of funds, such as in the Assam microcredit crisis.
- 2. Economic Burden on States:** Implementing these women-centric policies is costly, with states allocating \$18 billion in 2024-25, amounting to 0.5% of India's GDP.
- 3. Inefficient Expenditure:** The Assam microcredit situation showed that free money might lead to crises if not managed well, with many women unable to repay loans, resulting in a collective default.

### Conclusion:

Targeting women as a distinct voting group is proving to be a powerful political strategy, changing traditional voting patterns and possibly the political landscape.

### Question for practice:

Examine how the initiatives aimed at women's empowerment and safety are influencing their voting behavior in India.

## India's growing global influence through various channels

**Source:** The post India's growing global influence through various channels has been created, based on the article "A global outreach beyond business" published in "Business Standard" on 4th January 2025

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper2- International Relations- Soft power

**Context:** The article discusses India's growing global influence through various channels like chess, yoga, and cinema, highlighted by Dommaraju Gukesh becoming the youngest world chess champion. It also mentions India's aspirations to host the Olympics and the significant role of the IPL in promoting India's culture and international relations.

For detailed information on **India's Growing Stature – A Rising Power** [read this article here](#)

### What Achievements Highlight India's Growing Global Influence?

- 1. Chess Victory:** Dommaraju Gukesh won the 2024 FIDE World Chess Championship, becoming the youngest world chess champion at age 18. His victory occurred in Singapore and is seen as a significant boost to India's global stature.

**2. Yoga and Culture:** Yoga, popularized globally by Indian gurus, has been celebrated internationally since the UN declared June 21 as the International Day of Yoga in 2014. This and other cultural exports like cinema and food have helped spread India's influence.

### How Is India Enhancing Its Sports Ecosystem?

**1. Sports Development:** India is investing in sports through hosting events and grassroots initiatives. It focuses on a wide range of sports from cricket to indigenous games like kabaddi and kho kho. Efforts are also made to promote women in sports.

**2. Olympic Ambitions:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed a desire to host the 2036 Olympics, which could enhance India's international profile and encourage a sporting culture.

### What Role Does the IPL Play in India's Diplomacy?

**IPL's Global Impact:** Since starting in 2008, the Indian Premier League (IPL) has grown into a major cricket league with a business valuation of \$16.4 billion as of 2024. It not only entertains but also serves as a diplomatic tool, enhancing India's cultural and economic ties worldwide.

### Question for practice:

Discuss how the achievements of individuals like Dommaraju Gukesh and events like the IPL have contributed to enhancing India's global influence.

## How Electric Vehicles Can Improve Delhi's Air

**Source:** The post How Electric Vehicles Can Improve Delhi's Air has been created, based on the article "Why Delhi needs to shift to EVs" published in "Indian Express" on 4th January 2025

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

**Context:** The article discusses the benefits of converting all vehicles in Delhi to electric vehicles (EVs) to reduce air pollution and healthcare costs. It highlights the significant role of transport emissions in Delhi's air quality issues and the potential health and economic gains from adopting EVs.

For detailed information on **Adoption of EVs: Challenges and Solutions** [read this article here](#)

### What is the Current State of Air Pollution in Delhi?

1. Delhi's air pollution is severe, with the transport sector emitting 48.37 Gg of PM2.5 annually.
2. Cars make up 32.44% of the vehicle fleet and contribute 25.54% to the total emissions.
3. Commercial vehicles, though only 2.56% of the fleet, account for nearly 39% of transport emissions.
4. Two-wheelers, which are 61.84% of the fleet, have a relatively lower emission share.
5. Crop burning in nearby states has decreased but still affects Delhi's air quality.
6. Despite the adoption of CNG vehicles, which helped reduce pollution, they still emit NOx and contribute to ozone pollution under certain conditions.

### What are the Benefits of Shifting to Electric Vehicles (EVs)?

1. **Reduction in PM2.5 Levels:** Transitioning to EVs could lower PM2.5 concentrations by nearly 40%.
2. **Healthcare Cost Savings:** A shift to EVs can decrease per capita healthcare costs by more than 25%.
3. **Economic Benefits:** The transition could result in a 25.7% reduction in mortality-related costs and a 2.54% decrease in costs from pollution-related diseases.
4. **Overall Savings:** A complete shift to EVs in Delhi could lead to financial savings of Rs 11,000 crore.

#### What Supports Does Delhi Provide for EV Adoption?

1. **Subsidy Offerings:** Delhi introduced an EV policy in 2020, which was extended to 2025 last year. The Delhi government provides substantial financial incentives for EV buyers, offering up to Rs 30,000 for two-wheelers and Rs 1.5 lakh for electric cars, depending on the battery capacity.
2. **Infrastructure Development:** To support the practical usage of EVs, the policy includes the installation of 25 new charging stations across the city. This initiative aims to enhance the accessibility and convenience of charging electric vehicles.

#### What Challenges Exist in Transitioning to EVs?

1. **High Costs:** Electric vehicles (EVs) are expensive, which could deter potential buyers.
2. **Limited Charging Infrastructure:** Delhi currently has plans for only 25 new charging stations, which may not meet the demand as more people switch to EVs.
3. **Slow Charging Speeds:** The charging technology available has relatively low speeds, impacting the practicality of EVs for daily use.
4. **Dependency on Imports:** Essential components like lithium-ion batteries need to be imported, adding to costs and supply chain complexities.
5. **Low Consumer Awareness:** There's a general lack of awareness about the benefits and usage of EVs among consumers, hindering adoption rates.

#### Question for practice:

Examine how the transition to electric vehicles in Delhi could influence local air quality and public health according to the article.

### Falling Rupee Impacts Fertilizer Costs

**Source:** The post Falling Rupee Impacts Fertilizer Costs has been created, based on the article “**Express view on fertilizer subsidies: Let the market decide**” published in “**Indian Express**” on 4th January 202

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper2-International Relations-Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India’s interests. And GS paper 3- Economy

**Context:** The article discusses the Indian rupee's recent decline in value against the dollar, which affects the cost of imported goods like fertilizers. This change complicates budgeting for businesses and the government, which is trying to avoid raising prices for consumers despite higher costs.

For detailed information on **Issues related to fertiliser sector in India** [read this article here](#)

### What is the Current Situation of the Rupee?

1. The Indian rupee has recently decreased in value, falling from 83.8 to 85.8 against the US dollar from the end of September to the present.
2. This decline is significant because it affects the cost of commodities like oil and fertilizers, which are priced in dollars.

For detailed information on **Rupee's Fall Driven by Stronger US Dollar** [read this article here](#)

### What challenges do fertilizer companies face?

1. **Increased Import Costs:** As the rupee falls, the cost to import fertilizers like di-ammonium phosphate (DAP) increases. For instance, with DAP's price at over \$630 per tonne, a Rs 2 depreciation adds Rs 1,260 per tonne to import costs.
2. **Price Regulation:** Companies are constrained by the government's control over the maximum retail price (MRP), which is currently set at Rs 27,000 per tonne for DAP.
3. **Subsidy Limitations:** While the government has extended a special subsidy of Rs 3,500 per tonne, this does not fully compensate for the increased costs due to currency depreciation, leaving companies with higher operational expenses.

### What Are the Broader Implications?

1. The weakening rupee is a warning for the government and companies with foreign debts that have not been hedged against currency risk.
2. It suggests that relying on imports due to a stronger rupee is no longer a cheap option and encourages a shift towards building domestic production capacities.

### Question for practice:

Examine how the depreciation of the Indian rupee affects the operational costs of fertilizer companies and the broader implications for the Indian economy.

### Issue of illegal Bangladeshi immigrants in India

**Source:** The post issue of illegal Bangladeshi immigrants in India has been created, based on the article "**Express view on illegal immigration in India: Loose political rhetoric won't solve the problem**" published in "**Indian Express**" on 4th January 2025

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

**Context:** The article discusses the issue of illegal Bangladeshi immigrants in India. It highlights political rhetoric, lack of reliable data, and procedural gaps in verifying identities. It emphasizes the need for robust policies and fairness, avoiding political exploitation of vulnerable people.

For detailed information on **Centre issues alert on illegal stay of Bangladeshi nationals** [read this article here](#)

### What actions have been taken regarding illegal immigrants?

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1. Mamata Banerjee, the Chief Minister of West Bengal, claimed that the Border Security Force is allowing illegal entries through places like Islampur and Cooch Behar. She made these comments during an administrative meeting on January 3.
2. In Delhi, after several arrests, the arrested individuals were deported to Bangladesh by the Delhi Police with the help of the Foreigners Regional Registration Office.
3. Additionally, a circular from the AAP government, dated December 23, 2024, instructed schools to check the admission of children from illegal Bangladeshi families.

### What does the central government say about illegal immigration?

1. In December 2023, the central government admitted to the Supreme Court that it cannot provide exact numbers of illegal immigrants, describing the situation as "grim."
2. Furthermore, a response to an RTI request in November 2024 revealed that there is no centralized data on illegal Bangladeshi nationals or their activities in India.

### What are the legal frameworks and challenges?

1. India has several laws to manage foreign nationals, including the Foreigners Act (1946), Registration of Foreigners Act (1939), Passport (Entry into India) Act (1920), and Citizenship Act (1955).
2. However, these laws face procedural issues, particularly in identity verification, often placing the burden on individuals to prove their citizenship, similar to procedures in Assam.

### How effective has deportation been?

According to Kiren Rijiju, the former Minister of State for Home Affairs, in a 2018 statement, deportations have drastically reduced from 5,234 in 2013 to only 51 in 2017. This decrease raises questions about whether the issue is being effectively managed or if deportation has become more challenging.

### Conclusion:

The issue of illegal immigration in India is often politicized and lacks a clear, data-driven approach. It calls for more serious and thoughtful handling of the issue to protect vulnerable groups from political and social exploitation.

### Question for practice:

Discuss the challenges and actions taken by various stakeholders in addressing the issue of illegal Bangladeshi immigrants in India.

## India Pledges Support to Maldives

Source: This post on **India Pledges Support to Maldives** has been created based on article "**India pledges support to Maldives to help it navigate economic issues**" published in **The Hindu** on 4<sup>th</sup> January 2025.

**UPSC Syllabus topic:** GS 2- International Relations

**Context:** The article discusses the strengthening of bilateral ties between India and the Maldives, with a focus on India's support for the Maldives in addressing its economic challenges. The context revolves around the

economic stress faced by the Maldives and India's proactive role in assisting its neighbor under its "Neighborhood First" policy and Vision SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region).

