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For UPSC CSE mains examination

UPSC

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Features :

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

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India's Economic Growth Slows with Mixed Trends

Source: The post India's Economic Growth Slows with Mixed Trends has been created, based on the article "**To grow economy, help consumers spend**" published in "**Indian Express**" on 9th January 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- Economy-Growth and development

Context: The article discusses India's slowing GDP growth, driven by reduced government capital expenditure, industrial deceleration, and global uncertainties. It highlights rising private consumption, rural recovery, export improvements, and suggests boosting consumption, job creation, and private investment in the upcoming budget.

For detailed information on **India's Economic Challenges and Policy Adjustments** read this article here

What is the Current Status of India's GDP Growth?

1. India's GDP growth is estimated to slow to **6.4% in 2024-25**, down from **8.2% in 2023-24**.

2. Growth in the second quarter dropped sharply to **5.4%**, dampening economic sentiment.

3. Investment growth (Gross Fixed Capital Formation) decelerated to **6.4%** from **9%** last year.

4. Government capital expenditure declined: Centre's capex fell by **12%,** State capex reduced by **6%,** CPSEs reported a **10.8% decline** in the first half.

5. **Industrial Slowdown**: Industrial growth fell to **6.2%,** driven by sharp declines in mining and manufacturing.

What Are the Positive Signs in the Economy?

1. **Private consumption** grew to **7.3%** in 2024-25 from **4%** the previous year.

• Rural consumption improved due to strong agricultural output.

• Food inflation (**7.6%**) is expected to moderate, boosting consumption.

2. **Exports** improved:

• Goods and services exports grew by **6%**, up from **2.6%** last year.

• Services exports remained strong, with merchandise exports showing recovery.

3. Agriculture and services sectors showed growth:

• Agriculture benefited from a good monsoon.

• Services sector growth is estimated at **7.2%**, slightly below last year's **7.6%**.

What are the Implications for the Upcoming Budget?

With nominal GDP growth estimated at 9.7%, which is lower than the expected 10.5%, the government might fall short of its capital expenditure target by approximately ₹1.5 trillion. However, achieving the budgeted fiscal deficit target remains feasible despite slower growth.

What should be done for economic recovery?

1. Boost consumption: Introduce income tax cuts to enhance consumer spending.

2. **Focus on jobs and skills**: Prioritize job creation and skilling programs to raise household incomes.

3. Sustain capex focus: Continue investment-driven recovery to support growth.

4. Relax fiscal consolidation targets:Extend the 4.5% fiscal deficit target to 2027-28 to fund growth-friendly measures.

5. India's growth remains robust globally but requires measures to regain 7-8% growth levels.

Question for practice;

Discuss the positive signs in India's economy despite the challenges of slowing GDP growth.

India's Response to the HMPV Virus

Source: The post India's response to the HMPV virus has been created, based on the article "**Express view on HMPV virus: Don't panic, keep vigil**" published in "**Indian Express**" on 9th January 2025

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

Context: The article discusses India's response to the HMPV virus, advising precautions like masks and hygiene. It highlights the vulnerability of children, elderly, and respiratory patients, urges stronger surveillance at all levels, and stresses integrating private healthcare into monitoring systems.

For detailed information on **India's Concern Over Human Metapneumovirus Outbreak** read this article here

What is the Current Focus of the Government Regarding HMPV?

1. The government is strengthening surveillance for Human Metapneumovirus (HMPV) across states.

2. HMPV, first detected 20 years ago in the Netherlands, surfaces frequently in winters and affects infants significantly.

3. Rising hospitalizations in China have raised global concerns, prompting India to act.

4. The Union Health Ministry advises precautions like wearing masks, handwashing, and avoiding contact with flu-like symptoms.

5. Vulnerable groups—children under five, senior citizens, and patients with respiratory conditions—are urged to remain cautious.

6. India's post-COVID monitoring systems ensure hospital-based detection but aim to integrate the private sector, covering 80% of healthcare services.

How Serious is HMPV in India?

1. In India, HMPV is one of the regular flu viruses detected, particularly affecting infants and the elderly.

2. Although regular laboratory tests are not conducted to detect HMPV, studies by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) confirm its prevalence.

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3. First-time HMPV infections are severe for children, the elderly, and people with asthma, COPD, and bronchitis. These conditions are increasing in India. Most infections are self-limiting, treatable with hydration, good nutrition, and symptom management.

4. Most cases in India are detected in hospitals, showing effective urban surveillance but highlighting the need for better rural monitoring.

Question for practice:

Discuss the measures India is taking to address the challenges posed by Human Metapneumovirus (HMPV) and its impact on vulnerable populations.

Education and Human Response to Global Crises

Source: The post Education and Human Response to Global Crises has been created, based on the article "**Mourn for the lost connection**" published in "**Indian Express**" on 9th January 2025

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

Context: The article discusses the human response to a decaying world marked by crises. It critiques hasty actions, emphasizing the need for reflection and mourning. Education should foster thoughtful responses to crises, instead of focusing on superficial, urgent solutions.

What is the current human condition in the face of crises?

1. Loss of faith: People are losing faith in the stability of the world due to ongoing violence and environmental crises.

2. Unexamined actions: In response to crises, there is a tendency to take hasty actions without proper examination, aimed more at temporary fixes rather than long-term solutions.

3. Exploitation by market: The state-market nexus uses crises to profit, pushing quick solutions while creating an artificial divide between humans and nature. For instance, promoting bottled water and air purifiers that do not address root causes.

4. Role of education: Education is often seen as a tool for quick fixes, such as organizing poster competitions and marches, which may raise awareness but seldom lead to deep understanding or substantial change.

What is the role of education in addressing crises?

1. Education is pressured to respond to crises through awareness programs and action plans.

2. However, these efforts often prioritize immediate solutions over deeper reflection. For example, poster competitions and cleanliness marches focus on activities rather than meaningful understanding.

3. Freud's essay *On Transience* suggests mourning helps people reconcile with loss and adapt to change.

4. Instead of promoting hyperoptimistic programs like happiness curriculums, education should teach individuals to feel loss and create thoughtful, grounded responses to crises.

Conclusion

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In conclusion, addressing global crises requires more than quick, superficial actions. As Hannah Arendt and Freud suggest, meaningful responses emerge from deep reflection and understanding of our losses. Education should prioritize these elements, fostering genuine connection and empathy, rather than pushing immediate, profit-driven solutions that widen the gap between humans and nature.

Question for practice:

Examine how education can contribute to meaningful responses to crises rather than promoting superficial solutions.

National Sample Survey Contributions and Key Lessons

Source: The post National Sample Survey Contributions and Key Lessons has been created, based on the article "**Lessons from the 75-year-old National Sample Survey**" published in "**Live mint**" on 9th January 2025

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

Context: The article highlights the National Sample Survey's (NSS) contribution to India's policymaking since the 1950s. It discusses its successes, autonomy, global impact, a flawed 1999-2000 survey, and missed opportunities to involve states and universities in data collection.

For detailed information on **National Sample Survey Organisation** read this article here

What is the Significance of the NSS?

The National Sample Survey (NSS) has provided critical data for India's development plans since the 1950s. Former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee praised the NSS for its dedicated and often unrecognized work in collecting valuable statistical data through detailed field surveys.

What are the Key Lessons from the NSS?

1. Importance of Public-Spirited Innovation:

• The NSS was established through collaboration with the Indian Statistical Institute (ISI) and Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics (GIPE).

• Its methodology inspired global practices and influenced the US Census modifications in the 1960s.

2. Need for Autonomy:

• The NSS was initially managed by researchers from ISI and became autonomous in 1970, ensuring unbiased data collection.

• However, autonomy was compromised during the controversial 1999-2000 survey, where political pressures led to a flawed survey design, as criticized by Nobel laureate Angus Deaton.

3. Challenges of a Centralized Model:

• Centralized data collection limited the usefulness of state-level data for policymaking.

• The original vision of utilizing state data to validate central data never materialized, reducing the potential for localized policy interventions.

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What Could Have Been Improved?

1. **Decentralized Data Collection:** The centralized model of the NSS limited the use of state-level data, which was often viewed as unreliable by policymakers. Collaborating with local institutions could have enhanced the diversity and reliability of data sets.

2. **Collaboration with Academic Institutions:** Expanding partnerships beyond initial collaborators like the Indian Statistical Institute could have fostered a richer data ecosystem, improving survey methods and results.

3. **Continuous Innovation:** Following the early years, innovation slowed. Reinvigorating the initial spirit of pilot experiments and analytical studies recommended by the Rangarajan commission could have maintained the NSS's relevance and accuracy.

Question for practice:

Examine the significance of the National Sample Survey (NSS) in shaping India's policymaking and the lessons learned from its successes and challenges.

Addressing Key Challenges to Boost India's Growth

Source: The post Addressing Key Challenges to Boost India's Growth has been created, based on the article "**Fix India's bond market to lift economic growth**" published in "**Live mint**" on 9th January 2025

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

Context: The article discusses India's slowing economic growth, highlighting struggles in private investment, low manufacturing capacity, and challenges in infrastructure. It emphasizes the need for proactive policies, increased public investment, a new public-private partnership model, and a stronger bond market for economic expansion.

For detailed information on **Growth Challenges for Viksit Bharat** read this article here

What Issues are Hindering Economic Growth?

1. **Slowing Growth Rate**: India's growth rate for 2024-25 is estimated at **6.4%**, as per the National Statistics Office, which is lower than earlier projections and the central bank's revised estimates.

2. **Low Private Investment**: Manufacturing capacity utilization has been stuck at **75%** for about a decade, leading to a lack of incentive for private sector investments in factories.

3. **Household Debt**: Household indebtedness has risen, indicating financial strain on families and reducing their ability to spend, which impacts economic growth.

4. **Public Spending Delays**: Up to **November 2024**, the government spent only **46.2%** of its budgeted capital outlay, despite collecting **59%** of budgeted revenues, slowing public investment.

5. **Infrastructure Challenges**: Infrastructure development relies heavily on the government as private sector participation has declined, disrupting the balance needed for optimal results.

6. **Weak Bond Market**: India's bond market is underdeveloped, with uneven regulation by the RBI for government securities and SEBI for corporate bonds. Long debt recovery processes and weak contract enforcement further stifle growth.

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What should be done?

1. **Revitalize PPP Models:** Establishing clear public-private partnership frameworks can attract private investment, especially in infrastructure.

2. **Improve the Bond Market:** By reforming the bond market to better integrate government and corporate bonds, and reducing regulatory discrepancies, investment in long-gestation projects could be supported more effectively.

3. **Address Debt Market Issues:** Fixing issues like long debt recovery times and weak contract enforcement is crucial. Making the bond market more accessible can reduce the costs and increase the efficiency of funding infrastructure projects.

Question for practice:

Examine how proactive policies, public investment, and a revitalized public-private partnership model could address the challenges hindering India's economic growth

River Interlinking and challenges

Source: This post on River Interlinking and challenges has been created based on article "**The right to food and the struggle with the PDS" published in The Hindu on 9th January 2025.**

UPSC Syllabus-GS 3- Environment

Context: The article critically examines India's ambitious river interlinking project, with a focus on the Ken-Betwa River Link Project recently initiated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Framed as a solution to water scarcity, particularly in drought-prone areas like Bundelkhand, the project entails linking supposedly surplus rivers with deficient ones. However, the article argues that such interventions are environmentally, socially, and economically disastrous, disregarding the complex ecological systems and the critical functions of free-flowing rivers.
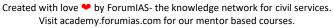
What is the Ken-Betwa River Link Project?
1. The Ken-Betwa River Link Project, inaugurated on December 25, 2024, aims to address water scarcity in the Bundelkhand region of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh.
2. The project involves linking the water-surplus Ken River with the drought-affected Betwa River and includes constructing a dam within the Panna Tiger Reserve, raising concerns about environmental submergence.

Why is the River Interlinking Model Criticized?

1. **Flawed Premises**: The project, costing around ₹45,000 crore, was launched despite objections from experts and the Supreme Court's empowered committee. It circumvents stringent laws regulating hydroelectric projects.
2. **Historical Context**: Initially proposed 130 years ago by Sir Arthur Cotton and refined by engineers like M. Visvesvaraya, the concept has been periodically revived, most recently as the River-Interlinking Project (ILR) under India's National Perspective Plan.
3. **Economic and Social Costs**: The estimated cost of ₹5.5 lakh crore does not account for social, environmental, and operational costs, ultimately burdening taxpayers.
4. **Environmental Impact**: River interlinking disregards natural hydrographic systems and poses a risk to ecological balance, potentially exacerbated by climate change.

What Are the Environmental Services of Rivers?

1. **Silt and Delta Formation**: Rivers transport silt to coastal waters, forming deltas critical for biodiversity and land fertility.

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2. **Flood Waters**: These replenish minerals, recharge groundwater, and sustain ecosystems.
3. **Deltaic Ecosystems**: Diverting river water starves deltas, disrupting their balance with seawater and harming ecosystems.

Are There Global Examples of Similar Failures?

