9 PM Current Affairs Weekly Compilation

For UPSC CSE mains examination

UPSC

सत्यमेव जयते

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Features :

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

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Copyright laws face new challenge from AI

Source: The post Copyright laws face new challenge from AI has been created, based on the article "**Copyright's tryst with generative AI**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 19th May 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3-Awareness in the fields of IT.

Context: The rapid rise of generative AI has triggered a renewed debate around copyright law. With AI platforms using copyrighted content for training without permission, courts are being asked to rethink how copyright should function in the age of machine learning.

For detailed information on **On copyright infringement and AI** read this article here

Evolution of Copyright Law and Technological Shifts

1. **Historical Foundations of Copyright/** Copyright law began in 1710 to address the challenges posed by the printing press. It aimed to protect publishers, promote learning, and support their economic interests. Over time, it evolved with new technologies like photocopiers, audio recorders, and the internet.

2. **Adapting to New Technologies:** At each technological shift, copyright law adapted itself to protect original works from unauthorised reproduction. However, generative AI presents a different challenge—it uses content for training, not for direct copying.

3. **Changing Legal Approach:** The law is now shifting from dealing with copies of works to regulating the use of copyrighted material in AI training. This marks a fundamental change in how copyright protections are applied.

Legal Tensions Around AI Training

1. **Litigations Across Jurisdictions:** Open AI is facing copyright infringement claims in India and the U.S. These involve literature, music, and photos accessed through internet scraping for training its large language models.

2. **Case in India:** The Federation of Indian Publishers and ANI filed cases against Open AI in the Delhi High Court. They object to the use of their content without consent. Amicus curiae Dr. Arul George Scaria raised key questions—whether AI can "unlearn" trained content and how the court should address false source attribution and access to legitimate copyrighted material.

3. **Differences in Legal Standards:** India's Copyright Act uses a fixed list of exceptions, unlike the U.S. 'fair use ' test. Education-related exceptions in India are limited to classroom use. This strict framework gives right-holders a stronger legal position.

Broader Implications for AI and Innovation

1. **Impact of Opt-Out Mechanism:** Open AI's opt-out mechanism applies only to future training, not past use. This could affect how future AI platforms are trained. If they cannot access quality materials, their development may be limited.

2. **Unequal Playing Field:** Smaller AI developers may not have the same access to rich training data as large firms. Courts must ensure fair competition between resource-rich and emerging AI platforms.

Reimagining Copyright for the AI Era

1. **Balancing Creativity and Protection:** Creativity—human or AI—relies on existing knowledge. Copyright should not prevent future creators from accessing the materials needed to innovate.

2. **Distinguishing Human and Machine Learning:** Ongoing litigation may lead to different legal treatment for human and machine creation. Yet, the current law treats both alike.

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3. **Core Principles as the Solution:** Copyright protects the *expression* of an idea, not the idea itself. If AI uses information without copying expression, it is not infringement. The foundational principles remain strong enough to manage the new challenges.

Conclusion

Copyright must evolve without undermining creativity. Courts must strike a balance that supports both protection of rights and access to knowledge—crucial for human and AI-driven innovation.

Question for practice:

Examine how the rise of generative AI is challenging traditional copyright laws and what legal and policy responses are emerging to address these issues.

President requests Supreme Court clarification on constitutional bill timelines

Source: The post President requests Supreme Court clarification on constitutional bill timelines has been created, based on the article "**What is a Presidential reference?**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 19th May 2025
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2-Structure, organisation and functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary—Ministries and Departments of the Government
Context: The President of India has invoked **Article 143** of the Constitution to seek the **Supreme Court's advisory opinion** on a set of legal questions. This move follows a recent **Supreme Court judgment** that laid down **timelines for the President and Governors** to act on Bills passed by State legislatures, sparking debate on **judicial review and federal powers**.
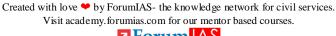
Historical Origins of Advisory Jurisdiction

1. **Colonial Roots and Constitutional Legacy:** The advisory power under Article 143 originates from the **Government of India Act, 1935**, which empowered the Governor-General to refer legal questions to the federal court. The Indian Constitution retained this mechanism to enable the judiciary to guide the executive on significant legal matters.

2. **Comparative Global Practices:** Canada follows a similar practice where courts can give opinions on legal references made by governments. In contrast, the **U.S. Supreme Court rejects advisory opinions** to uphold strict **separation of powers** between branches of government.
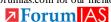
Legal Framework of Article 143

1. **Scope and Procedure:** Under Article 143, the **President can refer legal or factual matters** of public importance to the Supreme Court, based on the **Council of Ministers 'advice**. Article 145 requires a **bench of at least five judges** to hear such references.