**What is the significance of Maldives in India's foreign policy?**

1. Maldives is a "very concrete" expression of India's 'Neighbourhood First' policy, according to External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar.
2. It is a key maritime neighbor of India in the Indian Ocean Region.

**What was discussed during the meeting between S. Jaishankar and Abdulla Khaleel?**

1. They reviewed progress on agreements from Maldivian President Mohamed Muizzu's visit to India in October.
2. Both sides finalized a framework to promote the use of local currencies for cross-border trade.
3. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed for high-impact community development projects under phase-III in the Maldives, funded by Indian grant assistance.

**What financial assistance has India provided to the Maldives?**

1. India extended aid to help Maldives tackle its debt crisis, including:
  - a. Resubscription of treasury bills.
  - b. A currency swap line worth **USD 400 million**.
  - c. Financial assistance of **₹3,000 crore**.
2. India facilitated the export of essential commodities to Maldives as part of ongoing bilateral support.

**How did Maldives respond to India's assistance?**

1. Maldivian Foreign Minister Abdulla Khaleel appreciated India's financial aid, highlighting its role as the "First Responder" to the Maldives.
2. He reaffirmed President Muizzu's commitment to enhancing the India-Maldives Comprehensive Economic and Maritime Security Partnership.

**What are India and Maldives aiming for in their partnership?**

1. Both countries aim to realize their joint vision for a comprehensive economic and maritime security partnership.
2. India reaffirmed its support under its 'Neighbourhood First' policy and the Vision SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) framework.

**Debate related to One Nation, One Election**

**Source:** This post on **Debate related to One Nation, One Election** has been created based on article "**The Looming Threat to Federalism and Democratic Tenets**" published in **The Hindu** on **4<sup>th</sup> January 2025**.

**UPSC Syllabus topic:** GS 2-Polity

**Context:** The article critically examines the "One Nation, One Election" (ONOE) proposal advocated by the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)/National Democratic Alliance (NDA) in India. This framework seeks to synchronize elections for the Lok Sabha (Parliament) and State Assemblies into a single electoral cycle. While

the proposal is touted for its fiscal and administrative efficiencies, the article highlights its potential to undermine India's federal structure and democratic principles as enshrined in the Constitution.

### What is the "One Nation, One Election" (ONOE) proposal?

1. The ONOE framework seeks to synchronize Lok Sabha and State Assembly elections under a single electoral cycle, aimed at administrative and fiscal efficiency.
2. However, it raises concerns about its impact on India's federalist and democratic structure.

### What is the historical context of simultaneous elections in India?

1. **Initial Practice:** Post-Independence, India held simultaneous elections for Parliament and State Assemblies.
2. **Disruption by Article 356:** President's Rule (Article 356) disrupted this cycle, beginning with Kerala in 1959, marking federal overreach by overriding State autonomy.
3. **Misuse of Article 356:** Initially termed a "dead letter" by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, Article 356 has been invoked over 130 times since Independence, often for political expediency, despite the S.R. Bommai case judgment limiting its misuse.

### What role does defection play in destabilizing State governments?

1. **Threat of Defections:** Legislators frequently switch parties for incentives, causing government instability.
2. **Anti-Defection Law:** Enacted in 1985 under the 52nd Amendment, it penalizes defectors but has loopholes, such as delays in Speaker decisions and allowances for group defections, rendering it ineffective.

### Why is ONOE a concern for India's federal structure?

1. **Impact on State Autonomy:** Aligning State elections with national cycles may curtail or extend State government terms, undermining their autonomy.
2. **Democratic Value Compromised:** Abbreviated State government tenures due to ONOE would breach the principle of "one person, one vote, one value," reducing voter mandates to incomplete representation.
3. **Blurred Accountability:** Holding State elections with national ones could impair voters' ability to assess State government performance.

### What logistical and financial challenges does ONOE present?

#### Logistical Challenges

1. **Resource Burden:** Managing elections for over 900 million voters, including Lok Sabha, State, and local bodies, would strain the Election Commission of India, security forces, and administrative systems.
2. **Voter Fatigue:** Frequent elections may confuse or exhaust voters, diminishing electoral engagement.

#### Financial challenges

While ONOE is promoted as a cost-saving mechanism, it may lead to frequent elections if governments fall prematurely, counteracting the financial and administrative efficiencies touted by its proponents.

### What systemic issues need to be addressed before implementing ONOE?

1. **Misuse of Article 356:** Strengthen safeguards to prevent arbitrary dismissal of State governments.



2. **Anti-Defection Reforms:** Introduce time-bound resolutions and stricter provisions to curb defections.
3. **Federal Balance:** Ensure States retain autonomy and are treated as equal partners in governance.

#### What is the broader threat posed by ONOE?

1. **Centralization of Power:** Forcing States to conform to a unified electoral cycle risks diluting their independence, weakening the federal structure.
2. **Constitutional Impact:** ONOE could undermine the basic structure of the Constitution, which recognizes India's diversity and plurality.

#### What is the ultimate requirement for democratic governance in India?

1. True democratic governance demands systemic reforms to uphold federalism, empower State governments, and align practices with constitutional principles.
2. Implementing ONOE without addressing these foundational issues risks exacerbating existing vulnerabilities rather than resolving them.

### Cross-Border Insolvency in India

**Source:** This post on **Debate related to One Nation, One Election** has been created based on article **"The Looming Threat to Federalism and Democratic Tenets"** published in **The Hindu** on **4<sup>th</sup> January 2025**.

**UPSC Syllabus topic:** GS 2-Polity

**Context:** The article discusses the challenges and gaps in India's current legal framework for handling cross-border insolvency cases. As international trade and globalization have grown, India's insolvency laws have struggled to adapt to the complexities of cross-border insolvency.

#### What challenges does cross-border insolvency pose for India?

1. The growth in international trade has amplified cross-border insolvency challenges, necessitating effective regulations.
2. A reliable insolvency framework is vital for economic stability, attracting foreign investment, and corporate restructuring.
3. Historically, India's insolvency laws under the British Raj, like the Indian Insolvency Act (1848), and later the Presidency-Towns Insolvency Act (1909) and Provincial Insolvency Act (1920), focused on domestic insolvencies, leaving cross-border insolvencies unaddressed.

#### How did India's approach to insolvency laws evolve?

1. **Pre-Independence:** Existing laws focused on domestic cases with no provision for cross-border insolvency.
2. **Post-Independence:** Despite the Third Law Commission's recommendations in 1964, these laws remained outdated.
3. **Economic Liberalisation:** The 1990s brought discussions on comprehensive insolvency reform.
  - a. Committees such as the Eradi (2000), Mitra (2001), and Irani (2005) Committees recommended adopting the UNCITRAL Model Law on Cross-Border Insolvency (1997).
4. **IBC 2016:** The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) was introduced but lacked robust cross-border provisions.

#### What provisions in the IBC address cross-border insolvency?

1. **Sections 234 and 235 of IBC:**

- a. Section 234 allows the government to enforce IBC provisions in foreign countries through reciprocal agreements.
- b. Section 235 outlines procedures to seek assistance from foreign courts via letters of request.
2. **Challenges:** These sections remain unenforceable due to the lack of reciprocal arrangements and non-notification by the central government.

**How did landmark cases highlight cross-border insolvency issues?**

1. **State Bank of India vs Jet Airways (India) Limited (2019):**
  - a. Highlighted the absence of reciprocal arrangements with the Netherlands.
  - b. Exposed the inactive status of Sections 234 and 235, rendering them “dead letters.”
2. **Jet Airways vs State Bank of India (2019):**
  - a. NCLAT employed an ad hoc “cross-border insolvency protocol” for resolution, showing the lack of a structured framework.

**What expert recommendations have been made to address these issues?**

1. **Committees and Reports:**
  - a. The Insolvency Law Committee (2018) and Cross-Border Insolvency Rules/Regulation Committee (2020) recommended adopting the UNCITRAL Model Law.
  - b. Parliamentary Standing Committee Reports (2021, 2024) stressed the urgent need for cross-border insolvency reforms.
2. **Key Recommendations:**
  - a. Adopt the UNCITRAL Model Law to provide a structured, efficient framework.
  - b. Modernise court-to-court communication by adopting Judicial Insolvency Network (JIN) Guidelines (2016) and Modalities (2018).

**What are the limitations of the current legal framework?**

1. **NCLT Jurisdiction:**
  - a. Section 60(5) of the IBC restricts civil courts from handling insolvency matters, leaving NCLT as the sole adjudicating authority.
  - b. NCLT lacks the power to recognise or enforce foreign judgments or proceedings.
2. **Operational Challenges:**
  - a. Failure to implement Rule 11 of the NCLAT Rules (2016) limits the NCLT’s ability to exercise inherent jurisdiction or comity.
  - b. Ad hoc solutions like protocols increase judicial burden, transaction costs, and delays.

**What reforms are essential for strengthening India’s cross-border insolvency framework?**

1. **Adopt the UNCITRAL Model Law:** Establishes a predictable and efficient cross-border insolvency framework.
2. **Modernise Judicial Coordination:**
  - a. Implement JIN Guidelines (2016) and Modalities (2018) for better court-to-court communication.
3. **Expand NCLT Powers:**
  - a. Enable recognition and enforcement of foreign judgments.
  - b. Amend Rule 11 to empower the NCLT with inherent jurisdiction over cross-border matters.

**Why is reform urgent for India’s cross-border insolvency framework?**

1. Current provisions are inadequate and unenforceable.
2. Reliance on temporary protocols adds delays and costs, reducing asset value.
3. Implementing these reforms will enhance legal predictability, attract foreign investments, and ensure efficient resolution of cross-border insolvencies.

## Rising Nitrate Levels in India's Groundwater

**Source:** This post on **Rising Nitrate Levels in India's Groundwater** has been created based on article “**India, cross-border insolvency and legal reform**” published in **The Hindu** on **4<sup>th</sup> January 2025**.

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

**Context:** India's groundwater quality is facing a significant threat, as highlighted by the latest annual assessment from the Central Ground Water Board (CGWB). The report indicates a worrying increase in districts affected by excessive nitrate contamination in groundwater, rising from 359 districts in 2017 to 440 in 2023.