Yes, examples highlight the risks of large-scale river manipulation:

1. **Indus Delta**: Once rich in biodiversity, it deteriorated due to barrage construction initiated by the British and continued by Pakistan.
2. **Kissimmee River, Florida**: Channelisation in the 1950s led to wetland loss, requiring expensive restoration efforts.
3. **Aral Sea**: Excessive irrigation projects turned one of the world's largest lakes into a desert under Soviet policies.

What Is the Real Cause of India's Water Crisis?

India's water crisis stems from:

1. **Inadequate Management**: Poor water governance and lack of clarity in laws.
2. **Corruption**: Mismanagement of water-related resources and projects.
3. **Policy Shortcomings**: Limited focus on watershed management, inefficient irrigation, and wastewater reuse.

What Are Potential Solutions for India's Water Crisis?
1. **Modern Irrigation**: Learning from Israel's drip irrigation, which saves 25%-75% of water, reducing dependency on aquifers.
2. **Local Involvement**: Empower citizens to monitor water systems and work with hydrologists, engineers, and biologists.
3. **Aquifer Management**: Regulate water extraction and maintain aquifer health.
4. **Watershed Strategies**: Incorporate vernacular practices for sustainable water management.

How Does River Interlinking Contradict India's Religious Beliefs?

Despite the Hindu reverence for rivers, India's rivers face existential threats due to:

1. **Over-Damming**: Excessive dam construction disrupting river ecosystems.
2. **Pollution**: Industrial and human waste degrading river health.
3. **Commercialization**: Treating rivers as commodities for religious or economic purposes.

The Right to Food and Challenges with the PDS

Source: This post on The Right to Food and Challenges with the PDS has been created based on article "**The right to food and the struggle with the PDS**"published in The Hindu on 9th January 2025.

Syllabus: GS Paper- 3- Economy

Context: The article delves into the challenges faced by marginalized communities in accessing their fundamental right to food through the Public Distribution System (PDS), particularly in states like Jharkhand, Odisha, and Bihar. It highlights the systemic failures, corruption, and bureaucratic hurdles that have compounded the issues surrounding food security for some of India's most vulnerable populations.

What recent reports have highlighted issues with the Public Distribution System (PDS)?
1. In 2023, reports from Jharkhand and Odisha revealed alarming issues: a substantial number of households were removed from the PDS rolls.
2. Bihar also faces its own PDS crisis, affecting vulnerable communities.

What challenges does the Musahar community face with the PDS in Bihar?
1. **Supply Crisis:** The COVID-19 pandemic left many communities, including the Musahars, without a stable supply of rations.

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2. **Ration Card Issues:**
    a. Many Musahar households in Patna district lack active ration cards.
    b. Existing ration cards often fail to include all family members.
3. **Biometric Verification Problems:**
    a. Mandatory biometric verification has resulted in many losing access to rations.
    b. Names are often struck off the PDS rolls, forcing individuals to apply for new ration cards.
4. **Quality and Quantity of Rations:**
    a. FPS dealers often provide only 4 kg of rice per person instead of the entitled 5 kg under Priority Household (PHH) cards.
    b. The rice distributed is of the lowest quality ("Usna" rice), with no wheat issued.

What are the documentation challenges for PDS enrolment?

1. **Application Process in Bihar:**
    a. Paper-based forms require Aadhaar details.
    b. Online applications mandate additional documents, including caste, income, and residence certificates.
2. **Legal Basis:**
    a. The demand for these certificates lacks legal support under the National Food Security Act (2013) or the PDS Control Order (2015).
    b. Officials acknowledge this requirement as an oversight in the digitised system.

How does systemic failure lead to exploitation?

1. **Middlemen Exploitation:**
    a. Vulnerable communities, particularly the Musahars, lack resources or knowledge to navigate online systems.
    b. Middlemen exploit them by charging over ₹3,000 for ration card processing.
    c. In many cases, neither the card is issued nor the middleman traceable after payment.
2. **Delayed Applications:**
    a. Applications often remain pending for 4–18 months, far beyond the 30-day timeline stipulated in the 2015 order.

What is the broader implication of these challenges?

1. The government's failure to address systemic flaws has created a bureaucratic maze that denies people access to their basic means of subsistence.
2. Despite the right to food being declared a fundamental right in 2001 (People's Union of Civil Liberties vs Union of India), excessive red tape has obstructed its implementation, harming the very people it aims to serve.

The Significance of Deciphering the Indus Script

Source: This post on **The Significance of Deciphering the Indus Script has been based on article "Why is deciphering the Indus script important?" published in The Hindu on 9ᵗʰ January 2025.**

UPSC Syllabus- GS 1-History

Context: The article explores the significance of deciphering the script of the **Indus Valley Civilisation (IVC)**, one of the earliest urban civilizations, and the potential connections between the Indus script and the Dravidian languages, particularly Tamil. The Tamil Nadu Chief Minister's announcement of a $1-million prize for deciphering the script underscores the ongoing efforts to understand the mysterious writing system, which holds the key to unraveling the full cultural, linguistic, and historical scope of the IVC.

Why is deciphering the Indus script important?

1. Deciphering the Indus script, often called a "mystery script," is critical to understanding the complete cultural picture of the Indus Valley Civilisation (IVC).

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2. Other contemporary scripts like those from Mesopotamian and Egyptian civilizations have been deciphered. The inability to decipher the Indus script leaves gaps in understanding its culture and history.

Why is Tamil Nadu particularly interested in the Indus scripts?

1. The announcement stems from the Dravidian hypothesis, which posits a connection between the Indus scripts and proto-Dravidian languages.
2. This theory has been debated since the discovery of the IVC and is supported by scholars such as Iravatham Mahadevan, Asko Parpola, and others.

What is the Indus Valley Civilisation?
1. The IVC, also known as the Harappan Civilisation, spanned 2,000 sites across 1.5 million sq. km. in present-day India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan.
2. It existed during the Bronze Age (3000-1500 BCE) and had a wider geographical area than the Egyptian and Mesopotamian civilizations combined.
3. The IVC introduced urban life along ancient migration routes connecting central and western Asia to India.

What is the Dravidian hypothesis regarding the Indus script?

1. The hypothesis suggests that the Indus script encodes a proto-Dravidian language. Scholars cite:
   a. The survival of Brahui, a Dravidian language, in the Indus region.
   b. Dravidian loanwords in the Rigveda.
   c. Substratum influence of Dravidian on Prakrit dialects.
   d. Computer analyses showing that the language in the Indus script likely used suffixes (like Dravidian) but not prefixes or infixes.
2. Scholars like Iravatham Mahadevan emphasize that while evidence supports the Dravidian theory, much work remains to confirm it.

What are the recent findings from Tamil Nadu?

1. A study commissioned by Tamil Nadu's State Department of Archaeology (TNSDA) reveals that 90% of graffiti marks found in Tamil Nadu share parallels with the Indus script.
2. The study differentiates "graffiti" (ceramic engravings) from "script" (seals and metal objects) but finds both to be related undeciphered signs.
3. Out of 42 base signs and their variants, 60% have parallels in the Indus script.

What evidence suggests cultural contact between the IVC and south India?

The study posits a possible cultural exchange between the two regions:

o Identical graffiti marks in Tamil Nadu and the Indus region suggest shared elements.
o Artifacts such as carnelian and agate beads, and high-tin bronze objects in Iron Age graves in south India indicate trade or contact.
o The Copper Age of the Indus Valley coincided with the Iron Age of south India, making cultural exchange plausible through direct or intermediate zones.

What further evidence is needed?

- The presence of semiprecious stones, copper, and high-tin bronze indicates trade, but more tangible evidence is required.
- Future studies should include excavations, scientific investigations, and historical linguistic analysis to confirm cultural connections.

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Why is further research important?

- The findings highlight the potential relationship between the Indus script and south Indian culture, but additional material evidence and linguistic analysis are essential for conclusive proof.
- The $1-million prize and recent studies aim to inspire further exploration to unlock the mysteries of the Indus script and its cultural significance.

Right to Information Act

Source: This post on **Right to Information Act** has been based on article "**Cripple and scuttle** - Governments are discouraging the exercise of the right to information " published in The Hindu on 9th January 2025.

UPSC Syllabus- GS 2- Polity

Context: The article highlights the challenges facing the implementation and efficacy of the Right to Information (RTI) Act in India, which was enacted nearly two decades ago to promote transparency and accountability in governance. Despite its potential to empower citizens and ensure governmental accountability, successive governments have shown discomfort with the Act's provisions, often attempting to dilute its effectiveness.

Why is the Right to Information Act under threat?

1. Nearly two decades after its enactment, governments remain uncomfortable with the transparency and empowerment the Right to Information (RTI) Act brings.
2. Efforts to weaken the law include:
   a. Amendments to dilute its efficacy.
   b. Delays or denials of requested information.
   c. Undermining the functioning of Information Commissions by leaving vacancies unfilled.

What is the current status of Information Commissions in India?

The Supreme Court noted significant vacancies in both central and State Information Commissions:

- Eight vacancies exist in the Central Information Commission (CIC), with 23,000 appeals pending.
- Some State-level Information Commissions are nearly defunct due to a lack of members to handle cases.

Why are Information Commissions important?

These commissions handle appeals from the public when:

o Access to information is denied.
o No response is received from designated information officers.

What concerns has the Supreme Court raised?

1. The Court questioned how the RTI framework can function effectively without adequate personnel.
2. It highlighted the urgent need to address vacancies to ensure the RTI Act's purpose is fulfilled.

What steps has the Supreme Court mandated?

1. Directed the Department of Personnel and Training to:
   a. Provide timelines within two weeks for completing the appointment process for CIC vacancies.
   b. Share details of the search committee and applicants for the posts.
2. States were instructed to complete their appointment processes within a fixed timeframe.

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What additional challenges hinder the RTI framework?

1. Non-compliance with the 2019 Supreme Court verdict:
    a. Governments were instructed to proactively fill vacancies by advertising early.
2. Autonomy of the CIC undermined:
    a. A fixed five-year tenure for Information Commissioners was replaced with an open-ended tenure.
3. Limited diversity in appointments:
    a. Preference for retired civil servants over candidates from varied backgrounds, as noted by the Supreme Court.

What are the consequences of vacancies and delays?

1. A large backlog of cases discourages people from filing appeals or seeking information.
2. This aligns with suspicions that those in power deliberately undermine the RTI framework to reduce accountability.

What needs to be done to restore the RTI Act's efficacy?

1. Governments must:
    a. Expedite appointments and maintain full staffing in Information Commissions.
    b. Comply with court directives on early advertisements for vacancies.
    c. Ensure appointments include diverse candidates and restore the autonomy of the CIC.
2. Without these measures, the RTI Act risks losing its purpose of ensuring transparency and empowering citizens.

India's Financial Needs for Growth by 2047

Source: The post India's Financial Needs for Growth by 2047 has been created, based on the article "**Financing India's future growth is a challenge that must be met**" published in "**Live mint**" on 10th January 2025

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

Context: The article discusses India's need for financial capital to sustain economic growth and achieve development by 2047. It highlights the importance of increasing private investments, foreign capital, and expanding the corporate bond market. It also emphasizes improving investment norms for insurance and pension funds.

For detailed information on **Boosting India's Economy through Innovation and Reform** read this article here

What Financial Goals Does India Have for 2047?

1. India aims to become a developed country by 2047, needing a growth rate of 7%-7.5% per year.
2. The National Infrastructure Pipeline requires an investment of $1.3 trillion, and the energy sector needs $250 billion annually until 2047.

3. The MSME sector requires $1.5 trillion for scaling up and digital transformation.

4. The chief economic advisor estimates that India's gross fixed capital formation needs to go up from the current 28% of GDP to at least 35% on a sustained basis.

What is the current status of India's financial capital?

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1. **Public Capital Expenditure:** Increased from **3.6% of GDP in 2019-20 to 5.6% in 2023-24**, mostly focused on infrastructure development.

2. **Private Investments:** Indian corporates have reduced their debt-equity ratio from **1.2% to 0.9%**, showing financial readiness. Equity fundraising through IPOs, QIPs, and rights issues crossed ₹3 trillion in 2024, a **64% rise from ₹1.88 trillion in 2021**.

3. **Domestic Savings:** Declined from pre-pandemic levels of **20% of GDP to 18%**, with more investments going into physical assets.

4. **Foreign Investments:** FDI remains stagnant at **$70-85 billion annually**, while private equity and venture capital contribute around **$50-55 billion annually**.

5. **Corporate Bond Market:** Underdeveloped, representing only **16% of GDP**, compared to the global average of **40%**.

How can India secure the financial capital needed for growth by 2047?

Increase Private Investments: Encourage public-private partnerships (PPPs), divestments, and manufacturing incentives. Indian companies are well-positioned, with strong balance sheets and a 64% rise in equity fundraising in 2024.

Attract Foreign Capital: Boost FDI (currently stagnant at $70-85 billion) by improving ease of doing business, contract enforcement, and tariff clarity. Strengthen private equity (PE) and venture capital (VC) inflows.

Expand the Corporate Bond Market: Deepen the market, which is currently 16% of GDP, compared to the global average of 40%. Provide quality bonds and attract diverse investors for infrastructure and manufacturing funding.

Reform Insurance and Pension Funds:

• Greater participation by insurance and pension funds can strengthen India's bond market.