2. **Nature of the Court's Opinion:** The Supreme Court's opinion in such cases is **not legally binding** and has **no precedential value**. However, it carries **strong persuasive weight** and is usually followed by both the executive and judiciary.

Notable Past References and Their Impact

1. Key Legal Clarifications

• *Delhi Laws Act (1951)*: Clarified **delegated legislation**.

• *Kerala Education Bill (1958)*: Harmonized **Fundamental Rights** and **Directive Principles**; protected **minority education rights**.

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• *Berubari Case (1960)*: Held that ceding territory needs a **constitutional amendment**.

2. Clarifying Institutional Powers

• *Keshav Singh Case (1965)*: Defined **legislative privileges**.

• *Presidential Poll Case (1974)*: Upheld elections despite **vacancies**.

• *Special Courts Bill (1978)*: Court may **decline vague references** and must not **encroach on Parliament's domain**.

3. **Judiciary Appointments and Exceptions**

• *Third Judges Case (1998)*: Set **guidelines for collegium system**.

• *Ram Janmabhoomi Case (1993)*: Court **declined to offer an opinion**—the only such instance so far.

Issues Raised in the Current Reference

1. **Background and Trigger:** The reference was prompted by a Supreme Court ruling that **prescribed timelines** for the President and Governors to act on State Bills, using a **Home Ministry Office Memorandum** as the basis. The Court also allowed **judicial review** of their decisions.

2. **Main Constitutional Questions:** The government has raised **14 questions**, mainly on **Articles 200 and 201**, asking whether courts can set **timelines not mentioned in the Constitution**, and if actions by the President or Governors can be **challenged before a Bill becomes law**.

3. **Article 142 and Judicial Limits:** The government has sought clarity on the **scope of powers under Article 142**, which empowers the Court to do "complete justice" in constitutional matters.

4. **Political and Legal Relevance: Centre–State tensions**, especially with Opposition-ruled States, have intensified this issue. The Court had previously ruled in the *Cauvery dispute (1992)* that it **cannot review earlier judgments** in an advisory role—a principle likely to be tested again.

Question for practice:

Examine how Article 143 has been used to clarify constitutional questions and its significance in balancing executive and judicial powers in India.
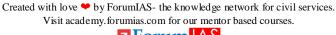
AI is changing the way Indian businesses function

Source: The post AI is changing the way Indian businesses function has been created, based on the article "**From pyramids to hourglasses: how AI can change Indian workplaces**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 19th May 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3 – science and technology – Awareness in IT, Space, Computers, and Robotics.

Context: AI is no longer just automating tasks — it is transforming how Indian businesses operate. The shift from the traditional pyramid model to an "hourglass" model, where AI trims the middle layer, offers both promise and risks for India's future in global business.

For detailed information on **AI's disruptive economic impact, an India check** read this article here

The Hourglass Model of Work

1. **AI Reduces Managerial Layers:** In this new model, AI manages coordination and routine decisions. Top leaders focus on strategy, while frontline teams use insights and tools to work smarter.

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2. **Efficiency and Global Adoption:** McKinsey predicts up to 25% productivity gains from AI. SMEs in India can benefit significantly from this increase. The model is rapidly gaining ground in the U.S. and Europe.

3. **Automation Driven by High Labour Costs:** With U.S. wages around $35/hour and Indian wages at $1–2, automation is cost-effective abroad. Many global firms use AI for onboarding and worker monitoring, leading to flatter structures.

India's Unique Approach to AI Integration

1. **Innovation Hubs vs National Readiness:** India has vibrant tech centres like Bengaluru and Hyderabad. Yet, it ranks 72nd on the IMF's AI Preparedness Index (0.49), behind the U.S. (0.77) and Singapore (0.80), due to rural digital gaps and hierarchical norms.

2. **Hybrid Adoption in Indian Firms:** Companies like Flipkart and Reliance Jio use AI for predictions and logistics. But they retain management layers to handle India's linguistic and regional complexity.

3. **Cultural and Cost Constraints:** Low wages reduce the urgency to automate. A cultural preference for hierarchy, especially in family firms, also limits structural flattening.

Benefits of AI-Human Blending

1. **Higher Efficiency and Innovation:** AI can improve forecasting and reduce waste — for example, a textile maker in Surat *could* use AI to predict fabric demand, reducing surplus and increasing profits. In the tech sector, generative AI boosts task output by 66%, freeing up time for innovation.
2. **Flexibility and Crisis Response:** During COVID-19, pharma companies used AI to navigate supply chains. In banks, chatbots and automated payroll improve service and staff productivity.
New Roles and Job Demand: AI is creating new professions like AI engineers and data ethicists. Deloitte and Nasscom expect demand to reach 1.25 million by 2027.