**What does the CGWB's annual assessment reveal about nitrate levels in groundwater?**

1. The Central Ground Water Board's (CGWB) 2023 assessment shows that the number of districts with excessive nitrate in groundwater has risen from 359 in 2017 to 440 in 2023.
2. This means over half of India's 779 districts now have nitrate levels exceeding the safe limit of 45 mg/L.

**Why is excessive nitrate in groundwater a concern?**

1. **Health Impact:**
  - a. High nitrate levels can cause methemoglobinemia or 'Blue Baby Syndrome' in infants, which reduces red blood cells' ability to carry oxygen.
2. **Environmental Impact:**
  - a. Excess nitrates in surface water, such as lakes and ponds, contribute to algal blooms, which harm aquatic ecosystems.

**What proportion of groundwater samples were found with excessive nitrate levels in 2023?**

Out of 15,239 samples analyzed, 19.8% contained nitrates above the safe limit. This is a slight improvement from 2017 when 21.6% of 13,028 samples were unsafe.

**Which states report the highest nitrate contamination?**

1. **Rajasthan (49%), Karnataka (48%), and Tamil Nadu (37%)** showed the highest percentages of samples exceeding safe nitrate limits.
2. Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Gujarat face perennial nitrate issues due to geological factors, with relatively stable contamination levels since 2017.
3. Regions in central and southern India are witnessing a rise in nitrate levels, which is an emerging concern.

**What causes elevated nitrate levels in groundwater?**

1. **Intensive agriculture** has been consistently linked to high nitrate concentrations.
2. Over-exploitation of groundwater exacerbates contamination, as evidenced in states with severely depleted groundwater blocks.

### What other chemical contaminants affect groundwater quality?

1. Apart from nitrate, **fluoride** and **uranium** were identified as major concerns.
2. High fluoride levels are problematic in Rajasthan, Haryana, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, and Telangana.

### What is India's current rate of groundwater extraction?

1. The degree of groundwater extraction stands at **60.4%**, consistent with levels observed since 2009.
2. About **73% of the blocks analyzed** are in the safe zone, meaning they are adequately replenished to offset water extraction.

### What measures are in place to monitor groundwater health?

1. India now has a **robust, scientific system** for annual assessment of groundwater quality and levels, providing valuable insights for action.
2. Strong awareness programs and policy interventions, driven by leadership at the highest levels, are essential to contain the crisis.
3. States need to act on CGWB findings and implement measures to curb nitrate contamination and over-extraction.

## Improving Social Security for Unorganised Workers

**Source:** The post Improving Social Security for Unorganised Workers has been created, based on the article “Building a system that sees the migrant worker” published in “**Indian Express**” on 6th January 2025

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper2- Governance-Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States.

**Context:** The article discusses the e-Shram portal, launched to register unorganised workers, highlighting its potential to improve social security. Despite efforts like the One-Stop Solution (OSS), challenges remain in addressing exclusions, portability, gender sensitivity, and effective implementation.

### What is the e-Shram Portal?

1. The e-Shram portal was launched by the Ministry of Labour and Employment (MoL&E) in May 2021. It aims to create a national database of unorganised workers, including migrant workers.
2. Over 300 million workers are registered on the platform, making it the largest database of unorganised workers globally.

For more detailed information on **e-Shram Portal** [read this article here](#)

### Why Was a National Worker Database Needed?

1. **Pandemic Crisis:** The exodus and distress of migrant workers during COVID-19 highlighted their vulnerability.
2. **Supreme Court Directive:** Instructed the Union government to create a national database for workers.
3. **Existing Recommendations Ignored:**

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- The *Interstate Migrant Workmen Act (1979)* mandated worker registration but was poorly implemented.
- The *National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganised Sector (2007)* proposed universal registration for migrant workers.
- The *Unorganised Workers' Social Security Act (2008)* suggested issuing identity cards.

### WhatQ Is the One-Stop Solution (OSS)?

1. The **One-Stop Solution (OSS)** was launched in October by the Ministry of Labour and Employment.
2. It integrates social security schemes with the e-Shram portal, helping migrant and unorganised workers access welfare programs.
3. Key schemes linked include **One Nation One Ration Card**, **MGNREGA**, and **PM Shram Yogi Maandhan**.
4. More schemes like **PM Matru Vandana Yojana** and **Shramik Suraksha Yojana** will be added soon.
5. It ensures benefits such as pensions, insurance, housing, skill development, and food security.

OSS aims to make registration easier and connect workers to welfare programs.

For more detailed information on **e-Shram Portal** [read this article here](#)

### What Are the Key Concerns?

1. **Exclusion due to Lack of Documents:** Many workers lack basic identity proofs, such as Aadhaar or permanent mobile numbers.
2. **Gender Sensitivity:** Women constitute 53.59% of registered workers, highlighting the need for gender-sensitive policies.
3. **Portability of Welfare Schemes:** Migrants need entitlements that can be accessed across states.
4. **Diverse Needs of Migrants:** Migrant workers are not a homogeneous category — there is substantial socio-cultural, regional, demographic, and economic diversity. It is essential to map out migrants' profiles in detail.
5. **Focus on Human Development:** Workers must be viewed as assets, and schemes should focus on long-term outcomes rather than subsidies.

### What Is the Way Forward?

1. Migrants and workers are vital to the Indian economy and must be included in development policies.
2. The **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** emphasizes the need for better governance of migration.
3. The MoL&E must address gaps in the e-Shram portal, OSS, and social security systems to achieve the goal of **Viksit Bharat**.

### Question for practice:

Examine how the e-Shram portal and the One-Stop Solution (OSS) address the challenges faced by unorganised and migrant workers in India.

## 2024 Faces Uncertainty With Global Polycrises

**Source:** The post 2024 Faces Uncertainty With Global Polycrises has been created, based on the article “Steering towards stability after a year of uncertainty” published in “Indian Express” on 6th January 2025

**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 2024 as a year of uncertainty, with challenges in geopolitics, the economy, energy, and technology. It emphasizes anti-incumbency, global conflicts, green energy transitions, and technological risks, urging global cooperation through multidisciplinary institutions to address these polycrises.

### Why is 2024 Called “The Year of Uncertainty”?

1. The year 2024 faced multiple crises, termed “polycrisis,” where distinct but interconnected challenges overwhelmed solutions.
2. The world struggled with geopolitical tensions, economic instability, energy transitions, and rapid technological changes. This created uncertainty about the future.

### What are the challenges in geopolitics, the economy, energy, and technology?

#### 1. Challenges in Geopolitics

- a. **Territorial Ambitions:** Putin seeks to revive “Imperia Rus,” Xi Jinping pushes for global dominance, and Netanyahu envisions “Greater Israel.”
- b. **Power Struggles:** Erdogan aspires for Ottoman-style influence, and Trump advocates “Make America Great Again.”
- c. **Global Conflict Risks:** These ambitions could create unintended global conflicts or modern feudalism.

#### 2. Challenges in the Economy

- a. **Slow Growth:** Global growth rates declined, impacting stability.
- b. **Protectionism:** Nations adopted policies limiting international trade.
- c. **Public Debt:** Rising debt levels created financial instability.
- d. **Unpredictable Policies:** Trump’s trade and tax pronouncements remain unclear, adding uncertainty to global markets.

For more detailed information on **Federal Reserve faces uncertainty in monetary policy** [read this article here](#)

#### 3. Challenges in Energy

- a. **Structural Barriers:** Transitioning to green energy requires decades and infrastructure redesign.
- b. **Funding Gaps:** Trillions of dollars are needed, requiring cooperation between governments, private sectors, and institutions.

c. **Political Resistance:** Leaders hesitate due to the economic and social impacts of reducing fossil fuel reliance.

#### 4. Challenges in Technology

a. **AI Risks:** Concerns exist over losing control of AI.

b. **Ethical Issues:** Debate continues over ethics in robotics and genetic engineering.

c. **Accountability:** Clear lines of responsibility for technology risks are missing.

#### How Should the World Respond?

1. **Create Global Institutions:** Establish multidisciplinary organizations to address interconnected crises like geopolitics, energy, and technology.

2. **Encourage Unity:** Follow Epictetus' philosophy by choosing collective, innovative responses to polycrises.

#### Question for practice:

Discuss how the interconnected challenges of geopolitics, the economy, energy, and technology make 2024 a "Year of Uncertainty" and the role of global institutions in addressing these polycrises.

### Badge engineering boosts carmakers market strategies

**Source:** The post Badge engineering boosts carmakers market strategies has been created, based on the article "What is 'badge engineering' in cars, how it helps customers, automakers" published in "Indian Express" on 6th January 2025

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper3-Effects of liberalisation on the economy

**Context:** The article explains "badge engineering," where carmakers share vehicle platforms to save costs and widen their market. It highlights Toyota-Maruti's success in India, offering similar cars under different brands, while some global partnerships, like Renault-Nissan, faced challenges.

#### What is Badge Engineering?

1. **Definition:** Badge engineering involves car manufacturers sharing a vehicle design or platform, allowing them to sell essentially the same car under different brand names.

2. **Cost Efficiency:** By using shared platforms, companies avoid the high costs of developing a new model from scratch.

3. **Market Impact:** This strategy contributed to Toyota achieving its best-ever wholesale figures in FY24, with over 40% year-on-year growth in unit sales.

4. **Consumer Choice:** Though cars share platforms, aesthetic tweaks and brand perception influence consumer purchasing decisions, allowing for targeted marketing strategies.

#### What are the Benefits for Manufacturers?

1. **Cost Efficiency:** Sharing platforms reduces R&D costs and increases economies of scale.

2. **Market Expansion:** Maruti targets premium buyers through Toyota's Innova; Toyota gains access to Maruti's budget segments.

3. **Increased Options:** Toyota sells strong hybrid variants of Grand Vitara, while Maruti focuses on mild hybrids.

### What are Examples of Failed Badge Engineering?

#### A. Examples of Successful Badge Engineering

1. **Toyota-Maruti Suzuki Partnership (India):** Toyota's Taisor (rebadged Maruti Fronx) and Grand Vitara-Hyryder collaboration boosted Toyota's FY24 sales by 40%.

2. **Hyundai-Kia:** Creta and Seltos share platforms but compete strongly.

3. **Volkswagen-Skoda:** Models like Taigun-Kushaq share platforms with distinct features.

4. **Hindustan Motors Ambassador:** Rebadged Morris Oxford (1957-2014).