• In the U.S., pension funds typically allocate **40-50% of their corpus to equities**, **20-30% to bonds**, and **10-15% to private equity (PE)**, with the rest in venture capital (VC) and real estate.

• In contrast, Indian life insurance funds must invest **50% of their corpus in government securities**, while under the National Pension System (NPS), people above 55 years must allocate **75% to government securities**. Relaxing these norms in India can allow funds to invest more in corporate bonds, equities, and alternative assets, improving returns for investors and mobilizing greater capital for the economy.

Question for practice:

Evaluate how India can secure the financial capital needed to achieve its growth and development goals by 2047.

Earthquakes in Himalayas Threaten Lives and Infrastructure

Source: The post Earthquakes in Himalayas Threaten Lives and Infrastructure has been created, based on the article "**Damage control: Adherence to existing regulations can limit the impact of earthquakes**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 10th January 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3-Disaster and disaster management.

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Context: The article discusses a recent earthquake in Tibet that caused damage and deaths. It highlights the seismic risks in the Himalayas, overdue massive earthquakes, and the need for earthquake-resistant infrastructure and building codes to limit damage in vulnerable regions.

For detailed information on **Restoring the Ecological Health of the Himalayas** read this article here

Why are earthquakes in the Himalayas dangerous?

1. **Tectonic Plate Movements**: The Indian plate collides with the Eurasian plate, creating fault lines that store energy.

2. **Seismic History**: The Himalayas have a history of major earthquakes, like the 2015 Nepal quakes, which killed over 9,000 people.

3. **Overdue Earthquake**: Scientists warn of an overdue earthquake in the Garhwal-Kumaon range. Data from the last 300 years shows that not all energy in the fault lines has been released. Experts predict a magnitude 8 earthquake in the region.

4. **Fragile Infrastructure**: Recurrent landslides and glacial lake outbursts damage dams, hydropower projects, and roads.

5. **Wide Impact Area**: Recent tremors in Tibet were felt in Nepal, Bihar, and New Delhi, highlighting regional vulnerability.

How can we reduce earthquake damage?

1. **Build Earthquake-Resistant Infrastructure**: Follow building codes in the Himalayas and Indo-Gangetic plains to reduce structural damage.

2. **Account for Regional Fragility**: Consider recurrent landslides and glacial lake outbursts when designing dams, roads, and hydropower projects.

3. **Focus on Long-Term Planning**: Factor the costs of natural disasters into development plans for the Himalayan region.

For detailed information on **NISAR satellite to map Himalayas' seismic zones** read this article here

Question for practice:

Discuss the reasons why earthquakes in the Himalayas are particularly dangerous and the measures that can be taken to reduce their impact.

Delhi High Court Order State on sexual abuse

Source: The post Delhi High Court Order State on sexual abuse has been created, based on the article "**The lack of empathy for survivors of sexual violence, assault**" published in "**Indian Express**" on 10th 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 Delhi High Court's order mandating free medical treatment for survivors of rape, child sexual abuse, and acid attacks. It highlights issues like lack of clothes for victims after forensic examinations and urges better support systems.

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What Does the Delhi High Court Order State on sexual abuse?

1. The Delhi High Court ruled on December 10, 2024, that all hospitals must provide **free medical treatment** to victims of rape, child sexual abuse, and acid attacks.

2. Treatment includes first aid, diagnosis, surgeries, counseling (physical and psychological), and family support.

3. **Hospitals cannot demand ID proof** before providing emergency care to victims.

Denial of free medical treatment is a criminal offense punishable by **one-year imprisonment, fine, or both**.

4. The Ministry of Health Guidelines (2014) require hospitals to offer free services such as pathology tests, radiology, and medicines.

5. The court highlighted that hospitals **routinely deny free treatment**, even as courts hear rape and child sexual abuse cases in **large numbers**, signaling a **grave governance crisis**.

6. The **political class fails to treat sexual violence as a public health issue**, ignoring victims' urgent needs.

7. The ruling emphasizes "therapeutic jurisprudence" to restore victims' dignity and health.

8. **Clothes and personal items seized** during forensic investigations must be replaced by the state, ensuring victims are not left vulnerable.

What is the broader significance of the judgment?

The order highlights the need for dignity, safety, and comprehensive care for survivors of sexual violence. It calls for societal and institutional changes to ensure their rights are protected.

Question for practice:

Examine the key directives and broader significance of the Delhi High Court's order for survivors of sexual violence.

India strengthens ties with Taliban amidst challenges

Source: The post India strengthens ties with Taliban amidst challenges has been created, based on the article "**India-Taliban talks — realism in Acting West**" published in "**Indian Express**" on 10th January 2025

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

Context: The article discusses India's growing engagement with the Taliban, highlighted by Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri's meeting. It examines regional tensions, Pakistan's challenges with the TTP, and India's humanitarian aid to Afghanistan, emphasizing the need for strategic cooperation despite non-recognition. For detailed information on **India-Afghanistan Relations** read this article here

What was the significance of Vikram Misri's meeting with the Taliban?

1. **Elevated Dialogue**: The meeting marked a shift from functional-level talks to senior-level engagement with the Taliban.

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2. **Geopolitical Context**: It came after India condemned Pakistani airstrikes in Afghanistan, which killed women and children.

What challenges is Pakistan facing?

1. **Taliban Support for TTP:** The Taliban supports the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), which has 6,000–6,500 fighters attacking Pakistan from Afghanistan.

2. **Border Tensions:** The Taliban refuses to recognize the Durand Line, dismissing Pakistani demands for border crossings with documents.

3. **Aggression Allegations:** Pakistan's airstrikes in Afghanistan, aimed at TTP camps, are labeled as "aggression" by Kabul, straining relations.

4. **Backfiring Policies:** Pakistan's past support for the Taliban during the Soviet era has led to threats on its western flank.

5. **Internal Instability:** Rising TTP attacks fueled by Pashtun nationalism challenge Pakistan's security.
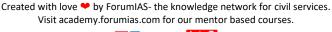
What is the global response to the Taliban?

1. The Taliban has not received formal recognition internationally.

2. The UN Credentials Committee rejected their recognition request for the fourth consecutive year.

3. Comparisons are made with Syria's Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), which is being engaged by diplomats despite its human rights violations.

4. Links between the Taliban, Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), and al-Qaeda hinder recognition efforts.

5. Nations like China, Russia, Iran, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan interact with the Taliban through local missions.

6. After the Taliban's takeover, India had recalled all its personnel but later restituted its presence in Kabul by dispatching a "technical team" to its embassy in 2022.

What role does India play in Afghanistan's humanitarian needs?

1. India has provided essential aid like wheat, medicines, vaccines, blankets, and stationery.

2. It sent Covid and polio vaccines, anti-tuberculosis medicines, and surgical items.

3. Rs 200 crore was allocated for Afghanistan in the 2024-25 Union Budget.

4. India supports refugee rehabilitation and Afghanistan's health sector.

5. Pakistan's expulsion of 5,00,000 refugees worsened the humanitarian crisis.

How can India strengthen its position in Afghanistan?

1. **Leverage Cricket Diplomacy**: Strengthen ties by supporting Afghan players in the IPL and fostering youth engagement through cricket.

2. **Partner with Iran**: Use Chabahar Port for trade and humanitarian aid, collaborating closely with Iran.

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3. **Resume Development Projects**: Capitalize on traditional friendship by reviving infrastructure and development initiatives.

Question for practice:

Examine how India's growing engagement with the Taliban reflects its strategic priorities and humanitarian efforts in Afghanistan.

India's potential to become a tech-driven economy in 2025

Source: The post India's potential to become a tech-driven economy in 2025 has been created, based on the article "**2025: India's tech transformation year**" published in "**Business Standard**" on 10th January 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3-Science and Technology- developments and their applications and effects in everyday life. Achievements of Indians in science & technology

Context: The article discusses India's potential to become a tech-driven economy in 2025. It emphasizes policy reforms, R&D funding, and key areas like AI, cybersecurity, quantum tech, data monetization, semiconductors, space, and air mobility to boost innovation and economic growth.

For detailed information on **Digital Economy** read this article here
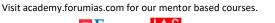
What are India's Economic Goals for 2025?

1. India aims to become a $4 trillion economy by 2025 and exceed Japan as the fourth-largest global economy.

2. The country's progression toward becoming the third-largest economy relies on effective use of emerging technologies.

What Are the Key Policy Reforms for 2025?

1. India plans to invest ₹1 trillion in private sector R&D and open up R&D in critical sectors like defense and energy.

2. Other reforms include improving government procurement policies, emphasizing skill development in technologies like quantum computing and cybersecurity, and promoting global trade of local products.

How Will Emerging Technologies Boost India's Economy?

1. **Global Contribution Potential:** Emerging technologies could add $29-$48 trillion globally by 2040, presenting a huge economic opportunity for India.

2. **Innovation and Jobs:** Producing technologies fosters innovation, creates jobs, and reduces import reliance. Example: Dominance in semiconductors and e-commerce by key global players.

3. **Multiplier Effects:** Technology adoption improves efficiency, boosts productivity, and stimulates innovation across sectors.

4. **Geospatial Data Utilization:** Initiatives like PM Gati Shakti and drone policies support infrastructure and project planning.

5. **Cloud Market Potential:** Capturing 5% of the global cloud market by 2030 could create a $100 billion industry.

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What Specific Technologies Will India Focus On in 2025?

1. **Artificial Intelligence (AI):** India plans to accelerate AI adoption in healthcare, education, and agriculture. It will prioritize subsidized AI models for these sectors and expedite empanelment of vendors for 10,000 GPUs. The focus will also include building localized AI models using API-based access to India's data assets.

2. **Cybersecurity:** India will enact stringent cybersecurity regulations for critical sectors like power, transportation, and healthcare. Early implementation of the DPDP Act 2023 and promoting digital forensics with indigenous tools will be critical.

3. **Quantum Technologies:** A nodal ministry will oversee quantum technologies in defense, healthcare, and finance. Plans include adopting quantum key distribution and post-quantum cryptography solutions, along with quantum-safe satellite communications.

4. **Geospatial Data:** India will complete nationwide geospatial data compilation and expand the PM Gati Shakti plan to all projects.

5. **Semiconductors:** Steps include operationalizing fab projects, incentivizing supply ecosystems.

6. India is set to advance in the drone industry, including setting up vertiports and enhancing air mobility management.

7. In space, steps include finalizing satellite spectrum allocation and promoting private industry participation in satellite services.

Question for practice:

Examine how India's focus on emerging technologies and policy reforms is expected to drive its economic growth and global competitiveness by 2025.
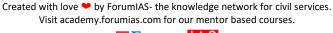
Arguments related to Dual Citizenship

Source: This post on **Arguments related to Dual Citizenship** has been created based on article **"Is India open to the idea of dual citizenship?"** published in The Hindu on 10th January 2025.

UPSC Syllabus- GS-2 -Polity

Context: The article discusses the complex and sensitive issue of granting **dual citizenship** to Indians settled abroad, a topic that has long been debated in India but remains unresolved. The conversation revolves around the remarks made by India's External Affairs Minister, S. Jaishankar, who acknowledged the challenges of introducing dual citizenship but emphasized that the debate on the matter is ongoing.

1. **Divided Loyalties**: Both Amitabh Mattoo and Vivek Katju emphasize the risks of dual citizenship creating individuals with divided political loyalties, which could undermine India's sovereignty. Mattoo explicitly states that political rights, such as voting, should not be extended to individuals with allegiance to another country.

2. **Legal and Constitutional Constraints**: The Indian Constitution and Citizenship Act make it clear that acquiring citizenship in another country requires renunciation of Indian citizenship. This legal framework underscores India's stance on political exclusivity and sovereignty.

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3. **Risk of Foreign Influence**: Allowing dual citizenship could inadvertently empower foreign-aligned interests, posing a potential risk to India's internal political processes.

4. **No Precedent for Leadership with Dual Citizenship**: Examples like the U.S., where even citizens born outside the country cannot hold certain positions (e.g., the presidency), highlight the rigidity of political rights tied to undivided national allegiance.

Arguments Supporting Flexibility (Though Not Dual Citizenship)

1. **Diaspora's Contribution**: The Indian diaspora has significantly bolstered bilateral relations, foreign investment, and India's global image. Initiatives like the Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI) card offer a bridge without full citizenship.

2. **Global Citizenship Trend**: With the increasing mobility of skilled workers and professionals, some argue that citizenship laws globally need to adapt to this reality. However, neither Mattoo nor Katju fully endorses this argument for India.

3. **Economic Integration**: The diaspora's role in attracting foreign investments (e.g., through tech leaders like Satya Nadella) highlights the economic potential, though they agree this doesn't justify extending political rights.

Challenges to Implementing Dual Citizenship

- **Defining Eligibility**: Differentiating between NRIs and PIOs complicates policy implementation. While NRIs retain Indian citizenship, PIOs do not.
- **Global Precedents**: Few countries with significant diasporas offer dual citizenship without significant constraints or exclusions.

Accessibility Rules: Moving Towards a Principle-Based Framework

Source: This post on **Accessibility Rules: Moving Towards a Principle-Based Framework** has been created based on article **"We need accessibility rules that are based on principles"** published in The Hindu on 10th January 2025.