Emerging Challenges and Limitations

1. **Job Displacement Risks:** Globally, up to 800 million jobs may shift by 2030. In India, low-skilled and older workers are especially vulnerable. Pew estimates 19% of U.S. jobs face high AI exposure.

2. **Ethical and Privacy Issues:** AI errors can arise from biased data. With 79% of Indians opposing data sales (ISACA), trust is critical. The 2023 Data Protection Act is a step forward but still evolving.

3. **Infrastructure and Cultural Gaps:** Around 65% of Indians live in rural areas with poor AI access. Many businesses lack funds for AI adoption. Resistance from traditional structures also slows change.

Way Forward for Indian Firms

1. **Focus on Reskilling:** Programs like Skill India should teach AI basics, data use, and critical thinking.

2. **Adopt a Balanced AI Model:** Use AI for analytics and customer service, but retain humans for key decisions.

3. **Build Ethical, Inclusive AI:** Follow OECD standards to ensure fairness and reduce bias. Partner with global firms to adapt affordable AI for Indian SMEs.

4. **Treat AI as a Long-Term Process:** Track risks and regulations continuously. India's model must reflect its social and economic realities, not just global trends.

Question for practice:

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Evaluate how the shift to the AI-driven hourglass model is reshaping the structure and functioning of Indian businesses.

Advancement Index improves grassroots data use

Source: The post Panchayat Advancement Index improves grassroots data use has been created, based on the article "**Getting the 'micropicture 'at the panchayat level**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 20th May 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2-governance-devolution of powers and finances up to local levels and challenges therein.

Context: Despite growing emphasis on evidence-based decision-making, its implementation remains weak. Delayed Census, poor data accessibility, and lack of user-friendly formats hinder data usage at all levels. In this situation, the Panchayat Advancement Index (PAI) stands out as a tool to promote grassroots-level data-driven planning and help achieve local development goals.

Gaps in Evidence-Based Governance

1. **Availability Without Usability**: Government portals host vast data. The NDSAP, 2012, aimed to provide open access to non-sensitive datasets. However, data is often not presented in a user-friendly or reusable format, limiting its utility.

2. **Overwhelming Data and Weak Tools:** Public and researchers feel overwhelmed due to the complexity and volume of data. Visualisation tools on data.gov.in and other platforms are underdeveloped. Analytics features are also lacking.

3. **Experience Over Evidence:** Due to these shortcomings, ministers and senior bureaucrats often rely on intuition or personal experience instead of structured evidence for decision-making.
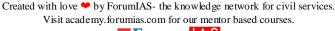
Local Data and Its Poor Integration

1. **Top-Down Portal Design:** Data is generated at gram panchayats but is used mainly by officials at higher levels. Portals are designed to serve the needs of department heads, not local representatives or staff.

2. **Lack of Micro-Level Insight:** The focus remains on presenting large-scale data. Local-level information, though collected, is not easily accessible or usable by the community or grassroots governance.

Significance and Structure of the Panchayat Advancement Index

1. **Robust and Inclusive Framework:** The PAI Baseline Report 2022–23, released in April 2025, includes data from over 2.16 lakh GPs. It uses 435 indicators (331 mandatory, 104 optional) and 566 unique data points across nine LSDG themes aligned with the National Indicator Framework.

2. **Clear, Localised Presentation:** The PAI displays data in formats understandable even by sarpanches or ward members. This empowers local actors to assess and improve their gram panchayat's performance.

3. **Data Disparities Between States:** While 25 States/UTs shared near-complete data, Uttar Pradesh submitted data for only 23,207 of its 57,702 GPs (40%). This poor participation raises concerns about development tracking in the State.

Connecting Data with Action

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1. **From Indicators to Interventions:** PAI links scores to local conditions, such as health. This makes it easier to identify gaps and take timely action.

2. **Collaboration Drives Performance:** Strong coordination between elected leaders, frontline workers, departments, and CSOs improves PAI outcomes and supports integrated development.

3. **Useful for Targeted Planning:** The PAI portal allows report generation at the constituency level, supporting targeted interventions by MPs and MLAs on specific LSDG areas.

Strengthening Local Data Use

1. **Urgent Need for Analysts:** Trained data analysts should be deployed at district and block levels to create regular reports for stakeholders.

2. **Role of Educational Institutions:** Over 4,000 institutions under Unnat Bharat Abhiyan should study nearby GPs and help communities understand and act on their PAI scores.

3. **Smart Resource Allocation:** PAI can guide allocation of CSR, DMF, MPLADS, and MLALAD funds for better SDG outcomes by 2030.