#### B. Examples of Failed Badge Engineering

1. **Renault-Nissan (India):** Terrano (Duster) and Scala (Sunny) failed.

2. **Aston Martin Cygnet:** Rebadged Toyota iQ sold poorly in 2011.

3. **Audi 50:** A rebadged VW Polo discontinued after low sales.

### What are the Challenges of Badge Engineering?

1. **Consumer Rejection:** Poorly differentiated models, like Renault Scala (Nissan Sunny) and Nissan Terrano (Duster), failed in India due to lack of uniqueness.

2. **Flagship Exclusivity:** Suzuki did not share Swift or Jimny, and Toyota kept Innova Crysta and Fortuner exclusive, limiting collaboration.

3. **High Price Perception:** Aston Martin Cygnet, a rebadged Toyota iQ, failed in 2011 due to a significant price jump.

### Question for practice:

Examine the benefits and challenges of badge engineering in the automobile industry with examples.

## The Power and Peril of Symbolism

**Source:** The post **The Power and Peril of Symbolism** has been created, based on the article "Symbolism must not become misplaced showmanship" published in "The Hindu" on 6th January 2025.

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper 1- Indian History and Culture

**Context:** The article discusses the critical role of symbolism in shaping identity, leadership, and historical remembrance. Using recent events in India as a focal point, such as the relocation of an iconic painting from the Indian Army Chief's office and the installation of Shivaji's statue in Ladakh, the piece explores how symbols resonate with people and their environment. The article critiques misplaced or inappropriate use of symbolism, arguing that it risks diluting the significance of history and undermines the emotional and cultural connection of the audience.



### What is the significance of symbols in leadership and public messaging?

1. Symbols hold intangible value as they represent important aspects of life.
2. Leaders use symbolism to communicate their values and vision effectively.

### What are some examples of symbolism from history and global contexts?

1. **Masada (Israel):** Military recruits vow to protect their country after a desert march to Fort Masada, symbolizing resilience and national identity.
2. **NASA Space Shuttle Discovery (U.S.):** Its final flypast in 2012 represented national pride in America's leadership in space exploration.
3. **Desk Reminders:** Leaders like Harry S. Truman and Jawaharlal Nehru used symbolic desk placards and poetry to remind themselves and their citizens of their duties.
4. **OP Baba Shrine (Siachen Glacier):** Soldiers seek blessings from the mythical OP Baba, symbolizing faith and unity among troops on the treacherous glacier.

### Why is December 16, 1971, a significant day in India's history?

It marks India's decisive victory over Pakistan, leading to the surrender of 93,000 Pakistani soldiers. This victory is a symbol of India's military and political competency.

### Why was the 1971 painting in the Army Chief's office considered iconic?

The painting represented India's finest military hour and sent a strong message to visiting dignitaries about India's military prowess.

### Why did the removal of a painting from the Indian Army Chief's office spark nationwide emotions?

1. The painting depicted the surrender of the Pakistani Army in the 1971 war, a moment of great pride in India's military history.
2. Its removal highlighted the importance of preserving symbolic representations of significant historical events.
3. A new painting, purportedly representing the Army's future vision, replaced it. Critics argue this diminishes the subtle yet powerful symbolism of the 1971 victory.

### What is the controversy surrounding the installation of Shivaji's statue in Ladakh?

Critics, including local leaders, feel it is an inappropriate symbol for the region. They suggest Zorawar Singh, a Dogra general with historical ties to the area, would have been a more fitting choice.

## India Needs to Prioritize Preventive Healthcare for a Healthier Future

**Source:** The post **India Needs to Prioritize Preventive Healthcare for a Healthier Future** has been created, based on the article " **India Needs to Prioritise Preventive Care**" published in "The Hindu" on 6th January 2025.

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper- 2- Issues Relating to Development and Management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

**Context:** The article underscores the urgent need for India to prioritize **preventive healthcare** as a strategic approach to address the country's escalating healthcare crisis. With a rising burden of **non-communicable diseases (NCDs)** like heart disease, diabetes, and cancer, which account for a significant portion of deaths, the article highlights the economic and social implications of delayed diagnosis and treatment. It emphasizes that **preventive measures**, such as regular screenings and early interventions, could significantly alleviate the healthcare and financial burden on individuals and the system.

### 1. What is the healthcare crisis India is facing?

India is witnessing a rising healthcare crisis characterized by:

- a. A paradox where life expectancy is increasing, but people face diseases earlier in life.
- b. A surge in non-communicable diseases (NCDs) like heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and cancer.
- c. NCDs accounted for 65% of all deaths in 2022, up from 50% in 2010-13.
- d. High prevalence of risk factors:
  - 1 in 4 adult men are hypertensive.
  - 1 in 8 adults are diabetic.
  - Rising cases of breast, lung, and cervical cancer with earlier diagnoses compared to global averages.

### 2. Why is preventive care important?

Preventive care offers the potential to:

- a. Diagnose and manage conditions early, reducing severe health outcomes.
- b. Lower individual and system-wide healthcare expenses.
- c. Minimize the cascading economic and social effects of serious diseases.

### 3. What is the economic burden of NCDs in India?

1. **Current Expenditure:** ₹7.9 lakh crore in 2021-22, growing faster than overall inflation.
2. **Household Contribution:** Nearly 50% of health expenditure comes from households, one of the highest globally.
3. **Future Projections:** WHO estimates the economic burden of NCDs in India will exceed ₹280 lakh crore by 2030, amounting to ₹2 lakh per household.
4. **Healthcare Budget:** The Union Budget for 2024 allocated ₹87,657 crore, a 13% increase, but still insufficient to address India's challenges.

### 4. How can regular screenings help?

Targeted and periodic screenings can significantly reduce life-threatening conditions:

- a. For every 1,000 screenings in a large hospital network, at least three pre-emptive cardiac or cancer interventions are identified.
- b. Recommended screenings:
  - i. Mammograms for breast cancer.
  - ii. Pap smears for cervical cancer.
  - iii. Low-dose CT for lung cancer.
  - iv. Ultrasound for liver disease.
  - v. Stress tests and echocardiograms for heart health.
- c. Early interventions result in better health outcomes and cost savings.

### 5. What are the barriers to preventive care adoption?

1. **High Costs:** Comprehensive health checks cost ₹8,000-₹15,000 in metro cities.
2. **Limited Tax Benefits:** The ₹5,000 tax deduction under Section 80D for preventive health checks has not been revised since 2013, despite rising healthcare inflation.

**6. How can the government encourage preventive care?**

1. **Revising Tax Deductions:** Increasing the preventive health check tax deduction limit to ₹15,000 in the Union Budget 2025-26. This could:
  - Encourage preventive health adoption.
  - Save future healthcare costs worth several thousand crores.
  - Require an incremental tax expenditure of less than ₹5,000 crore.
2. **Subsidised Screenings:** Policies to reduce screening costs for high-risk individuals.
3. **Public Awareness:** Campaigns to promote preventive health measures.

**7. What steps can drive preventive care adoption?**

A three-pronged approach can foster change:

1. **Strengthen Early Interventions:**
  - a. Expand the Ayushman Health and Wellness Centres.
  - b. Utilize AI-enabled imaging for cost-effective, large-scale screenings.
2. **Subsidise Private Screenings:**
  - a. Encourage insurers and private providers to offer affordable screening packages.
  - b. Fund programmes through a healthcare cess or the proposed 35% GST slab on tobacco and sugar products.
3. **Increase Tax Incentives:**
  - a. Enhance the tax deduction limit to motivate more people to undergo regular health checks.

**8. What is the ultimate goal of prioritising preventive care?**

By focusing on prevention over reactive treatments, India can:

- a. Improve health outcomes.
- b. Reduce economic and financial burdens of chronic diseases.
- c. Build a healthier, more economically resilient nation.

**Digital Personal Data Protection Rules**

**Source:** The post **Digital Personal Data Protection Rules** has been created, based on the article “**No secret affair - Deliberations on draft Digital Personal Data Protection Rules must be open**” published in “The Hindu” on 6th January 2025.

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper- 2- Polity

**Context:** The article addresses the critical need for transparency in the rule-making process for India’s Digital Personal Data Protection Rules, 2025, which seek to enforce the Digital Personal Data Protection Act passed over a year ago.

**1. What is the significance of the draft Digital Personal Data Protection Rules, 2025?**

1. The draft rules are a crucial step towards enforcing the fundamental right to informational privacy for Indians, as affirmed by the Supreme Court in *Justice K.S. Puttaswamy vs. Union of India* (2017).
2. They aim to implement the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, passed over a year ago, which itself was delayed for seven years.
3. The delay has potentially compromised the privacy of Indians’ data during a period of rapid digitisation.

## 2. What are the key features of the proposed rules?

1. **User Data Communication:** Online services must clearly communicate the purposes of their data collection.
2. **Children's Data Protection:** Specific safeguards for handling children's data online.
3. **Data Protection Board of India (DPBI):** Establishes the DPBI and defines its functions.
4. **Government Exemptions:** Sets standards for government agencies to follow if exempted from the Act.
5. **Data Breach Procedures:** Outlines steps to be taken if a data fiduciary breaches personal data.

## 3. Are there concerns with the proposed rules?

1. Concerns remain about the institutional design of the DPBI, which has not been addressed in these rules.
2. It is unlikely that subordinate legislation will resolve these issues comprehensively.

## 4. Why is the rule-making process criticized?

1. The government has kept the process opaque, declining to make stakeholder recommendations public.
2. This lack of transparency has been a pattern since the Justice B.N. Srikrishna committee drafted the first Bill.
3. An open, deliberative process involving public and industry associations is essential but absent.

## 5. What principles should guide the finalisation of the rules?

1. **Transparency:** Equal participation of stakeholders, including industry associations and the public, with visibility into all viewpoints.
2. **Data Protection Goals:** Focus on:
  - Minimising data collection.
  - Promoting disclosures.
  - Penalising negligence in data protection.
  - Discouraging surveillance by both private entities and the government.

**3. Timeliness:** The process must move quickly to ensure Indians receive the rights affirmed in 2017.

## 6. What are the risks of further delay or lack of transparency?

1. Continued delays erode public confidence in the government's commitment to protecting data privacy.
2. Both private enterprises and government agencies may exploit the absence of stringent rules, compromising users' data further.
3. By addressing these issues with openness and adherence to privacy principles, the government can reinforce trust and effectively protect Indians' digital rights.