UPSC Syllabus- GS-2 -Polity

Context: The article discusses the Supreme Court's landmark judgment in **Rajive Raturi v. Union of India (2024)**, which declared **Rule 15 of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Rules, 2017**, violative of the **Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016**. The Court criticized the discretionary nature of Rule 15, as it conflicted with the mandatory obligations imposed by the Act to ensure accessibility for persons with disabilities.

What did the Supreme Court rule in Rajive Raturi v. Union of India (2024)?

1. The Supreme Court invalidated Rule 15 of the RPwD Rules, 2017, as it conflicted with the mandatory provisions of the RPwD Act, 2016.
2. The Court observed that the Rule's discretionary nature undermined mandatory obligations under the Act.
3. Striking down Rule 15 also nullified the statutory authority of existing accessibility guidelines, prompting the Court to direct the government to create minimum mandatory accessibility requirements within three months.

How Should Accessibility and Reasonable Accommodation Be Understood?

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1. **Accessibility**: A right based on universal and standardized provisions ensuring inclusivity across all systems from the outset.
2. **Reasonable Accommodation**: Tailored solutions addressing specific challenges faced by individuals in specific contexts.
3. Both are complementary and interdependent, forming the foundation for substantive equality.

Why Do Accessibility Parameters Need to Evolve?

1. **Dynamic Needs**: With technologies like AI and IoT, accessibility must adapt to ensure inclusivity in both physical and digital ecosystems.
2. **Phased Realization**: Accessibility should follow a sliding-scale approach, setting minimum immediate standards while moving towards comprehensive goals, akin to Canada's roadmap for full accessibility by 2040.
3. **Tangible and Intangible Barriers**: The RPwD Act recognizes barriers in their broadest form, from physical infrastructure to societal attitudes, making regular updates essential.

How Does Universal Design Broaden the Scope of Accessibility?

1. Universal design caters not only to persons with disabilities but also to vulnerable groups like women, children, and the elderly.
2. It emphasizes that disability often arises from environmental or situational factors, such as age-related issues, pregnancy, or high cognitive workloads.

What Role Do Social Audits Play in Accessibility Compliance?

1. Social audits mandated under Section 48 of the RPwD Act ensure that schemes and programs meet the needs of persons with disabilities.
2. **Challenges**: A lack of standardized guidelines, insufficient auditor training, and unclear methodologies lead to inconsistencies between the Centre and States.
3. **Solution**: Clear guidelines and broader operationalization of audits can identify changing challenges and enhance service delivery.

What Challenges Did Earlier Accessibility Rules Face?

1. **Overlapping Jurisdiction**: Conflicting mandates across ministries (e.g., sports complexes governed by multiple ministries).
2. **Bureaucratic Complexity**: Technicalities and contradictions delayed relief for persons with disabilities and increased compliance costs.
3. **Lack of Clarity**: The absence of streamlined processes made implementation difficult.

What Should the New Accessibility Rules Address?

1. **Clarity and Simplicity**: Direct, practical rules avoiding bureaucratic complexity.
2. **Nodal Authority**: Designate regulators or the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment to ensure coordination.
3. **Immediate and Long-Term Goals**: Establish a sliding baseline for accessibility standards to evolve periodically.

Section 152 of the BNS

Source: This post on **Section 152 of the BNS** has been created based on article **"Section 152 of BNS should not become a proxy for sedition"** published in The Hindu on 10th January 2025.

UPSC Syllabus- GS-2 -Polity

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Context: The article addresses concerns over the potential misuse of **Section 152 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS)**, enacted as part of India's new criminal law framework. Although the government proclaimed the repeal of **Section 124A (sedition)** of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), the author argues that Section 152 of the BNS serves as a **proxy for sedition**, raising similar threats to freedom of speech and dissent.

What was the context of the Rajasthan High Court's warning in Tejender Pal Singh v. State of Rajasthan (2024)?

1. The Rajasthan High Court cautioned against using Section 152 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) to stifle legitimate dissent.
2. This follows the Supreme Court's 2022 decision to suspend pending criminal trials under Section 124A (sedition) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) until the government reconsidered the law.
3. The Union Home Minister had earlier proclaimed that 'sedition' would be repealed.
4. Section 152 of the BNS criminalises acts exciting secession, armed rebellion, and subversive activities, as well as those encouraging separatism or endangering India's sovereignty, unity, and integrity.
5. Although the term "sedition" is not used, concerns arise that Section 152 replicates the essence of the repealed provision.

What are the problems with Section 152 of the BNS?

1. **Lack of Definition and Vague Terms**
- Section 152 criminalises acts "endangering the sovereignty, unity, and integrity of India" but does not define what constitutes such endangerment.
- This vagueness leaves room for expansive interpretation by authorities, potentially stifling dissent.
- For example, criticism of historical or political figures could be construed as threatening unity or integrity.
2. **Low Threshold for Offence**
- The term "knowingly" lowers the threshold for liability.
- Sharing a post on social media, even without malicious intent, could lead to prosecution if it reaches a larger audience and provokes prohibited activities or feelings.
- Section 152 does not require prima facie evidence of a causal link between speech and its consequences, risking misuse.
3. **Chilling Effect on Free Speech**
- Section 152 is cognisable and non-bailable, making it prone to abuse like Section 124A IPC.
- National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data shows that from 2015 to 2020, 548 persons were arrested for sedition under Section 124A IPC, but only 12 were convicted.
- Section 152, being broader, poses an even greater risk of misuse.

What are judicial precedents on balancing free speech and national interest?

Consequentialist Approach: The judiciary has emphasized considering the actual impact of speech rather than the speech itself.

a. *Balwant Singh v. State of Punjab (1995):* Distinguished casual sloganeering from its consequences, requiring a direct causal nexus to determine an offence.
b. *Javed Ahmad Hazam v. State of Maharashtra (2024):* Judged speech by the standards of "reasonable, strong-minded" individuals, not "weak and vacillating" minds.
c. *Kedar Nath Singh v. State of Bihar (1962):* Differentiated "disloyalty towards the government" from strong criticism of its policies.

What is the way forward for Section 152 BNS?

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1. **Judicial Guidelines:** The Supreme Court should establish guidelines for enforcing Section 152, similar to the guidelines on arrests in *D.K. Basu v. State of West Bengal*. Clear boundaries for terms like "endangering sovereignty" or "unity" are needed to prevent misuse.
2. **Marketplace of Ideas:** Drawing from Justice Holmes' vision in *Abrams v. United States*, society should allow a free flow of ideas and criticism to foster democratic growth. The focus should be on creating a space where ideas are tested and accepted based on their merit.

Why is this important?

1. Free expression is vital in a democratic society, especially in the age of social media.
2. Without safeguards, Section 152 risks becoming a tool for suppressing dissent, much like its predecessor, Section 124A IPC.

Overview of the GDP Growth Slowdown

Source: This post on **Overview of the GDP Growth Slowdown** has been created based on article **"Decoding India's growth slowdown"** published in The Hindu on 10th January 2025.

UPSC Syllabus- GS-3 -Indian Economy

Context: The article analyzes the slowdown in India's economic growth, as reflected in the first advance estimates of GDP for 2024-25, released by the National Statistics Office (NSO). These estimates show a significant decline in both real and nominal GDP growth rates, raising concerns about the robustness of India's economic recovery post-pandemic and the sustainability of its fiscal and investment strategies.

What does the NSO's latest GDP estimate for 2024-25 indicate?

1. The NSO estimates India's real GDP growth rate for 2024-25 at 6.4%, down from 8.2% in 2023-24.
2. This is lower than the 6.5%-7% projection from the Economic Survey (July 2024). Nominal GDP growth is estimated at 9.7%, below the 10.5% expected in the Union Budget.

Why are India's official GDP estimates questioned?

1. Experts, including the IMF, have flagged issues such as reliance on the Wholesale Price Index (WPI) as a deflator instead of the Producer Price Index (PPI).
2. This creates discrepancies in constant price GDP estimates, leading to anomalies in high-frequency economic trends.
3. For example, in 2023-24, nominal GDP growth fell from 14.2% to 9.6%, but real GDP growth rose from 7.0% to 8.2%.
4. This was due to an implausibly low GDP deflator (1.4%) despite retail inflation being 5.4%. Such discrepancies cause policy errors and confusion.

How has private investment contributed to GDP growth recently?

1. Despite an 8.2% real GDP growth in 2023-24, private corporate investments remained sluggish, focusing disproportionately on construction-related assets.
2. The private sector's role in capital formation continues to underperform.
3. The Union Budget counted on a corporate-led capex revival and announced schemes like the ₹2 trillion 'Prime Minister's Package for Employment and Skilling.'
4. However, real gross fixed capital formation growth has dropped from 9% in 2023-24 to 6.4% in 2024-25.

How has private investment fared historically?

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1. During the UPA era (2004-2014), real private investment grew at over 10% annually, outpacing public investment (9%).
2. Under the NDA (2014-2020), private investment growth slowed to 6.3%, below public investment growth of 6.6%. Post-pandemic, there has been no significant structural shift in private corporate investment behavior.

What do supply-side data reveal about sectoral growth?

1. Quarterly Gross Value Added (GVA) growth has declined since 2023-24. Manufacturing, mining, construction, and services like retail trade, transport, and finance are slowing.
2. The only sector expected to grow faster in 2024-25 is public administration and defense, underscoring the role of public spending.

What is the status of the government's fiscal position?

1. As of November 2024, only 56% of the ₹25.83 trillion net tax revenue target has been achieved, while non-tax revenues benefited from a ₹2.11 trillion RBI surplus transfer. Capex spending remains below 50% of the budgeted ₹11.11 trillion for 2024-25.
2. Slowing tax revenue growth has disrupted budgetary targets. Maintaining fiscal consolidation would require reduced public spending, further worsening the slowdown.
3. Abandoning fiscal discipline is not feasible due to high public debt and interest obligations.

What is the suggested way forward?

1. The government needs to rework its revenue strategy by enhancing taxation on wealth and corporate profits.
2. This would allow for increased capital expenditure and welfare spending without derailing fiscal prudence.

Improving Ambulance Services in India for All

Source: The post Improving Ambulance Services in India for All has been created, based on the article "**BlinkIt's '10-minute' ambulances and the spectre of a larger malady**" published in "**Indian Express**" on 11th 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 growth of ambulance services in India, highlighting their importance, variations in quality, lack of regulation, and regional disparities. It emphasizes the need for standard protocols, trained staff, and affordable, efficient emergency care services.

For detailed information on **India's healthcare system on right track** read this article here

How did ambulance services evolve in India?

1. **Initially hospital-based services**: Ambulances were initially available only at hospitals.

2. **NGO involvement in the 1980s**: NGOs in southern India started providing free and voluntary ambulance services in the 1980s.

3. **Government services**: In the last decade, several state governments introduced ambulance services targeting women of reproductive age and children under five years.

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4. **Institutional deliveries focus**: Ambulances were introduced to transport expectant mothers to healthcare facilities under the National Rural Health Mission through public-private partnerships.

5. **Private sector entry**: Private ambulance services by corporate hospitals and standalone companies, such as Blinkit's "10-minute" ambulance service in Gurugram, have emerged.

What is the significance of ambulance services in India?

1. Ambulance services are crucial for emergency medical care and patient transportation.

2. An increase in chronic diseases and road accidents has led to higher demand. Services include transporting patients and providing Basic Life Support (BLS) or Advanced Life Support (ALS).

3. The Indian ambulance market was valued at $1.5 billion in 2022. It is expected to grow at over 5% annually from 2024 to 2028.
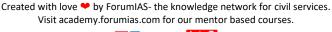
What are the challenges in ambulance services?

1. **Limited Critical Care Facilities**: Only 3,441 of 17,495 ambulances have Advanced Life Support (ALS) units. Most function as basic patient transport facilities rather than emergency care providers.

2. **Regional Disparities**: Western states like Gujarat and Maharashtra dominate the market, while northeastern states face significant shortages.

3. **Inadequate Staffing**: Only 3% of hospitals have Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs), despite 88% having in-house ambulances.

4. **Poor Infrastructure**: Only 12% of hospitals provide specialized care during patient transport.

5. **Traffic and Road Challenges**: Poor urban planning and traffic congestion in metros delay emergency response.

6. **Lack of a Standard Toll-Free Number and Monitoring System**: There is no nationwide toll-free number or monitoring mechanism to ensure timely and quality care.

7. **Weak Regulation**: Lack of standard protocols, fragmented licensing, and corruption lead to inconsistent service quality.

What should be done?

1. To enhance ambulance services, it is crucial to develop standard protocols, improve training and certification of paramedics, and address regulatory inconsistencies.

2. Publicly-funded services, public-private partnerships, and civil society initiatives are essential to provide affordable and efficient ambulance services in India.

Question for practice:

Examine the evolution, significance, challenges, and required improvements in ambulance services in India.

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Impact of extreme work hours

Source: The post impact of extreme work hours has been created, based on the article "**Express view on L&T chairman's remarks: The CEOs who lack of vision, empathy or ideas**" published in "**Indian Express**" on 11th January 2025

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

Context: The article criticizes corporate leaders promoting excessive work hours, like 70-90-hour weeks, ignoring employee well-being. It highlights the stress, low pay, and lack of support faced by workers, emphasizing that productivity doesn't improve by sacrificing health, relationships, and sustainability.

For detailed information on **The Issue of Overwork in India** read this article here

What Is the Current Trend in Work Hours Advocated by Corporate Leaders?

1. Corporate leaders like Narayana Murthy and S N Subrahmanyan have suggested extreme work weeks of 70 to 90 hours, respectively.

2. Other leaders, such as Bhavish Agarwal of OLA and Shantanu Deshpande of Bombay Shaving Company, also support intense work schedules.

3. Even the prime minister is noted for advocating long working hours, suggesting a cultural valorization of overwork in the country.

How Do These Work Hours Compare Globally?

In Asia, the average work week is nearly 49 hours, compared to about 38 hours in North America and Europe. This highlights a significant disparity in work-life balance.

What Are the Implications of These Long Work Hours?

1. Extended work hours lead to high stress and low income among employees.

2. There's a lack of adequate support systems for workers, impacting their physical and mental well-being.

3. This approach overlooks the importance of employee well-being and long-term sustainability.

Conclusion

The International Labour Organization states: **"Labour is not a commodity."** It emphasizes the need to align corporate demands with employee well-being and sustainability, which many leaders fail to consider.

Question for practice:

Discuss the implications of corporate leaders advocating extreme work hours on employee well-being and productivity.

Rising crude prices impact India and refiners

Source: The post Rising crude prices impact India and refiners has been created, based on the article "**FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE: Indian refiners may face a windfall this year from falling Urals oil rates even as US**

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levies sanctions on Russian firms. Will motorists benefit?" published in "**Business Standard**" on 11th 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 rising global crude oil prices, India's reliance on discounted Russian oil, and potential savings for Indian refiners. It highlights uncertainties about US sanctions on Russia, impacts on Indian pump prices, and losses in LPG subsidies for state-run refiners.

Why are crude oil prices rising?

1. Brent crude oil prices rose by 3% this year, crossing $77 per barrel.

2. This increase is due to a harsh northern hemisphere winter, reduced US inventory, lower OPEC production, and expectations of new US sanctions on Russia.

3. Seasonal demand and macroeconomic factors have also contributed to the price surge.
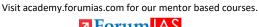
How does India benefit from Russian oil?

1. Russia supplied **1.78 million barrels per day (bpd)** of oil to India in 2024, accounting for **38% of India's total crude imports**.

2. Urals, Russia's biggest export and a medium sour crude, made up **1.3 million bpd (28%)** of India's imports.

3. Discounts on Urals range from **$3 to $20 per barrel**, depending on market conditions.

4. Russian oil averaged **$74.8 per barrel** in November 2024, cheaper than Saudi oil at **$81.4 per barrel**.

5. In December 2024, Urals accounted for over **80% of Russian oil shipped to India**, showing its profitability for Indian refiners.

Will sanctions impact India's imports?

1. The Biden administration imposed stringent sanctions on **two Russian state-oil companies, key Russian insurers, and 183 tankers**.

2. If these sanctions remain, Russian suppliers may need to expand discounts (from the current **$3-4 per barrel**) to keep Indian refiners buying.

3. Similar discounts exceeded **$35 per barrel in December 2022** after price caps by the US and EU, showing how sanctions influence pricing.

4. If India reduces Russian imports, refiners will need to purchase costlier Gulf or US crude, raising overall import costs.

How might global production affect oil prices?

1. Global oil production is expected to rise by **1.6 million bpd** in 2025, with **90% of this growth coming from non-OPEC nations**.

2. An oversupply of **300,000 bpd** (excluding any OPEC production increase) may keep Brent prices lower, with forecasts of **$74 per barrel** for 2025.

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3. If Brent averages $74 per barrel, Urals — trading at a **$16 discount** — would cost around **$58 per barrel**.

4. Russian oil exporters are concerned about prices falling to **$40-50 per barrel**, which is $30 below Russia's 2025 budget assumptions.

What is the impact on Indian fuel prices?

1. Since May 2022, India has kept petrol, diesel, and LPG prices unchanged, regardless of global price changes.

2. State refiners faced **Rs 40,000 crore in losses** from LPG sales in 2024-25, and there is no clarity on government compensation.

3. Cheaper Urals prices have helped refiners recover losses, but it is unclear if savings will be passed on to consumers through lower pump prices.

What does the future hold for Russian oil?

1. Russian officials, including Rosneft's chief Igor Sechin, warn that Urals prices may drop to **$40-50 per barrel** due to increased global supply.

2. Discounts on Urals have narrowed from **$37 per barrel** (post-Ukraine invasion in 2022) to around **$3-4 per barrel** in 2024.

3. India's crude basket averaged **$79 per barrel** (April-December 2024), excluding Russian oil, showing the cost advantage of discounted Urals.

Question for practice:

Examine how rising global crude oil prices and sanctions on Russia impact India's oil imports, refiners' profitability, and consumer fuel prices.

Improving faecal sludge management in India

Source: The post Improving faecal sludge management in India has been created, based on the article "**Review the treatment**" published in "**Down to Earth**" on 11th 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 challenges in managing faecal sludge and wastewater in India. It highlights design flaws in treatment plants, especially in Uttar Pradesh, and suggests cost-effective, climate-specific solutions for better sludge management, co-treatment processes, and waste disposal in towns and cities.

For detailed information on **Sanitation In India** read this article here

What is the Current State of Faecal Sludge Management in India?

1. Since the National Faecal Sludge and Septage Management Policy was introduced in 2017, India has made significant strides in managing faecal sludge.

2. The first faecal sludge treatment plant (FSTP) was established in Devanahalli, Karnataka.

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3. Currently, over 1,500 FSTPs are operational across the country, primarily using decentralized and nature-based treatment methods.

How is Uttar Pradesh Addressing Faecal Sludge Management?

1. Uttar Pradesh began implementing faecal sludge management in 2018, constructing FSTPs in cities like Jhansi as part of the Namami Gange programme.

2. By 2019, the state planned to build 54 FSTPs under the Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT). As of now, there are 59 treatment plants across 56 cities in the state.

What Are the Design Flaws in Uttar Pradesh's FSTPs?

The FSTPs in Uttar Pradesh have faced several design issues:

1. **Uniform Capacity**: All FSTPs under the AMRUT mission were built with a capacity of 32 kilolitres per day, which does not suit the varied population sizes and sludge volumes in different cities. This has led to inefficiencies, with some plants being underutilised and others overwhelmed.

2. **Redundant Features**: Many plants have unnecessary features, like both screw press machines and unplanted drying beds for dewatering, leading to higher capital and operational costs. For example, in Jhansi, where natural drying would be sufficient due to the dry climate, the use of mechanical presses is unnecessary.

3. **Over-Engineered Co-Treatment Facilities**: Some co-treatment plants include secondary treatment modules that duplicate processes already happening in sewage treatment plants, adding unnecessary complexity and cost.

How Can These Issues Be Resolved?

To avoid past mistakes, treatment plants should be designed with the following considerations:

1. **Climate and Sludge Characteristics**: In arid regions, natural drying beds may be sufficient, while more humid or cold areas might need mechanical dewatering.

2. **Scalability**: Start with smaller-capacity plants that can be expanded as necessary, which is particularly useful for small and medium towns.

3. **Simplified Co-Treatment**: Focus on dewatering septage without secondary treatment of liquid waste to streamline operations and reduce costs.

Question for practice:

Discuss the design flaws in faecal sludge treatment plants in Uttar Pradesh and the proposed solutions to address them.

National Youth Festival

Source: This post on **National Youth Festival** has been created based on article **"Forging Leadership with India's Youth Power"** published in **The Hindu in 11th January 2025.**

UPSC Syllabus- GS Paper 1 – History

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Context: The article discusses India's **National Youth Festival**, celebrated annually on **January 12**, marking the birth anniversary of **Swami Vivekananda**, a pioneer of youth empowerment and nation-building. It highlights the launch of the **Viksit Bharat Young Leaders Dialogue**, an innovative platform designed to engage young Indians in the developmental journey of the nation. This initiative aligns with the vision of a **Viksit Bharat** (Developed India) and is rooted in **Prime Minister Narendra Modi's emphasis on the centrality of youth in India's growth story**.

What is National Youth Festival, and why is it celebrated?

1. January 12 is celebrated as the National Youth Festival in India, marking the birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda.
2. The festival aims to engage and empower Indian youth, fostering creativity, leadership, and national integration.

What is the Viksit Bharat Young Leaders Dialogue?

1.   It is an initiative launched to harness the energy, creativity, and leadership of Indian youth to contribute towards a "Developed India" or *Viksit Bharat*.
2. It supports PM Narendra Modi's belief in youth as central to India's progress by providing a platform for discussions, idea exchanges, and collaboration on national challenges.

What is the theme of the 2025 National Youth Festival?

1.   The theme is "Youth for Sustainable Development," highlighting young people's role as drivers of global change.
2. There are few new elements that are introduced this year:
    a. **Workshops on leadership and innovation:** Topics include youth leadership, digital entrepreneurship, and sustainable living.
    b. **Cultural programs:** Celebrating India's heritage through music, dance, and art.
    c. **Tech showcases:** Exhibitions by young innovators addressing real-world issues in health, education, agriculture, and more.
    d. **Virtual participation:** Digital platforms allow youth from remote areas to join discussions and workshops.
    e. **Engagement with leaders:** Interaction with experts from government, business, and academia.
    f. **Recognition of contributions:** Awards for exceptional youth leadership, innovation, and service.

What is MY Bharat's role in the National Youth Festival?

1.   As an autonomous body under the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, MY Bharat curates the festival's programs, ensuring alignment with the aspirations of India's youth.
2. It provides resources, mentorship, and opportunities to address social and technological challenges, encouraging innovative solutions for nation-building.
3. MY Bharat enables participation from across the country, ensuring inclusivity and broader representation.

How does the initiative reflect Swami Vivekananda's philosophy?

It resonates with Vivekananda's belief in the potential of youth, as he once said, "Give me one hundred 'believing' young men… I will transform India as the number one nation in the world."

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Breaching 1.5°C

Source: This post on **Breaching 1.5°C** has been created based on article **"What breaching 1.5°C means "** published in **Indian Express on 11th January 2025.**

UPSC Syllabus- GS Paper 3 – Environment

Context: The article discusses the significant milestone in climate change: the year 2024 became the first calendar year to breach the 1.5°C global warming threshold, marking a critical point in the planet's warming trend. This breach, measured relative to pre-industrial temperatures (1850-1900 averages), is based on data from multiple global datasets, including the Copernicus Climate Change Service and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO).

What does breaching 1.5°C mean, and why is it significant?

1. **Significance of 1.5°C**: The 1.5°C mark, referenced in the 2015 Paris Agreement, is an arbitrary threshold indicating severe climate impacts as temperatures rise. It doesn't signify an abrupt change but emphasizes worsening climate effects.
2. **2024 Breach**: The year 2024 became the first calendar year to breach the 1.5°C warming threshold, with a global annual average temperature of 1.6°C above pre-industrial levels (1850-1900).
3. **Paris Agreement Context**: The 1.5°C target refers to long-term trends over decades, not individual years. Therefore, this breach does not imply the Paris Agreement has been violated yet.

What data confirms the breach?

1. **Copernicus Climate Change Service**: Recorded a 1.6°C rise above pre-industrial levels for 2024.
2. **World Meteorological Organization (WMO)**: Using six datasets, WMO reported a warming of 1.55°C for 2024.
3. **Historical Context**: 2024 surpassed 2023 as the warmest year on record. For comparison, 2016, influenced by a strong El Niño, was 1.29°C warmer than pre-industrial levels.

Why did 2024 become the warmest year ever?

1. **Contributing Factors**:
   o Mild El Niño conditions during 2023-2024.
   o Other El Niño-like systems in different ocean regions.
   o The 2022 Tonga volcanic eruption, which altered atmospheric composition.
   o Reduced sulphur dioxide emissions from the shipping industry, which otherwise reflect solar radiation.
   o The Sun's solar maximum phase during 2024, increasing solar energy reaching Earth.
2. **No Single Cause**: ECMWF notes that warming resulted from a combination of factors, and further analysis is required.

How do 2023 and 2024 compare to previous years?

Exceptionally Warm Years:
   a. 2023: 1.45°C above pre-industrial levels.
   b. 2024: 1.6°C above pre-industrial levels, breaking the previous record.
   c. Monthly Trends: Every month since July 2023, except July 2024, was over 1.5°C warmer than pre-industrial averages.

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Does this breach mean the 1.5°C target is unachievable?

1. **Not Yet**: A single-year breach does not mean the Paris Agreement target is unattainable. The focus is on multi-decade trends.
2. **Future Outlook**: With global warming rates exceeding 0.2°C per decade, breaching the 1.5°C target within the 2030s is highly likely.

What are the long-term implications of the 2024 breach?

1. **Global Emissions**: Emissions are still rising, and 2030 emission cut targets are unlikely to be met. This increases the probability of 1.5°C breaches becoming the norm.
2. **Projections**: According to the WMO, annual temperatures could reach 1.9°C above pre-industrial levels before 2028. There's a 50% chance of the five-year average exceeding the 1.5°C mark by 2028.