## Impacts of China's Mega-Dam Project

**Source:** The post Impacts of China's Mega-Dam Project has been created, based on the article "Implications of China's mega-dam project" published in "The Hindu" on 6th January 2025.

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper- 2- International relations

**Context:** The article delves into the geopolitical, ecological, and socio-economic implications of China's ambitious **mega-dam project** on the Brahmaputra River, highlighting its potential impacts on downstream nations like India, Bhutan, and Bangladesh. The proposed 60 GW hydropower project in the **Great Bend region of the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR)** signals China's intent to assert dominance over the Brahmaputra

basin, a critical transboundary river system originating in Tibet and flowing through multiple riparian countries before draining into the Bay of Bengal.

***What is China's mega-dam project, and where is it located?***

1. **Project Overview:** China plans to build a 60 GW mega-hydropower dam in the Great Bend region of Medog county in the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR). This project was included in China's 14th Five-Year Plan (2020) and approved on December 25, 2024.
2. **Location:** The Brahmaputra River, known as the Yarlung Zangbo in TAR, is a transboundary river spanning China, India, Bhutan, and Bangladesh. The dam is situated at the Great Bend, where the river turns southward to enter India.

***Do all riparian countries have water infrastructure projects in the Brahmaputra basin?***

1. Yes, all riparian nations (China, India, Bhutan, and Bangladesh) have major water infrastructure projects, including hydropower dams, embankments, irrigation systems, and barrages.
2. **China:** Three Gorges Dam, Zangmu Dam (commissioned in 2015), and the planned Medog mega-dam.
3. **India:** Upper Siang dam, its largest hydropower project.
4. **Bhutan:** Multiple medium and small dams, raising concerns in downstream India and Bangladesh.

***How are nation-states controlling the Brahmaputra river system?***

1. **Geopolitical Control:** Countries view transboundary rivers as resources to be controlled through dams and hydraulic infrastructure, symbolizing sovereignty.
2. **"Water Wars" Vocabulary:** Terms like "water wars" and "water bombs" reflect tensions between upstream and downstream nations. For example, China's mega-dam is seen as a "water bomb" by India and Bangladesh.
3. **China's Strategy:** As the upper riparian nation, China has complete control over Tibet's rivers, leveraging its technological and material capabilities.

***What are the risks for communities along the Brahmaputra river basin?***

1. **Disruption of Traditional Knowledge:** Dams disrupt the natural flow of rivers, rendering communities' traditional knowledge ineffective.
2. **Adverse Impacts:**
  - Blocking the Yarlung Zangbo's perennial flow could reduce surface water levels, disrupt monsoon patterns, and harm groundwater systems.
  - Downstream agrarian communities and the Himalayan ecosystem face catastrophic risks.
  - Increased disasters such as floods affect traditional lands, livelihoods, and biodiversity.

***What explains the hydropower dam-building race?***

1. **Geopolitical Rivalry:** China's Great Bend project and India's Upper Siang project exemplify strategic competition.
2. **Lack of Agreements:** None of the riparian nations are signatories to the 2014 UN Convention on the Law of the Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses, making water-sharing agreements unenforceable.
3. **Bilateral Efforts:** India and China have an Expert Level Mechanism (ELM) since 2006 to share hydrological data but lack a comprehensive treaty on shared rivers.
4. **Securitization:** Territorial disputes between China and India exacerbate tensions over the Brahmaputra basin.

*Why are Tibet's river systems critical to the Himalayan bioregion?*

- **Cryosphere Significance:** Tibet's rivers, fed by glaciers and permafrost, are vital to the Earth's climate systems, including monsoons and precipitation pathways.
- **Climate Change Impacts:**
  - Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs) are increasing, as seen in the 2023 Chungthang Dam collapse in Sikkim.
  - Mega-dams threaten biodiversity, agro-pastoral communities, and river ecosystems.

*What historical and ecological risks are associated with the Medog dam?*

- **Seismic Risks:** The site of the Medog dam is prone to earthquakes. The 1950 Assam-Tibet earthquake, one of the most significant in modern history, caused widespread destruction downstream in Assam and Bangladesh.
- **Flooding:** Annual catastrophic floods are a persistent challenge in the region, worsened by man-made interventions.

*What are the broader implications of mega-dams in the region?*

- **Ecological and Social Impact:**
  - Dams disrupt the natural life cycles of rivers, turning the Himalayan river basin into an active risk-scape.
  - Agro-pastoral communities and the Himalayan bioregion face significant threats from these projects.

*How should riparian nations address these challenges?*

- **Alternative Approaches:**
  - A bioregional/ecoregional framework could help desecuritize the Brahmaputra river basin and protect its ecology.
  - India could assume a leadership role by adopting sustainable water management practices instead of mirroring China's dam-building strategy.
- **Strategic Recommendation:** Avoid "a dam for a dam" approach to prevent turning the Himalayan river systems into disaster zones.

## Measuring CPI Impact of Free Foodgrain Distribution

**Source:** The post Measuring CPI Impact of Free Foodgrain Distribution has been created, based on the article "Welfare programmes impact the retail prices relevant to people" published in "Live mint" on 7th January 2025

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper3- Issues related to direct and indirect farm subsidies and minimum support prices; Public Distribution System- objectives, functioning, limitations, revamping

**Context:** The article discusses a **MoSPI discussion paper** on accounting for free foodgrain distribution under the Public Distribution System (PDS) in India's Consumer Price Index (CPI). It addresses challenges in incorporating free items in current and future inflation measurements.

For detailed information on **Consumer Price Index (CPI)** [read this article here](#)

### What Challenges Are Faced in Measuring CPI with Free Foodgrain Distribution?

- 1. Impact on CPI Weight:** Free wheat and rice, which have a combined 7.5% weight in the all-India CPI, create challenges in adjusting price calculations when their cost drops to zero.
- 2. Incorrect Redistribution:** Redistributing the weight of free items only within the same category is flawed. For example, households receiving free rice may spend extra income on other goods, not just cereals.
- 3. Transparency Issues:** The absence of parallel indices (with and without the changes) for at least one year creates doubts about CPI accuracy.
- 4. Policy Impact:** Opaqueness in adjustments fuels speculation about inflation data and its role in policymaking.

For detailed information on **Reassessing Inflation Measurement** [read this article here](#)

### How Does Free Foodgrain Distribution Affect Household Income and Spending?

1. Free foodgrain distribution increases disposable income by eliminating costs for essential items like wheat and rice.
2. Around 800 million households benefit under the National Food Security Act. The savings are likely spent across the entire consumption basket, not just on food items. For example, households receiving free rice are unlikely to spend all savings on cereals alone.
4. Redistribution of item weights in CPI must reflect this behavior.
5. Transparent CPI adjustments can improve the accuracy of economic measures and policy decisions.

### What is the Proposed Solution for Transparent CPI Measurement?

- 1. Dual Index Production:** Produce two versions of the CPI, one reflecting the impact of free food distribution and one without it.
- 2. Duration for Comparison:** Continue this dual index production for at least one year.
- 3. Purpose:** This approach allows users to compare and understand the impact of including free foodgrain distribution on inflation measurement.
- 4. Transparency and Trust:** Publishing both indices enhances transparency and builds trust in government statistics, addressing concerns about the accuracy of inflation data.

### Why is Regular Household Consumption Survey Important?

- 1. Accurate Weighting in CPI:** Regular surveys ensure the CPI reflects current consumption patterns, especially when free distribution of items like wheat and rice alters spending habits.
- 2. Dynamic Index:** A dynamic CPI index with updated weights captures changes like free foodgrain schemes, impacting 800 million households.
- 3. Transparent Adjustments:** Transparent methodologies prevent speculation and doubts, enhancing trust in government statistics.
- 4. Policy Effectiveness:** Accurate data aids inflation targeting and welfare programs, especially if items like pulses and edible oils are included in schemes.

5. **Black Swan Events:** Regular updates help address crises like COVID-19 effectively.

**Question for practice:**

Examine the impact of free foodgrain distribution on household income, spending patterns, and its implications for Consumer Price Index (CPI) measurement.

**India's Concern Over Human Metapneumovirus Outbreak**

**Source:** The post India's Concern Over Human Metapneumovirus Outbreak has been created, based on the article "**Dealing with HMPV Govt must educate the public**" published in "**Indian Express**" on 7th January 2025

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

**Context:** The article discusses the Human Metapneumovirus (HMPV) outbreak, its mild risks compared to Covid-19, and India's vulnerability due to proximity to China. It emphasizes preventive measures, public health messaging, and the importance of avoiding panic through clear communication.

**What is Human Metapneumovirus (HMPV)?**

HMPV is a respiratory virus identified in the early 2000s. It commonly infects babies, infants, the elderly, and immuno-compromised people. The virus spreads through direct contact, contaminated surfaces, coughing, sneezing, or shaking hands. It is not considered fatal and typically occurs in winter and early spring.

For detailed information on **Human Metapneumovirus (HMPV)** [read this article here](#)

**Why is there concern in India?**

1. **Local Cases Without Travel History:** Two HMPV cases were reported in Bengaluru – a three-month-old baby (discharged) and an eight-month-old (recovering), raising concerns about local transmission as neither had a travel history.

2. **Proximity to China:** India's close borders with China, where the outbreak originated, increase vulnerability due to possible virus transmission.

3. **People-to-People and Economic Links:** Extensive connections with Southeast Asia, seen in the spread of swine flu, avian flu, and Covid-19, amplify risks.

4. **Mass Gatherings:** Events like weddings and the Kumbh Mela (with over 400 million pilgrims) pose significant risks of widespread transmission.

5. **Health Infrastructure Limitations:** India's healthcare system has limited capacity to handle rapid outbreaks.

6. **Spread of Rumors:** Uninformed rumors can exaggerate fears and create unnecessary panic.

**How can the government prevent an outbreak?**

1. Health authorities must issue clear advisories about HMPV prevention and treatment.

2. Communication campaigns in local languages should provide accurate information.

3. Tools like Doordarshan (650 million viewers) and mobile phones (78% penetration) can effectively reach the population.



4. Resuming Covid-19 protocols, such as masking and sanitizing, is recommended in crowded areas like markets, malls, and stations.
5. Proactive communication and preventive actions are crucial to managing HMPV's impact and avoiding unnecessary panic.