What does 2025 and beyond look like?

1. **2025 Forecast**:
    a. Not expected to surpass 2024 as the warmest year.
    b. Likely to remain in the 1.1°C to 1.4°C range above pre-industrial levels, consistent with the past decade.
2. **Long-term Trends**: The UK Met Office predicts 2025 might be the third warmest year ever, after 2024 and 2023.

India's Journey in Military AI

Source: This post on **India's Journey in Military AI** has been created based on article **"India's journey so far on the AI military bandwagon "** published in **The Hindu on 11th January 2025.**

UPSC Syllabus- GS Paper 3- Science and technology

Context: The article explores India's journey and challenges in integrating artificial intelligence (AI) into its military framework, amidst global advancements in military AI technologies. As AI becomes a pivotal component in modern warfare, countries like Israel and China are leading in rapid AI adoption for military purposes. India, recognizing the transformative potential of AI, has made significant investments in AI development and modernization of its defense systems.

How has India embraced AI in its military modernization efforts?

1. India has allocated ₹6.21 lakh crore ($75 billion) in its defence budget, emphasizing modernization.
2. AI integration in military operations has begun with systems like the **Indrajaal autonomous drone security system**.
3. Investments from foreign tech giants, such as Microsoft's $3 billion investment in Telangana data centers, have supported India's AI ecosystem.

What is the government's stance on AI for military purposes?

1. Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh highlighted AI's transformative potential in areas like predictive analytics and autonomous decision-making.
2. India is part of international joint AI initiatives, showcasing its commitment to leveraging AI for defence.

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What challenges does India face in adopting AI for defence?

1. **Infrastructure Issues**:
   a. A lack of digitized data and the high cost of data centers are significant barriers.
   b. Legacy systems in the military, such as outdated aircraft, require expensive upgrades, straining resources.
2. **Policy Gaps**:
   a. Fragmented policies and insufficient guidelines hinder AI deployment.
   b. Documents like the **National Strategy for Artificial Intelligence** and **Responsible AI for All** lack military-specific frameworks.
3. **Institutional Barriers**:
   a. The Defence Artificial Intelligence Council (DAIC) and the Defence AI Project Agency (DAIPA) exist but have not provided recent updates or significant progress.

How does India compare globally in military AI?

1. Nations like **Israel** and **China** are rapidly advancing in military AI and are already ahead in technology deployment.
2. While India recognizes AI's importance, there is inconsistency in its approach, reflected in cautious remarks by leaders:
   a. The Minister of External Affairs likened AI to nuclear weapons in its potential dangers.
   b. The Prime Minister emphasized the need for extreme caution during the **Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI) in 2023**.

What systemic challenges exist in India's military structure for AI adoption?

1. **Siloed Operations**:
   a. The Indian Army, Navy, and Air Force operate with distinct doctrines and communication systems, limiting interoperability.
2. **Public Sector Dependence**:
   a. Reliance on public sector units (PSUs) for defence manufacturing hinders large-scale, advanced AI system deployment.
   b. Encouraging **public-private partnerships (PPPs)** and integrating private competition can enhance innovation, as seen in the space sector.

What are the strategic steps India needs to take for better AI adoption?

1. Develop robust policies and frameworks tailored for military AI deployment.
2. Address inter-service silos to ensure interoperability in joint operations.
3. Promote PPPs to scale and enhance the quality of AI systems.
4. Foster international collaborations and innovation for rapid AI integration.

What is the outlook for India's AI-enabled military?

1. Despite current challenges, India has taken significant steps toward leveraging AI for defence.
2. Strategic alignment, systemic reforms, and fostering collaboration will enable India to harness AI effectively and ethically.
3. With cohesive strategies, India can match global advancements and ensure its defence ecosystem remains competitive.

Why Tigers Roam: Dispersal, Threats, and the Struggle for Territory

Source: This post on **Why Tigers Roam: Dispersal, Threats, and the Struggle for Territory** has been created based on article **"Space crunch, threats, a natural tendency: Why tigers go on long walks "** published in **Indian Express on 11th January 2025.**

UPSC Syllabus- GS Paper 3- Environment

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Context: The article explores the natural behavior of tiger dispersal, emphasizing how these solitary and territorial predators venture across vast landscapes in search of exclusive hunting grounds and reproductive opportunities. It highlights their remarkable ability to navigate human-dominated areas and natural barriers like highways and settlements.

Why do tigers go on long walks?

1. Tigers are solitary, territorial animals.
2. They naturally disperse to establish their own space, ensuring exclusive hunting and reproductive rights.

What recent examples highlight tiger dispersal in India?

1. **Odisha to West Bengal (2024):** A tigress walked 300 km east.
2. **Uttarakhand to Himachal Pradesh:** A tiger traveled to areas near the Line of Control (LoC).
3. **Maharashtra (2019):** A tiger covered 3,000 km over 225 days, exploring a linear distance of 315 km.

What are some notable examples of tiger dispersal?

1. **2003 (Rajasthan):** "Broken Tail" traveled 150 km but was killed by a train.
2. **2008 (Karnataka):** A tiger covered 197 km to Dandeli sanctuary.
3. **2018 (Madhya Pradesh):** A tiger moved over 300 km to Gujarat.
4. **2023 (Maharashtra):** A tiger traveled 2,000 km across four states, covering 650 km linearly.
5. **2024 (Rajasthan):** A tiger walked 100 km to Haryana's Jhabua forests.

How do tigers navigate through human-dominated landscapes?

1. Tigers adapt to non-forest landscapes using small green patches.
2. Resting sites are often close to human settlements (as near as 300-500 meters).
3. They navigate around barriers like highways, railways, and mines.

What does research say about male and female tiger dispersal?

1. **Male tigers**: More likely to disperse (92.3%) and travel farther (4.5-148 km).
2. **Female tigers**: Disperse less frequently (36.4%) and cover shorter distances (4.6-25.8 km).

Why do tigers disperse?

1. **Territorial disputes:** Young tigers seek their own territory to avoid conflict with dominant males.
2. **Mating opportunities:** Male tigers must establish territories to access tigresses.
3. **Population management relocations:** Relocated tigers often attempt to return to their original homes.
4. **Cub protection:** Tigresses may disperse to shield their cubs from new males that could harm them.

What challenges do dispersing tigers face?

1. **Human conflict:** Encounters with humans can lead to conflict and loss of goodwill.
2. **Mortality risks:** Dispersals can result in deaths due to accidents or inability to find suitable habitats.

What benefits arise from tiger dispersal?

1. **Gene flow:** Fresh gene input revitalizes isolated populations.
2. **Habitat reclamation:** Successful dispersals highlight potential new habitats and corridors.

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What does India's latest tiger estimate reveal?

1. India has 3,682 tigers, but one-fifth of the tiger reserves (16 reserves) host just 25 tigers — less than 1% of the total population.
2. This indicates the need for better habitat connectivity and protection.

Celebrating Indian diaspora achievements and challenges

Source: The post Celebrating Indian diaspora achievements and challenges has been created, based on the article "**Indians abroad: Absence of opportunities remains the main driver of migration**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 14th January 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2- International Relations-Indian diaspora.

Context: The article highlights the achievements of the Indian diaspora, celebrated at the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) event. It stresses the need to address issues faced by the diaspora, including stricter visa policies, global conflicts, and economic challenges driving migration.

For detailed information on **Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD)** read this article here

What is the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD)?

1. The Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) is an event held annually around January 9 to celebrate the achievements of the Indian diaspora. The date marks Mahatma Gandhi's return to India from South Africa in 1915.

2. The event started in 2003 and brings together Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) and Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs) to discuss their contributions and challenges.

3. The latest PBD was held in Bhubaneswar, Odisha, with over 3,000 delegates from 70 countries. President Droupadi Murmu presented 27 Pravasi Bharatiya Samman awards.

How significant is the Indian diaspora?

1. The Indian diaspora consists of more than **35 million people**, including **15.85 million NRIs** and **19.57 million PIOs**.

2. They have excelled in various fields, including politics, where leaders of Indian origin head over 30 countries.

3. Their ability to integrate into local societies while contributing to India's growth makes them "ambassadors to the world," as described by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

What challenges do they face?

1. **Stricter Visa Policies**: Far-right populist governments, particularly in the West, impose stricter visa and entry conditions for Indians.

2. **Global Conflicts**: Over **9 million Indians** living in West Asia face risks due to ongoing conflicts, endangering lives and livelihoods.

3. **OCI Card Issues**: Government actions to deny or revoke OCI cards for critics undermine inclusivity.

4. **Economic Pressures**: Limited opportunities in India force skilled individuals to migrate, resulting in a **brain drain** despite their global success.

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5. **Inadequate Safeguards**: Discussions on diaspora protection are limited, affecting their welfare in volatile regions.

How can the PBD become more impactful?

1. Focus on **diaspora issues**, such as safeguarding rights and improving conditions for Indians abroad.

2. Promote **inclusive and non-partisan ties**, avoiding political bias in engagement with the diaspora.

3. **Leverage Viksit Bharat Programme**: Involve the diaspora in national development initiatives like this programme, which was emphasized at PBD.

4. **Celebrate Success**: Continue recognizing achievements through Pravasi Bharatiya Samman awards, as done for 27 individuals this year.

Question for practice:

Examine the significance of the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) event in celebrating the achievements of the Indian diaspora and addressing their challenges.

Engaging Men to End Violence Against Women

Source: The post Engaging Men to End Violence Against Women has been created, based on the article "**Transforming 'men'-talities, redefining masculinity**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 14th January 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper1-Society-Social empowerment

Context: The article highlights the need to engage men in ending violence against women by challenging harmful masculinity norms. It discusses UNESCO's *Transforming MENtalities* initiative and a report documenting Indian programmes promoting equality, empathy, and non-violence through education and dialogues.

For detailed information on **Women Safety in India** read this article here

Why is violence against women a "men's issue"?

1. **Men as Perpetrators and Agents of Change**: Nearly one in three women globally face violence from men, highlighting men's role in both perpetuating and addressing the issue.

2. **Harmful Masculinity Norms**: Boys are conditioned to equate strength with dominance and see emotions as weakness. This leads to aggressive behaviors and limits healthy relationships.

3. **Impact on Men's Lives**: Toxic masculinity traps men in cycles of suppressed emotions and aggressive behaviors, affecting their relationships and personal growth.

For detailed information on **Fighting Femicide** read this article here

What does UNESCO's report on India highlight?

1. **UNESCO's** *Transforming MENtalities* initiative emphasizes engaging men as active participants in promoting gender equality.

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2. The report, ***Engaging Men and Boys: Pathways to Gender Equality in India***, documents 10 pioneering programmes addressing gender inequality. These programmes encourage dialogues to challenge traditional gender norms and promote positive masculinities.

3. Some of the interventions are:

• ***Mardon Wali Baat*** uses storytelling and social media to help young men critically examine limiting narratives, promoting values like respect and equality.

• ***Gender Equity Movement in Schools (GEMS)*** engages boys in Rajasthan through interactive activities. One boy stated, "Boys should also work at home."

• Initiatives like ***Dekh Rekh*** and ***Hamari Shaadi*** tackle everyday gender bias by encouraging men to participate in family nutrition and planning.

What role do role models play?

1. Positive male role models who share caregiving duties, reject violence, and show empathy inspire change.

2. Public figures like a famous Indian cricketer, who took paternity leave, promote shared responsibilities and equitable relationships.

What is the way forward?

Men must reject harmful stereotypes and actively contribute to gender equality. By questioning patriarchal privileges and embracing equality, men can help build a world free from violence where everyone thrives. Let us celebrate men transforming mentalities and championing equality.

Question for practice:

Examine how engaging men and boys in challenging harmful masculinity norms can contribute to ending violence against women.

Trump's America First Policy and Global Impact

Source: The post Trump's America First Policy and Global Impact has been created, based on the article "**The Trump card, global politics and outcomes for India**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 14th January 2025
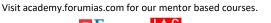
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2- International Relations-Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

Context: The article discusses Donald Trump's leadership style, his "America First" approach, and its global impacts. It highlights rising protectionism, U.S.-China tensions, challenges for global institutions, and implications for India-U.S. relations, particularly in defense, trade, and countering China.

For detailed information on **Trump's Re-election and India US Relations** read this article here

What is Trump's Policy Approach?

1. Trump follows an "America First" policy that prioritizes U.S. sovereignty over global governance.

2. He dislikes multilateral agreements, as seen with his withdrawal from the **Paris Climate Agreement** and **Trans-Pacific Partnership**.

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3. He prefers bilateral agreements and criticizes organizations like the **United Nations** and **NATO**, arguing they harm U.S. interests.

How Does Trump Impact Global Politics?

Trump's policies promote protectionism and disrupt global stability.

1. **Trade Wars**: His policies create tariffs and trade conflicts, especially with China.

2. **China-U.S. Tensions**: He sees China as an economic and ideological rival, increasing competition, especially in the Indo-Pacific.

3. **Global Institutions**: His skepticism weakens international law and fosters nationalism.

4. **Climate Policy**: He downgrades climate action, impacting global agreements.

For detailed information on **Donald Trump's return as U.S. President and its impact on South Asia** read this article here

How Will Trump's Leadership Affect India-U.S. Relations?