**Question for practice:**

Discuss the reasons for India's concern about the Human Metapneumovirus (HMPV) outbreak and the measures the government can take to prevent its spread.

**Nehru's Economic Policies and Their Shortcomings**

**Source:** The post Nehru's Economic Policies and Their Shortcomings has been created, based on the article "Why criticism over the Nehru-led economy doesn't hold" published in "Indian Express" on 7th January 2025

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

**Context:** The article discusses India's economic performance during Nehru's leadership. It highlights his focus on income growth, achievements like a 4% growth rate, agricultural success, and private sector expansion. However, it criticizes the neglect of primary education, limiting human capital development.

For detailed information on **Nehru's Economic Vision and Its Impact on India** [read this article here](#)

**What was Nehru's economic focus?**

1. Nehru's main economic focus was to raise income levels, which were extremely low due to colonial exploitation.
2. He prioritized practical growth methods over strict ideologies. In 1956, during the launch of the Second Five-Year Plan, he emphasized using "every possible way of growth" rather than following outdated theories.
3. Under his leadership, India's average annual growth rate was 4%, based on S. Sivasubramonian's data. This was a significant increase from the less than 1% growth during the last 50 years of British rule.
4. Nehru supported both agriculture and industry. Agriculture thrived, benefiting from industrial inputs and infrastructure.
5. He invited agricultural scientist Norman Borlaug in 1963, leading to the Green Revolution.
6. Public sector savings grew faster than private corporate savings.
7. Private sector investment also surged, growing at least as much as public sector investment.

**What were the shortcomings of Nehru's economy?**

1. **Neglect of Education:** Primary education was severely overlooked, with abysmally low literacy rates in 1947. Critics like B.V. Krishnamurti, Amartya Sen, and J.P. Naik highlighted this failure. Nehru did not adopt a mission-mode approach, especially for girls' education, unlike East Asian nations. This lack of investment in education created a democratic deficit, leaving most Indians without the skills and opportunities to improve their productivity and quality of life.

**2. Public Sector Issues:** While public enterprises were designed to generate revenue, their degeneration into inefficient welfare traps occurred under later administrations, undermining Nehru's vision.

### Conclusion

Nehru revived a stagnant economy with significant achievements in growth, agriculture, and private sector development. However, neglect of education created long-term challenges for human development and economic productivity.

### Question for practice:

Discuss how Nehru's economic policies balanced growth in agriculture, industry, and the private sector, while addressing the shortcomings in education.

## Increasing representation of women in IITs

**Source:** The post increasing representation of women in IITs has been created, based on the article “**Express view on quota for women at IIT: Proof that inclusion works**” published in “**Indian Express**” on 7th January 2025

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

**Context:** The article highlights the increasing representation of women in IITs due to a 20% supernumerary quota. It discusses improved infrastructure, challenges stereotypes in STEM, and stresses the need for continued support to ensure women thrive in education and careers.

For detailed information on **Open IIT Gates – More women are taking a crack at the JEE** [read this article here](#)

### How has the representation of women in IITs increased?

1. The 20% supernumerary quota for women was introduced in 2018.
2. IIT-Kanpur saw an increase in female students from 908 in 2017 to 2,124 in 2024.
3. At IIT-Roorkee, women's enrolment rose by 76.36% between 2019-20 and 2024.
4. IITs in Chennai, Mumbai, Guwahati, and Kharagpur also witnessed significant growth.
5. Infrastructure upgrades like hostels, washrooms, and recreational facilities supported women's inclusion.
6. Open-door policies for women aspirants and parents encouraged enrolment.
7. These efforts challenge the narrative that STEM is male-dominated, fostering inclusivity and gender equity.

### What is the broader impact?

**1. Challenging Stereotypes:** The rise of women in IITs challenges the stereotype that STEM is for men. It paves the way for more women to contribute to India's intellectual and technological future.

**2. Inspiration for Other Fields:** IITs' success can guide gender-neutral policies in other sectors.

### What More is Needed for Women's Success?

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1. **Gender-Neutral Policies:** Create policies to remove workplace and educational biases.
2. **Mentorship Programs:** Provide guidance to help women navigate their careers.
3. **Inclusivity:** Ensure IITs and workplaces foster supportive environments.
4. **Economic Opportunities:** Address gaps, as highlighted by the India Human Development Survey (2004-2024). Despite progress in IITs, women make up only 11.3 lakh in engineering versus 27.6 lakh men (AISHE 2021-22).
5. **Support Systems:** Improve infrastructure and resources to sustain women's growth.

#### Question for practice:

Examine the factors contributing to the increased representation of women in IITs and the broader impact of these changes.

### National Anthem Controversy in Tamil Nadu

**Source:** This post on **National Anthem Controversy in Tamil Nadu** has been created based on article **Decoding the National Anthem controversy** published in The Hindu on 7<sup>th</sup> January 2025.

#### UPSC Syllabus topic: GS -2- Polity

**Context:** The article discusses a controversy surrounding the Tamil Nadu Governor R.N. Ravi's decision to leave the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly without delivering his customary address. The Governor's departure was in protest against the absence of the National Anthem being played before his scheduled address, a practice he deemed essential.

#### What is the usual practice in the Tamil Nadu Assembly regarding the National Anthem? What is the practice in other States?

1. **State Anthem First:** The session begins with the playing of the State anthem, *Tamil Thai Vaazhthu*.
2. **National Anthem Last:** The National Anthem is played after the Governor's address.
3. This practice has been followed since July 1991, introduced during the AIADMK government led by Jayalalithaa. Before this, Governors would deliver their address without any anthems.
4. Practices vary widely:
  - a. **Nagaland:** The National Anthem was not played in the Assembly for decades and was introduced only in February 2021 during R.N. Ravi's tenure as Governor.
  - b. **Tripura:** The National Anthem was played for the first time in the Assembly in March 2018.
  - c. **Other States:** Some Assemblies do not follow a strict protocol for playing the National Anthem.

#### What happens during the President's address in Parliament?

1. **Before the Address:** The National Anthem is played when the President reaches the dais.
2. **During the Address:** The President reads the printed address, followed by another version if necessary, read by the Rajya Sabha Chairman.
3. **After the Address:** The National Anthem is played again before the President leaves the hall.

#### What does the Constitution of India say about respecting the National Anthem?

Article 51(A)(a), under fundamental duties, mandates every citizen to abide by the Constitution and respect the National Anthem, National Flag, and other national symbols.

### **What does the Ministry of Home Affairs' order specify about playing the National Anthem?**

The National Anthem must be played in full on the following occasions:

1. During civil and military investitures.
2. When a national salute is given to the President or Governor.
3. During parades, hoisting of the National Flag, or regimental colour presentations.
4. Upon the President's arrival or departure from formal State functions.
5. Before and after the President's address to the nation over All India Radio.

### **When is mass singing of the National Anthem required?**

Mass singing is required on occasions such as:

1. The unfurling of the National Flag.
2. Cultural or ceremonial functions (other than parades).
3. Arrival and departure of the President at government or public functions.

### **Is playing the National Anthem mandatory at official functions?**

1. No, it is not mandatory. For instance, during a 2019 function in Madurai attended by the Prime Minister, Tamil Nadu Governor, and Chief Minister, the National Anthem was not played.
2. A petition seeking punishment for not playing the anthem was dismissed by the Madras High Court. The court noted that the National Anthem's use is customary and not mandated by law.

## **Digital Governance in India**

**Source:** This post on **Digital Governance in India** has been created based on article “**Enhancing Governance the Digital Way**” published in The Hindu on 7<sup>th</sup> January 2025.

**UPSC Syllabus topic:** GS -2- Polity

**Context:** The article highlights the transformative journey of India towards digital governance and its profound implications for public administration. Written by an accomplished civil servant from the 2015 batch of the Indian Revenue Service (IRS) and a Master's graduate in Public Policy from McGill University, the piece delves into the interplay between digital tools, workforce competency, and public service efficiency.

### **What is the significance of digital governance in India's transformation journey?**

1. India is undergoing a digital governance transformation to enhance citizen services and empower government employees.
2. This shift is critical for improving public service efficiency, which heavily relies on the workforce's skills and competencies.
3. Despite significant progress, challenges remain in fully realising the digital governance potential.

### **How does governance relate to modern digital strategies?**

1. Governance involves decision-making by various stakeholders, including governments, NGOs, and local communities.
2. Influenced by Chanakya's principles and the Arthashastra, governance today incorporates strategies for statecraft, economic policy, and ethical leadership.
3. Modern digital tools must integrate these principles to transform governance effectively.
4. Digital governance requires government employees and intermediaries to adapt to new technologies for better communication, informed decisions, and efficient workflows.
5. The evolving expectations of citizens demand an upskilled workforce adept at navigating digital platforms.

**What initiatives are driving digital capacity building among government employees and promote literacy among employees?**

1. **iGOT Karmayogi Platform (2020):** Provides personalised online training in data analytics, public administration, and digital technologies, fostering continuous improvement.
2. **e-Office Initiative:** Digitises workflows, automates file management, and promotes real-time communication to reduce paperwork and enhance transparency.
3. **Government e-Marketplace (GeM):** Streamlines procurement processes, transitioning them to an online platform.

**Among employees:**

1. Government programs focus on familiarising employees with e-governance tools, cybersecurity, and digital communication.
2. These efforts aim to improve efficiency and adaptability in a technology-driven world.

**What are the key challenges in adopting digital governance?**

1. **Resistance to Change:** Bureaucratic structures and workforce hesitancy hinder adaptation. Employees with varying levels of readiness may require additional training.
2. **Lack of Incentives:** Platforms like iGOT Karmayogi risk becoming attendance trackers unless they lead to meaningful outcomes, such as skill application through relevant job opportunities.
3. **Digital Divide:** Limited access to high-speed Internet and digital tools, especially in rural areas, risks excluding many employees and citizens.
4. **Cybersecurity Risks:** Increased online operations raise concerns about data breaches, necessitating employee training in cybersecurity protocols.

**How can the government address these challenges?**

1. Foster an innovative environment while providing resources for hesitant employees.
2. Measure success by training outcomes, not just participation.
3. Bridge the digital divide by improving Internet and tool access in rural areas.
4. Strengthen cybersecurity through comprehensive training and robust systems.
5. Ensure continuous learning to keep up with rapid technological evolution.

**What is required to maximise the potential of digital transformation in governance?**

1. India's robust infrastructure, focused training, and commitment to a dynamic workforce can set a global standard.
2. Success depends on equipping every employee, regardless of location or rank, with the skills to thrive in the digital age.
3. This inclusive, transparent, and accountable governance model can meet the needs of all citizens.

## Collegium and Recent Changes

**Source:** This post on **Collegium and Recent Changes** has been created based on article “**The Collegium and changes — it may still be early days**” published in The Hindu on 7<sup>th</sup> January 2025.

**UPSC Syllabus topic: GS -2- Polity**

**Context:** The article explores the recent developments in the functioning of the **Supreme Court of India's Collegium**, which plays a critical role in appointing and transferring judges in the higher judiciary. It reflects on two proposed changes: conducting interviews for candidates recommended for elevation to High Courts and excluding individuals with close familial ties to current or former judges. While these changes appear to promote transparency and diversity, the article contextualizes them within the broader challenges facing the collegium system.

**What recent decisions have been made regarding the Supreme Court's Collegium?**

The Supreme Court Collegium has reportedly decided to:

1. Conduct interviews of candidates recommended for elevation as judges to High Courts.
2. Exclude, as much as possible, candidates whose close relatives have served or are serving as judges in High Courts or the Supreme Court.

**Why are these changes significant?**

1. **Interviews:** Such meetings are fundamental for evaluating candidates for important State positions, including the judiciary.
2. **Exclusion of relatives:** While some deserving candidates may miss out, this step aims to diversify the judiciary.

**What is the main concern about these changes?**

1. Despite their potential, these reforms may have limited impact unless the government stops arbitrarily stonewalling Collegium recommendations.
2. Government delays or rejections, often without disclosure, undermine the effectiveness of reforms.

**What is the Collegium system? What role does the Collegium play in judicial appointments?**

1. The Collegium is a product of judge-made law..
2. It is responsible for judicial appointments and transfers in the higher judiciary.
3. It operates without formal rules, making it opaque and unaccountable.
4. The Collegium recommends judges for appointment to High Courts and the Supreme Court, Transfers between High Courts and selection of new High Court Chief Justices.
5. The collegiums comprises of the Chief Justice of India (CJI) and senior judges. Its recommendations must be acted upon by the government.

**How were judicial appointments initially envisioned?**

The Constitution grants the President authority to appoint judges:

1. **To the Supreme Court:** In consultation with the CJI and other judges deemed necessary.
2. **To High Courts:** In consultation with the CJI, the State Governor, and the Chief Justice of India.

**What changes did the Second Judges Case (1993) bring, and what is the government's role in the Collegium process?**

1. The Second Judges Case redefined "consultation" with the Chief Justice of India (CJI) to mean "concurrence," requiring agreement from a Collegium of senior judges rather than just the CJI. This formalized the Collegium system, granting the judiciary greater control over judicial appointments and transfers.
2. The government's role includes accepting the Collegium's recommendations, returning them for reconsideration, and approving the proposal after reconsideration.

**What challenges arise from this system, and does the Collegium have real authority?**

1. The government can delay or block recommendations by keeping them pending indefinitely or withholding the issuance of a presidential warrant.
2. Although the Collegium theoretically has primacy, the government's ability to stall decisions undermines its authority, contradicting the judiciary's constitutionally protected independence.

**Why is reform of the Collegium system essential, and how do government delays affect it?**

1. The absence of binding rules and formal accountability weakens the Collegium's integrity, making a transparent, rule-based system essential for judicial independence.
2. Government inaction or arbitrary delays disrupt the process and violate the rule of law. While the Supreme Court has questioned delays, it avoids issuing direct orders to prevent confrontation.

**What steps are needed for meaningful reform of the Collegium system?**

1. **Implementation:** Collegium recommendations must be followed through to ensure accountability.
2. **Collaboration:** All branches of the State must work together to maintain the system's integrity.
3. **Rule-based structure:** Clear, binding rules must replace ad hoc procedures to enhance transparency and consistency.

**The End of Global Climate Policy**

**Source:** This post on **Shift in global climate policy** has been created based on article "**The End of Global Climate Policy**" published in The Hindu on 7<sup>th</sup> January 2025.

**UPSC Syllabus topic: GS 3-Environment**

Context: The article examines a pivotal shift in global climate policy following the 2024 climate conference in Baku, which marked a significant departure from the traditional framework of the global climate treaty. This shift involved moving away from the post-colonial distinction between "donor" and "recipient" nations and advocating for the establishment of an alternative global sustainability forum. The emphasis is on empowering developing countries to take control of their climate strategies and prioritize sustainable development.

**What significant shift occurred at the 2024 Baku Climate Conference?**

1. The 2024 Baku Climate Conference redefined the global climate treaty by eliminating the post-colonial distinction between "donors" and "recipients."
2. It proposed establishing an alternate global sustainability forum, emphasizing that developing countries should take control of their own destinies.

### **What was the original purpose of the 1992 climate treaty?**

The treaty aimed to collectively address climate concerns by:

1. Mandating the G7 to reduce future carbon emissions.
2. Offering developing countries technology transfers and financial support for tackling a problem they did not create.

### **Why is the current global climate arrangement criticized?**

The system favors the G7 due to:

1. A disconnect between academic frameworks and real-world practices.
2. Rules addressing symptoms, not root causes, of climate issues.
3. Pressure on developing countries to incentivize private finance and manage trade restrictions, which were not part of the original agreement.

### **How has the G7's role evolved?**

1. The G7, emerging in 1973, represents former colonial powers.
2. They have overused atmospheric resources, shifting the burden of carbon reductions onto developing nations.
3. The G7 has now distanced itself from financial responsibilities for climate action, offering only illusory commitments like providing funds by 2035.

### **What is the perspective of the Global South on climate change?**

1. The Global South, accounting for 80% of the population and 50% of GDP, prioritizes sustainable development over emission reductions.
2. The focus is on "just transition," addressing social dimensions of climate policies.
3. They demand climate justice by challenging:
  - Unfair global-local distinctions.
  - Widening inequalities caused by solutions like carbon pricing and trade restrictions.

### **How do emissions and urbanization trends reveal disparities?**

1. G7 (with 20% of the population) consumed 75% of global resources in 1950, with the U.S. alone consuming 40%.
2. By 2050, G7's share of global emissions will be 25%, while Asia will account for 55%, aligning with population shares.
3. Urbanization drives three-quarters of emissions, and the Global South is adopting sustainable urban resource use unlike the G7's historical patterns.

### **What foundational changes are required for sustainability?**

New principles must prioritize justice, focusing on:

1. A fair transition to sustainable urbanization.
2. Ecological balance while ensuring shared prosperity.
3. Developing strategic frameworks like the G7's rules-based order but tailored to the Global South.

### **What steps are proposed for global governance reform?**

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1. **Alternate Sustainability Forum:**
  - BRICS and partners should create a global forum for:
    - Urban energy transition.
    - Research on sustainability science and urbanization.
    - Monitoring G7 climate policies.
2. **Limit UN Climate Negotiations:**
  - Restrict the focus to G7 emissions reductions.
  - Allocate \$300 billion in grants to Small Island States and Least Developed Countries.
3. **Reassess International Fora:**
  - Treat international gatherings as platforms for annual stocktaking and course correction.
  - Allow ineffective institutions like the WTO to phase out.

#### What role should BRICS play in the new order?

1. BRICS should bridge the gap in multilateralism and advocate for fair global governance.
2. Their efforts can strengthen their claim for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council, reflecting their influence in shaping global sustainability.

### Justin Trudeau resigns amid political economic challenges

**Source:** The post Justin Trudeau resigns amid political economic challenges has been created, based on the article “Vivek Katju writes: How Canada can undo Justin Trudeau’s damage to bilateral ties with India” and the article “India and Canada, after Justin Trudeau” published in “Indian Express” on 8th January 2025

**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 Justin Trudeau's resignation as Canada's Prime Minister amidst declining popularity, internal party pressure, and tensions with India over Khalistani separatists. It highlights strained India-Canada relations due to Trudeau's accusations in the Nijjar case, domestic challenges in Canada, and potential opportunities for resetting bilateral ties under new leadership.

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

#### What Were Trudeau’s Final Challenges?

1. **Internal Party Pressure:** Trudeau faced criticism from within his party, making his leadership untenable.
2. **Declining Popularity:** Public dissatisfaction over a weakening economy and generous immigration policies caused his government’s popularity to decline.
3. **Polls Showed Massive Deficit:** The Conservative Party, led by Pierre Poilievre, held a 20% lead over the Liberals in polls.
4. **Parliament Paralysis:** Governance became ineffective due to a paralyzed parliament.
5. **US Pressure:** President-elect Donald Trump threatened a 25% tariff on Canadian goods, proposed revisiting North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and made derogatory remarks about Canada as the “51st US state” and Trudeau as its “Governor.”
6. **Disparaging Comment by Trump:** Trudeau’s lack of response to Trump calling him the “Governor of the Great State of Canada” highlighted his weak position.

7. **Freeland's Resignation:** Deputy PM Chrystia Freeland's resignation on December 16, 2024, increased the pressure.

### How Did Trudeau's Leadership Impact India-Canada Relations?

1. Trudeau accused India of involvement in Hardeep Singh Nijjar's killing in September 2023, citing intelligence, not hard evidence.
2. India dismissed these allegations and demanded proof, which Canada refused to share.
3. Diplomatic fallout ensued, with Canada withdrawing 41 diplomats in October 2023 and India expelling six Canadian diplomats.
4. Trudeau ignored Indian complaints about Khalistani activities, justifying them under "freedom of expression."
5. Canadian authorities accused six Indian diplomats of targeting Canadian citizens and sought their immunities removed.
6. These tensions worsened when a Canadian official blamed Amit Shah for violence against Khalistanis.
7. Visa uncertainty: Thousands of Indian students and workers faced difficulties due to Canada's unclear visa policies.
8. Diaspora issues: Canada ignored India's concerns about separatists operating from its soil, prioritizing appeasing radical diaspora elements.

### Conclusion

India hopes Trudeau's successor will repair ties. However, Canada's domestic issues and its handling of the Nijjar case may delay progress. India remains cautious due to Canada's past leniency towards Khalistani activities and visa restrictions.

### Question for practice:

Examine the factors that led to Justin Trudeau's resignation as Canada's Prime Minister and their impact on India-Canada relations.