1. **Strategic Partnership**: India-U.S. relations will continue evolving due to shared interests, especially in countering China's aggressive actions along the Line of Actual Control.

2. **Defense Cooperation**: Defense ties will strengthen, and collaboration on critical technologies is expected to grow, provided the U.S. avoids using export controls as leverage.

3. **The Quad**: The U.S. will likely strengthen the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (India, U.S., Japan, Australia) to counter China's influence in the Indo-Pacific.

4. **India's Strategic Autonomy**: While partnering with the U.S., India will maintain independence in its foreign policy to align with its geopolitical priorities.

5. **Prime Ministerial Bond**: The warm relationship between Narendra Modi and Donald Trump may further ease bilateral cooperation.

What Should India Prioritize Strategically?

A. India needs to focus on its priorities while partnering with the U.S.:

1. **Defense and Border Security**: Strengthen military modernization and counterterrorism efforts to counter threats from **China's military aggression** and **cross-border terrorism** from Pakistan.

2. **Energy Security**: Diversify energy sources and focus on **renewable energy** to ensure stable supplies from key partners.

3. **Economic Growth**: Ensure peace in South Asia and neutralize destabilizing influences from **China** and **Pakistan**.

B. India must strengthen its future capabilities:

1. **Technology**: Emphasize digital transformation, artificial intelligence, and cybersecurity.

2. **Soft Power**: Promote democracy, pluralism, and diaspora engagement.

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3. **Russia Relations**: Maintain ties with Russia to balance Sino-Russian influence in the region.

What Does Trump's Return Mean for the Global Order?

1. **Disruption of Global Order**: Trump's return could weaken multilateralism and global institutions like the UN and NATO, as seen during his first term.

2. **Rising Protectionism**: His policies encourage tariffs and trade wars, impacting global markets and increasing economic uncertainty.

3. **Global Polarization**: Ian Bremmer's "G-Zero world" highlights a future dominated by self-interest and instability.

Question for practice:

Examine how Donald Trump's "America First" policy impacts global politics and India-U.S. relations.

Rule 93(2) amendment weakens election transparency and trust

Source: The post Rule 93(2) amendment weakens election transparency and trust has been created, based on the article "**Resisting transparency, eroding public trust**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 14th January 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2-Polity-Salient features of the Representation of People's Act.

Context: The article discusses a recent amendment to the election rules that limits public access to election records, such as Form 17C and CCTV footage. It criticizes the Election Commission for opposing transparency, which is vital for trust in the electoral process and fair elections.

What changes were made to Rule 93(2)?

1. **Earlier Provision**: Rule 93(2) allowed public access to all election-related papers except those exempted under Rule 93(1). This promoted transparency in the electoral process.

2. **High Court Order**: Following concerns over electoral integrity, the Punjab and Haryana High Court directed the ECI to provide election records like Form 17C and CCTV footage from Haryana elections.

3. **Amendment**: Soon after the High Court's directive, the Central government amended Rule 93(2), limiting access to only "papers specified in these rules," excluding critical documents like Form 17C and CCTV footage.

4. **Impact**: Key records like Form 17C and CCTV footage now fall outside public access, raising transparency concerns and mistrust.

Why Is the Election Commission's Role Questioned?

1. The Election Commission of India (ECI) is criticized for lacking transparency, especially noticeable when they didn't release absolute voter turnout numbers immediately after the early phases of the 2024 general elections.

2. There was a mysterious 6% increase in voter turnout figures later, which led to suspicions and demands for the disclosure of Form 17C.

3. Form 17C is crucial as it details voter turnout and the votes counted in the Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs).

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4. Several parties, including the Biju Janata Dal (BJD), have noted discrepancies in voter turnout figures and demanded access to Form 17C to verify these numbers.

5. Despite these requests, the ECI has denied access to this form, citing reasons like potential misuse of the information and lack of technical capabilities for scanning and sharing these documents.

What Does the Supreme Court Say?

1. In 2024, the Supreme Court invalidated the electoral bonds scheme, highlighting a voter's fundamental right to information.

2. This precedent supports the need for more transparency in the electoral process, challenging the new restrictive amendment.

How Can Transparency Be Improved?

Transparency ensures public trust in the electoral process. The Supreme Court in 2024 struck down the electoral bonds scheme for violating voters' right to information. The ECI and the government need to withdraw this amendment, as it weakens democracy.

Question for practice:

Discuss how the recent amendment to Rule 93(2) of the Conduct of Election Rules, 1961, and the Election Commission's actions have impacted transparency and trust in the electoral process.

Debating the Future of Workweek Hours

Source: The post Debating the Future of Workweek Hours has been created, based on the article "**We should all look forward to a 90-hour work-month**" published in "**Live mint**" on 15th January 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2- Governance-Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Human Resources.
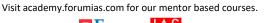
Context: The article discusses the evolving workweek, highlighting debates around shorter work hours versus longer workweeks. It explores trials of four-day workweeks, historical reductions in work hours, technological impacts on productivity, and contrasting views of wealthy individuals and economists on work-life balance.

For detailed information on **70 Hours Work Week** read this article here

What Are the Differing Views on Work Hours?

A. Support for Shorter Workweeks

1. Over 90% of UK companies implemented a four-day workweek after a successful 2022 trial.

2. John Maynard Keynes predicted a 15-hour workweek by 2030 due to rising living standards and technological advancements.

3. Andrew Barnes' company, Perpetual Guardian, in New Zealand, showed that employees were happier and more productive with a four-day workweek at full pay.

4. Jack Ma stated that technological advancements might allow people to work three days a week, four hours a day, in the next 20 years.

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5. John Maynard Keynes predicted in 1930 that improved living standards would lead to much shorter work hours by 2030.

B. Support for Longer Workweeks

1. N.R. Narayana Murthy suggested young Indians work 70 hours per week to boost India's economy.

2. L&T's chairman supports a 90-hour workweek.

3. Elon Musk advised employees to prepare for 80-hour workweeks at Twitter in 2022.

4. Jack Ma earlier defended China's 12-hour, six-day work culture in 2019.

How Do Shorter Workweeks Impact Productivity and Well-being?

1. **Improved Productivity**: Trials in the UK showed that more than 90% of businesses continued a four-day workweek due to its success in maintaining productivity.

2. **Enhanced Employee Happiness**: New Zealand's Perpetual Guardian employees experienced higher focus, happiness, and better personal engagement after adopting a four-day workweek.

3. **Better Work-Life Balance**: Portugal's gradual reduction of the workweek from 44 to 40 hours benefited women and employees with family responsibilities.

4. **Health Benefits**: Shorter workweeks reduce stress, as highlighted in Japan's efforts to address overwork deaths, where 54 cases occur annually.

5. **Economic and Environmental Advantages**: Rutger Bregman, in his 2016 article in *The Guardian*, argued that cutting back on work hours could improve worker safety and address **environmental issues, stress, inequality, happiness, and unemployment**.

What Is the Future of Work Hours?

Keynes and Jack Ma foresee AI enabling shorter workdays. The future might bring seismic workplace changes, possibly reducing workweeks to 90 hours monthly instead of weekly. The effectiveness of AI in achieving this remains to be seen.

Question for practice:

Evaluate the differing perspectives on shorter versus longer workweeks and their implications for productivity and well-being.

India's Annual Groundwater Quality Report 2024

Source: The post India's Annual Groundwater Quality Report 2024 has been created, based on the article "**Ground realities: Groundwater contamination poses serious hazards**" published in "**Business Standard**" on 15th January 2025

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

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Context: The article discusses India's heavy reliance on groundwater for drinking and irrigation, highlighting severe contamination issues. It explains causes like industrial waste and fertilisers, impacts on health and crops, and suggests sustainable practices, local management, and better policies for improvement.

For detailed information on **Groundwater Use and Governance in India** read this article here

What does the Annual Groundwater Quality Report 2024 reveal?

1. **High Reliance on Groundwater**: Groundwater meets 85% of rural drinking water and 62% of irrigation needs in India.

2. Widespread Contamination:

• 20% of groundwater samples exceeded the permissible nitrate limit.

• 9.04% had unsafe fluoride levels.

• 3.55% were contaminated with arsenic, especially in the Ganga-Brahmaputra floodplains.

3. Regional Variations:

• Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, and Meghalaya showed 100% compliance with water quality norms.

• Hotspots like Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana, and Andhra Pradesh showed severe contamination.

• Punjab's nitrate pollution results from excessive fertiliser use.

4. **Urban Challenges**: Industrial effluents and untreated sewage worsen urban groundwater quality, leading to microbial contamination.

5. **Impact on Agriculture**: Salinity in coastal regions reduces crop productivity.

For detailed information on **Rising Nitrate Levels in India's Groundwater** read this article here
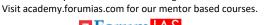
What are the main causes of groundwater contamination?

1. **Agricultural Chemicals**: Excessive use of fertilizers and pesticides leads to nitrate contamination. Punjab faces high nitrate levels due to agricultural runoff.

2. **Industrial Activities**: Unregulated industrial discharge pollutes aquifers.

3. **Natural Leaching**: Minerals naturally seep into groundwater, increasing contamination.

4. **Sewage and Effluents**: Urban areas suffer from untreated sewage and industrial effluents.

5. **Salinity and Seawater Intrusion**: Over-extraction causes salinity issues in coastal regions.

What are the Consequences of Contaminated Groundwater?

1. **Public Health Risks**: Toxic substances like fluoride (9.04% samples), nitrate (20%), and arsenic (3.55%) cause serious health issues, especially in regions like the Ganga-Brahmaputra floodplains.

2. **Agricultural Impact**: Contaminated water reduces crop yields and introduces harmful chemicals into the food chain. For example, coastal farmers face reduced productivity due to salinity caused by seawater intrusion.

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3. **Urban Challenges**: Microbial contamination from untreated sewage and industrial effluents affects urban groundwater quality.

4. **Regional Variations**: Punjab's high nitrate levels, due to fertilizer runoff, make groundwater unsafe for drinking

What solutions can improve groundwater quality?

1. **Sustainable Farming Practices**: Reduce nitrate contamination by minimizing chemical fertilizer use, as seen in Punjab.

2. **Affordable Water Filtration**: Provide low-cost filtration to poor households to tackle fluoride and arsenic contamination.

3. **Rainwater Harvesting**: Expand Tamil Nadu's successful rainwater harvesting model.

4. **Arsenic Mitigation**: Scale up programmes like West Bengal's arsenic-mitigation efforts.

5. **Aquifer Recharging**: Recharge groundwater using treated water.

6. **Local Management**: Empower gram panchayats to create water-security plans incorporating indigenous knowledge.

7. **Monitoring Systems**: Set up hydrogeological monitoring networks for better data collection.

8. **Legislation**: Enforce groundwater rights detached from land ownership to regulate use effectively.

Question for practice:

Examine the causes, consequences, and potential solutions for groundwater contamination in India.

India's Climate Warming Trends and Future Challenges

Source: The post India's Climate Warming Trends and Future Challenges has been created, based on the article "**2024 was the warmest year for India and the world. But why was warming lower over India?**" published in "**Indian Express**" on 15th January 2025

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

Context: The article discusses 2024 being the warmest year globally and in India, explains differences in warming rates, highlights reasons for India's lower warming, and emphasizes strengthening India's climate observation, research, and forecasting capabilities for better disaster management and climate change assessment.

For detailed information on **The Global Warming Challenge for India** read this article here

Why was 2024 the warmest year globally and in India?

1. The World Meteorological Organisation declared 2024 as the warmest year globally, with Earth's temperature exceeding pre-industrial levels (1850-1900) by over 1.5°C.

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2. In India, the IMD reported a 0.65°C rise above the 1991-2020 average. However, India's warming cannot be directly compared to the global average due to different baselines.

3. India's temperature in 2024 was 1.2°C higher than the 1901-1910 average.

4. Global land surface warming exceeds 1.6°C, while oceans warmed about 0.9°C due to slower heat absorption, highlighting the difference in warming patterns.

Why is warming lower in India?

1. **Geographic Location**: India is near the equator, where warming is less pronounced compared to higher altitudes. For example, the Arctic has warmed at least twice the global average due to the albedo effect (melting ice reflecting less solar radiation).

2. **Aerosols and Pollution**: High aerosol concentration in India scatters sunlight and reduces surface heating. Dust and air pollution unintentionally lower temperature rise.

3. **Land Temperatures Only**: India's warming is less severe because it includes only land temperatures, unlike the global average that includes oceans.

What are India's climate vulnerabilities?

1. Regional Variations: Different warming impacts are seen across regions like the Himalayas and coastal areas. For example, the Himalayas experience distinct climate changes compared to coastal regions.

2. **High Population Density**: India's large population amplifies the impacts of climate change, increasing vulnerability to disasters.

3. **Tropical Location**: India's proximity to the equator reduces overall warming but does not mitigate risks of extreme weather events.

How can India improve its climate observation?

1. Expand Weather Monitoring Network: Mission Mausam aims to expand observation networks with weather stations in every village by 2047.

2. India's first climate impact assessment in 2020 was significant but needs to continue regularly, like IPCC global assessments.

3. **Modernize IMD**: IMD now supports disaster management, electricity generation, and tourism. Further advancements will make it more effective in forecasting.