## Vice Chancellor Appointments Need Reform in India

**Source:** The post Vice Chancellor Appointments Need Reform in India has been created, based on the article "Who selects the university Vice-Chancellor?" published in "Indian Express" on 8th January 2025

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

**Context:** The article discusses the appointment of Vice Chancellors (VCs) in Indian universities. It highlights overregulation, limited autonomy, and the need for flexibility in selecting VCs. It calls for broader eligibility, humility in leadership, and universities having greater autonomy in appointments.

### What are the issues with Appointment of Vice Chancellors (VCs) in India?

1. **Overregulation and Limited Autonomy:** Indian universities face overregulation with little freedom in selecting VCs. In central universities, the President of India appoints VCs based on government advice. In state

universities, governors follow state government recommendations. Only 27% of Asian universities allow full autonomy in VC appointments (CHEMS, 1996).

**2. Narrow Eligibility Criteria:** The UGC regulations of 2018 mandate that a VC should be a distinguished academician with at least 10 years of experience as a professor or an equivalent position in a reputed organization. However, this limits the pool of candidates to academicians alone.

**3. Political Interference:** Political preferences often influence VC selections. For instance, Congress governments leaned toward left-leaning VCs, while the current government opts for the opposite.

**4. Lack of Visionary Leadership:** The current system does not prioritize leadership qualities like humility, teamwork, or alignment with constitutional values. Humility, a vital leadership trait, is often overlooked.

### What Reforms Are Suggested for VC Appointments?

1. Allow universities greater autonomy in choosing VCs.
2. Modify the proposed three-member search committee to include more university representatives.
3. Encourage nominations from intellectuals, judges, and senior academics to ensure merit-based appointments.
4. Emphasize leadership qualities like humility, teamwork, and alignment with constitutional values.

### How do different countries handle VC appointments?

1. **In Asia**, 55% of VCs are government-appointed, 18% require government approval post-selection, and 27% have autonomy.
2. **Western universities** enjoy full autonomy, as seen in Oxford University's appointment of John Hood (2005), a businessman.
3. **Some African universities** also restrict government influence.
4. **In India**, VCs in central universities are appointed by the President based on government advice.
5. This centralized control contrasts with the global trend of granting universities greater freedom to select leaders.

### What Should Be the Role of Universities in VC Appointments?

Universities should have the freedom to choose their leaders. Each institution has unique challenges and needs. A bottom-up approach, with more say for universities, could lead to better leadership and improved performance.

### Question for practice:

Discuss the challenges in the appointment of Vice Chancellors (VCs) in Indian universities and the reforms needed to address them.

## Union government capex declines, challenging fiscal stability.

**Source:** The post Union government capex declines, challenging fiscal stability has been created, based on the article “**An opportunity in capex decline**” published in “**Business Standard**” on 8th January 2025

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper3- Economy- Government Budgeting.

**Context:** The article discusses the decline in the Union government's capital expenditure, mainly in roads, defence, and telecom. It highlights underutilized funds, delayed equity infusion in BSNL, and unspent allocations for new schemes, suggesting potential fiscal adjustments to manage revenue shortfalls.

For detailed information on **Union Budget 2024-25- Analysis** [read this article here](#)

### What is the Current State of the Union Government's Expenditure?

1. The Union government's capital expenditure (capex) has decreased by 12% from April to November 2024 compared to the same period in 2023.
2. Despite a target of 17% growth to ₹11.11 trillion for 2024-25, the government might struggle to exceed the previous year's ₹9.48 trillion.
3. Revenue expenditure is showing a better trend, increasing from 2% growth at the end of June 2024 to 7.8% by November 2024, with a budget projection of a 6% rise for the year.

### Why is the Union Government's Capital Expenditure Declining?

1. While some blame the seven-phase general elections (April-June 2024) for slowing capex, the trend did not reverse in later months.
2. Even after the elections, the April-November period still saw a decline of 12%, reflecting deeper structural issues.

### What are the impacts of Union Government's Capital Expenditure Declining?

1. Over 90% of total capex is concentrated in six sectors: roads, railways, defence, telecom, transfers to states, and new schemes.
2. However, major declines were seen in:
  - **Roads and highways:** A 16% fall in spending,
  - **Defence:** A 15% decline.
  - **Indian Railways:** Capex fell only by 1% to ₹1.68 trillion, showing resilience.
  - **Transfers to states:** Increased by 5%, though much lower than the budgeted 41% rise.
  - **Telecom (BSNL Equity Infusion):** Only 6% of the budgeted ₹0.83 trillion was spent. In contrast, last year's infusion exceeded the budgeted amount.
  - **New Schemes:** Only 4% of the ₹0.62 trillion allocation was used, leaving ₹0.63 trillion unspent.
3. 25 State capex (accounting for 95 per cent of all the states' and Union territories' total capex budget) grew by just 1% in April-November 2024-25. States like Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, and Telangana saw declines, but

the overall impact has been limited so far. A continued slowdown in central transfers may affect states' capex programs later.

### What Should the Finance Ministry Do?

1. To manage revenue shortfalls and rising revenue expenditure, the finance ministry could:

- Avoid infusing ₹0.83 trillion equity into BSNL and encourage it to raise market resources.
- Withhold ₹0.6 trillion for new schemes.

2. By saving ₹1.43 trillion (nearly 0.5% of GDP), the ministry could meet the 2024-25 fiscal deficit target of 4.9% of GDP. This slowdown in capex, while concerning, could provide fiscal flexibility.

### Question for practice:

Discuss the reasons behind the decline in the Union Government's capital expenditure and its potential impacts on key sectors and fiscal management.

## Understanding Internal Migration Trends and Challenges

**Source:** The post Understanding Internal Migration Trends and Challenges has been created, based on the article "**Migration: A dream or a nightmare?**" published in "**Business Standard**" on 8th January 2025

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

developmental issues, urbanisation, their problems and their remedies.

**Context:** The article discusses internal migration in India, highlighting its historical roots, challenges, and trends. It emphasizes the need for better urban planning, data monitoring, and policies to support migrants, viewing migration as crucial for economic growth and national integration.

For detailed information on **Internal Migration in India and associated challenges** [read this article here](#)

### What is the Historical Background of Internal Migration in India?

Internal migration has been a longstanding feature of India's history.

1. In the 19th century, Marwaris from Rajasthan became prominent businessmen in eastern India.
2. Marathas migrated as warriors to northwestern and southern regions.
3. Bengalis, Tamils, and Telugus moved for employment under the East India Company and British rule.
4. Such migration patterns highlight India's historical movement of people across regions for trade, war, and jobs.

### How Has Internal Migration Changed Recently?

1. Internal migration has accelerated due to economic growth, education, and a youth-dominated population.
2. The COVID-19 lockdown exposed its scale, with migrant workers walking home due to transportation issues.

3. From 2011 to 2023, internal migrants decreased from 456 million (37.6% of the population) to 402 million (28.9%), as reported in *400 Million Dreams*.

4. India's annual inter-state migration (9 million) is lower compared to China's 77 million and the US's 7.9 million (2021), despite its larger population.

### What Challenges Do Migrants Face?

1. **Urban Infrastructure Issues:** Migrants face challenges with accommodation, water supply, sewerage, sanitation, education, and healthcare.

2. **Psychological Impact:** Moving from villages to chaotic urban centers causes emotional stress and difficulties in adjusting.

3. **Urban Planning:** Unplanned cities worsen the migrant experience, highlighting the need for better policies.

### Why is Migration Important?

1. Migration helps balance economic growth across regions, improves labor market efficiency, and promotes national integration.

2. Encouraging migration to better-planned cities is crucial for improving living standards and achieving collective goals.

### How does India compare with other countries?

1. **India vs China:** From 2011 to 2016, only 9 million people migrated annually between Indian states, while 77 million Chinese workers migrated to different provinces in 2016. China's migration rate is significantly higher.

2. **India vs USA:** In 2021, 7.9 million people moved between states in the US (population 340 million), comparable to India's 9 million migrants annually despite India's population being over four times larger.

3. **Global Migration Context:** In 2005, 12% of the global population (763 million people) lived outside their birth regions, highlighting India's slower migration compared to global trends.

### Question of practice:

Discuss the historical trends, recent changes, and challenges of internal migration in India, and compare it with global migration patterns.

## India's Economic Challenges and Policy Adjustments

**Source:** The post India's Economic Challenges and Policy Adjustments has been created, based on the article "**Monetary policy should lead the easing cycle our economy needs**" published in "**Live mint**" on 8th January 2025

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

**Context:** The article discusses India's economic challenges and policy decisions. It highlights slowing GDP growth, controlled core inflation, and weak domestic demand. Fiscal easing is unlikely, while monetary policy debates focus on managing inflation, wage demands, and potential RBI strategy changes.

For detailed information on **India's economic challenges in 2025** [read this article here](#)

### **What are the key economic challenges in India?**

1. India's GDP growth has been declining for three consecutive quarters.
2. Core inflation has been under control in the 12 months to November 2024.
3. The current account does not show excessive domestic demand spilling into imports.
4. Weak domestic demand from households, firms, and the government is a concern.

### **What are the Current Fiscal and Monetary Policies?**

#### **A. Fiscal Policy**

1. The government is committed to reducing the fiscal deficit by the end of FY 2025-26.
2. Aims to manage finances to lower the public debt-to-GDP ratio.
3. Limited scope for fiscal stimulus due to the deficit reduction plan.

#### **B. Monetary Policy**

1. Inflation has been above the target range for most of the year, except for dips in July-August and a spike in October.
2. The RBI is cautious about price pressures, noting signs of inflation spreading from one sector to another (e.g., edible oils to processed foods).
3. Rising input costs have affected prices across goods and services, impacting consumer demand.
4. Despite food price spikes, some MPC members argue that their impact on core inflation has reduced due to changes in wage and price-setting practices.

### **What Might Change Under the New RBI Governor?**

1. The new RBI Governor, Sanjay Malhotra, may influence future monetary policy, especially regarding the handling of the Indian rupee's value against the dollar.
2. Recent depreciation of the rupee might indicate a shift in RBI's strategy to possibly allow more flexibility in exchange rates.
3. Observers speculate this may reflect a new direction under the new RBI governor.

### **Question for practice:**

Examine the key economic challenges India is currently facing and how fiscal and monetary policies are addressing them.