4. **Strengthen Research Institutions:** Support institutions like the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology and INCOIS.

5. India's ocean observation network is inadequate and requires urgent improvement.

Question for practice:

Examine the reasons behind India's lower warming rates compared to the global average and its implications for climate vulnerability and disaster management.

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Disputes between India and Bangladesh over border fencing

Source: The post disputes between India and Bangladesh over border fencing has been created, based on the article "**India summons envoy: Why Bangladesh has objected to fencing along the border**" published in "**Indian Express**" on 15th January 2025

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

Context: The article discusses disputes between India and Bangladesh over border fencing. Bangladesh objects to fencing near the border citing a 1975 agreement. India defends the fencing to prevent crimes and secure borders. Negotiations and challenges continue, especially in sensitive areas.

For detailed information on **India-Bangladesh Relations** read this article here

What is the issue between India and Bangladesh regarding border fencing?

1. **Objection to Fencing Proximity**: Bangladesh opposes India's border fencing within 150 yards of the international boundary, citing the 1975 Joint India-Bangladesh Guidelines for Border Authorities. However, India argues that the fences are not defense structures but measures to control illegal activities and manage border security.

2. **Concerns Over Smart Fencing**: Bangladesh opposes smart fencing with surveillance systems, claiming it allows India to monitor Bangladeshi territory.

3. **Local Disputes**: In Malda (West Bengal), the BGB tried to stop fencing near Kaliachak No. 3 block, while in Cooch Behar's Mekhliganj, they objected to fencing around the Dahagram-Angarpota enclave.

4. **India's Argument**: India says fencing is vital to prevent trans-border crimes, as 60% occur in unfenced areas, and denies that single-row fencing (SRF) has defense potential.

5. **Fencing Status**: India has fenced 3,141 km (76%) of the 4,096.7 km India-Bangladesh border. In West Bengal, 81.5% of the 2,217 km border is fenced.Riverine borders, covering 900 km, are guarded by the BSF water wing.

6. **Challenges**: Unfenced areas face issues like difficult terrain, riverine borders, and local opposition.

Why is border fencing important for India?

1. **Prevents Trans-Border Crimes**: 60% of crimes occur in unfenced areas. Fencing helps reduce smuggling and illegal crossings.

2. **Controls Animal Movement**: Fencing in places like Mekhliganj prevents cattle from damaging crops.

3. **Secures Sensitive Areas**: Dahagram–Angarpota, a Bangladeshi enclave in India, faces security challenges.

Question for practice:

Discuss the disputes and challenges between India and Bangladesh regarding border fencing and its importance for India.

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UGC new draft regulations aligned with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020

Source: The post UGC) new draft regulations aligned with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has been created, based on the article "**Criticism of draft UGC regulations ignore their potential**" published in "**Indian Express**" on 16th January 2025

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

Context: The article discusses the University Grants Commission's (UGC) new draft regulations aligned with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. It highlights changes promoting multidisciplinary education, flexible qualifications, inclusive recruitment, and transparent leadership appointments to enhance India's higher education system.

For detailed information on **UGC Draft Regulations 2025** read Article1, Article2

What are the UGC's new draft regulations?

A. Flexible Qualifications for Teaching:

1. Candidates can qualify for UGC-NET or pursue a PhD in a subject different from their undergraduate or postgraduate studies. For **example, a** physics graduate can pursue a PhD in data science, encouraging multidisciplinary teaching and research.

2. This approach promotes passion-driven learning and dismantles rigid disciplinary boundaries.

B. Evaluation of Notable Contributions:

1. The Academic Performance Indicator (API) system, which focused on quantitative metrics, is replaced by a focus on notable contributions in academics, research, societal engagement, and institution building.

2. Contributions from librarians and sports professionals are evaluated separately, ensuring inclusivity.

3. **Example**: Criteria now include innovation, digital literacy, and community engagement.

C. Transparent Appointment of Vice-Chancellors (VCs):

1. The draft suggests forming a search-cum-selection committee by the Chancellor to appoint vice-chancellors (VCs). The committee will include experts from industry and the public sector, ensuring transparency and expanding the leadership pool.

2. Critics claim this affects federalism, but the draft ensures a democratic and merit-based process.

3. Opening VC positions to experts from diverse fields can bring fresh perspectives to higher education leadership.

For detailed information on **UGC Guidelines on Vice-Chancellor appointments** read this article here

D. Alignment with NEP 2020 Goals:

The regulations emphasize multidisciplinary education, blended pedagogy, technology integration, and strong industry-academic linkages to meet global standards.

What is the larger aim of the regulations?

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1. The draft regulations are designed to create a more dynamic, inclusive, and quality-driven higher education system in India.

2. They emphasize flexibility, inclusivity, and democratic values in higher education governance and aim to enhance global competitiveness and relevance.

Question for practice:

Examine how the UGC's new draft regulations align with the goals of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 to promote flexibility, inclusivity, and transparency in India's higher education system.

India's Startup Growth Opportunities and Key Challenges

Source: The post India's Startup Growth Opportunities and Key Challenges has been created, based on the article "**How India can become the world's leading startup ecosystem**" published in "**Indian Express**" on 16th January 2025

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

Context: The article highlights India's rapid startup growth, driven by digital infrastructure, government initiatives, and innovation in emerging technologies. It emphasizes funding challenges, regulatory balance, education-industry collaboration, and regional growth, positioning startups as key to India's economic future.

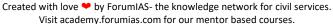For detailed information on **Governance issues at Indian Startups** read this article here

What is the current status of India's Startup?

1. India is the **third-largest startup hub**, with over **1,30,000 recognized startups**, compared to just 400 in 2015-16.

2. **Startup funding grew 15 times** since 2015-16, with private equity and venture capital playing significant roles. In 2024, startups raised over **$12 billion**, with **75% coming from international sources**.

3. Initiatives like the **Fund of Funds for Startups (FFS)** have catalyzed Rs **81,000 crore** in funding, creating a multiplier effect.

What Opportunities Do Indian Startups Have?

1. Advanced Technologies: Startups have immense opportunities in **AI, ML, big data, quantum computing, genomics, robotics, EVs, drones, and space exploration**. Government initiatives like the **National Quantum Mission** and **India AI Mission** support these fields with significant investments.

2. **Government Support**: The government has allocated **Rs 1 lakh crore** for **R&D**, boosting innovation across industries.

3. New Sectors: Policies now allow startups to operate in **space, geospatial technology, defence, and drones**, enabling ventures into cutting-edge domains.

4. **Regional Growth**: Nearly **50% of startups** now come from **Tier II and Tier III cities**, such as Indore, Jaipur, and Ahmedabad, offering untapped growth potential.

What Are the Challenges for India's Startup?

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1. **Access to Patient Capital**: Deep tech startups struggle with long-term funding. Despite raising $12 billion in 2024, 75% came from international sources. A specialised domestic fund is needed.

2. **Regulatory Concerns**: Corporate mismanagement in startups like Byju's highlights the need for better governance and self-regulation.

3. **Skill Gaps**: Curricula lack focus on emerging skills like AI and data science, slowing innovation.

4. **IPR Challenges**: India paid $14.3 billion in IPR royalties in 2024 but earned only $1.5 billion, indicating innovation gaps.

5. **Geographic Disparity**: Startups in Tier II and III cities need better infrastructure, education, and inclusivity to unlock potential.

What should be done?

1. Ensure Transparency and Ethical Practices:

• Startups must adopt self-regulation to ensure transparency, accountability, and ethical conduct.

• Strong boards, sound financial management, and mentorship are critical for sustainable growth.

2. Address Skill Gaps Through Education:

• Institutions like IITs and IIMs must align curricula with emerging needs in product development, AI, and data science.

• Internships and apprenticeships should bridge skill shortages and attract talent to startups.

3. Adapt Regulatory Frameworks:

• Regulations must evolve to accommodate new technologies, balancing innovation with oversight.

• Pro-innovation policies are essential to maintain India's global competitiveness in startup ecosystems.

4. Support Economic Growth Through Startups

• Startups should lead in job creation and innovation, driving India's economic growth.

• Collaborative efforts across sectors, backed by supportive policies, will help achieve the vision of **Viksit Bharat by 2047**.

Question for practice:

Examine the opportunities, challenges, and necessary measures for the growth of India's startup ecosystem.

US Proposal Restricting Chips Impacting India

Source: The post US Proposal Restricting Chips Impacting India has been created, based on the article "**Processing power: GPU restriction will affect India's ambitions**" published in "**Business Standard**" on 16th January 2025

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UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- Science and Technology- Awareness in the fields of IT, Space, Computers, robotics, nano-technology, bio-technology and issues relating to intellectual property rights.

Context: The article discusses a US proposal to restrict advanced chip exports, including GPUs, to countries like India, aiming to maintain US AI leadership and prevent China's progress. This could hinder India's AI plans, but India might leverage diplomatic ties and local chip design capabilities to mitigate the impact.

For detailed information on **Semiconductor Industry in India** read this article here

What is the US Proposal About Advanced Chip Exports?

1. The US is proposing to restrict the export of advanced computer chips, particularly GPUs, which are essential for AI development.

2. This proposal aims to maintain US leadership in AI technology and prevent China from gaining a technological edge.

3. About 20 key allies of the US would not face these restrictions, but other countries, including India, would have limits on how many chips they can import.

For detailed information on **Learning from the CHIPS Act of the U.S** read this article here

How will this impact global supply chains?

1. The US proposal could disrupt global chip supply chains as key chips designed by Nvidia and AMD are fabricated abroad.

2. Many raw materials come from nations not on the "favoured" list, complicating production.

3. Countries like India, with R&D centers for Nvidia and AMD, may retaliate against restrictions, affecting production.

4. Countries like Israel and EU members, also facing restrictions, could experience similar impacts.

5. India's lack of high-end fabrication units hinders self-reliance; building such facilities requires years and large investments.

6. Supply chains for AI and data-center industries globally may face delays and higher costs due to restricted GPU availability.

What Can India Do?

1. Leverage Existing Strengths: India has strong chip-design expertise and a growing data-center industry. Companies like Nvidia and AMD have R&D centers in India. India can use its large domestic market as a testbed for AI innovations.

2. Diplomatic and Strategic Efforts: India needs smart diplomacy to negotiate "favored" status with the US. It can leverage its IT services giants and Silicon Valley connections. India's role as a US military ally against China is also a bargaining point.

3. Explore Long-Term Alternatives: If negotiations fail, India will need alternative GPU sources. This requires domestic fabs or overseas facilities owned by Indian businesses. Building such capacity will take years and require enormous investments.

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Question for practice:

Discuss how the US proposal to restrict advanced chip exports could impact India's AI ambitions and global supply chains, and what steps India can take to mitigate these challenges.

India's Growing Inequality and Economic Struggles

Source: The post India's Growing Inequality and Economic Struggles has been created, based on the article "**Our economy seems to have gotten even more K-shaped**" published in "**Live mint**" on 16th January 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- Indian Economy

Context: The article highlights India's growing economic inequality, with luxury spending rising among the wealthy, while the middle class and small businesses struggle due to inflation, slow wage growth, and policy challenges. It also stresses disparities in education and export competitiveness.

For detailed information on **Status of Inequality In India** read Article1, Article2

What is India's K-shaped Economy?

1. India's K-shaped economy highlights growing inequality. Some sections of society experience rapid wealth and luxury, while others face financial struggles.

2. Luxury watch imports rose 28% in 2023, but fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) saw sluggish growth due to higher prices.

For detailed information on **On India's K-Shaped Recovery – SBI report** read this article here

What are the Challenges faced by India's Economy?

1. High Tax Burden and Complex Regulations for Small Businesses

• Small businesses struggle due to a high tax burden and complicated regulations.

• Kirana stores' retail share fell from 33% in 2015-16 to 22% in 2023-24 as quick-commerce platforms gained popularity.

• GST complexities and increased tariffs further harm small exporters.

2. Decline in Labour-Intensive Exports

• Labour-intensive exports driven by SMEs are declining.

• Overvaluation of the rupee reduces global competitiveness.

• Bangladesh's apparel exports grew 7% to $38 billion in 2024, surpassing Indian exporters.

3. Educational Disparities

• Only 15% of Indian students meet global skill standards, compared to 85% in China (as per Ashoka Mody).

• Lack of skilled workers limits India's competitiveness in global manufacturing.

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How Is the Middle Class Affected?

1. The growth of India's middle class has been slowing for years, with signs it is shrinking further.

2. Low wage growth and sustained food inflation have reduced disposable incomes, forcing families to prioritize essentials.

3. 90% of urban households spent more on essential items in November, the highest in a decade.

4. Subcompact car sales are declining, with inventory piling up, while SUV sales thrive, reflecting income disparities.

5. Maruti Suzuki chairman R.C. Bhargava highlighted that without growth in the lower market, there will be no feeders into the upper market.

What should be done?

1. There is a need to remove GST on gig workers' incomes and tax quick-commerce companies heavily.

2. Companies and consumers should share costs for gig workers' insurance and address environmental issues like excessive plastic waste.

Question for practice:

Examine the challenges and disparities highlighted in India's K-shaped economy and suggest measures to address them.

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