Conclusion:

PAI is more than a performance ranking—it is a development roadmap. With regular updates, stronger analytics, and community involvement, it can transform how India achieves grassroots development.

Question for practice:

Discuss how the Panchayat Advancement Index (PAI) helps bridge the gaps in evidence-based local governance and planning.

OPEC policy shift may hurt India in long run

Source: The post OPEC policy shift may hurt India in long run has been created, based on the article "**The ongoing oil price tensions**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 20th May 2025
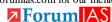
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- Infrastructure

Context: A silent yet crucial conflict has emerged in the global oil market after OPEC+ announced on May 3 a gradual rollback of earlier production cuts. This strategic shift signals the beginning of a new oil price war, with far-reaching implications for major importers like India.

OPEC+ Policy Shift and Triggers

1. **Reversal of Production Cuts:** In 2023, OPEC+ imposed voluntary cuts of 2.2 million barrels per day (bpd) to boost prices. Since early 2024, the group has reversed 960,000 bpd of these cuts over three rounds, with plans to fully unwind them by October 2025.

2. **Market Reaction to Increase:** The May 3 decision led to a 2% drop in Brent crude prices, falling to $60.23 per barrel—the lowest since the pandemic. Prices recovered to $65 with support from a U.S.-China trade deal and nuclear talks stalling between the U.S. and Iran.

3. **Weak Post-COVID Demand:** Global recovery after COVID was uneven, with slow demand growth. Meanwhile, new producers like Brazil and Guyana entered the market, worsening the supply-demand gap. OPEC+ initially responded with a five million bpd cut, which proved ineffective.

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Saudi Arabia's Strategic Shift

1. **Discontent with Overproduction:** Saudi Arabia, bearing 40% of total cuts, saw its 2024 production drop below nine million bpd—its lowest since 2011. Other members like Iraq, Nigeria, and the UAE exceeded quotas, prompting frustration.

2. **History of Market Share Tactics:** The Kingdom has used market flooding strategies before—in 1985-86, 1998, 2014-16, and 2020—to punish overproducers and reassert discipline within OPEC+. This tactic has previously helped restore desired prices.

3. **Reigniting Price War:** With diplomatic efforts failing, Riyadh opted to restore production rapidly, launching what appears to be a price war disguised as a policy shift, aiming to reassert control.

For detailed information on **Saudi Arabia uses oil policy for diplomacy** read this article here

Shifting Dynamics in Oil Market

1. **Fragmented Producer Base:** Unlike earlier times, the current market is crowded with independent producers. Heavy investments in costly offshore and marginal fields require continued output to avoid political fallout.

2. **Declining Demand Growth:** The International Energy Agency (IEA) projects only 0.73% oil demand growth in 2025. Factors like EV adoption in China, climate commitments, and a global slowdown support the "peak demand" outlook, once seen as unrealistic.

3. **Global Economic Weakness:** S&P forecasts global GDP growth at just 2.2% in 2025 and 2.4% in 2026. The WTO predicts a 0.2% decline in global trade in 2025, limiting demand recovery even if supply tightens.

Saudi Arabia's Broader Calculations

1. **Revenue Maximization Strategy:** Anticipating long-term stagnation, Saudi Arabia may be frontloading oil sales to maximize earnings before sanctions on Russia, Iran, and Venezuela are lifted and U.S. production rises under Trump's "Drill, Baby, Drill" push.

2. **Political Coordination with U.S.**
The timing also coincides with President Trump's planned visit. Saudi Arabia may be signaling alignment with U.S. goals of low oil prices to counter inflation, in exchange for defence deals, nuclear cooperation, and arms sales worth over $100 billion.
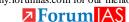
India's Position and Challenges

1. **High Import Dependence:** India, the world's third-largest crude importer, spent $137 billion on oil in 2024–25. Its demand rose by 3.2%—almost four times the global rate—and is expected to be the main growth driver till 2040.

2. **Short-Term Benefitsx** A $1 fall in crude prices saves India $1.5 billion annually. Lower prices ease inflation and reduce fiscal burdens.

3. **Long-Term Risks:** Lower oil revenue in Gulf nations could reduce trade, investment, and tourism. Remittances from nine million Indian expatriates in the Gulf—over $50 billion—may decline. Refinery margins and tax revenues may also fall.

Need for Diversification: Unless India reduces hydrocarbon dependence, reduced economic synergy with oil economies may become the "new normal."

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Question for practice:

Examine how the recent OPEC+ policy shift and Saudi Arabia's strategic response may impact India's economy in both the short and long term.

India faces sharp decline in MTech student enrolment

Source: The post India faces sharp decline in MTech student enrolment has been created, based on the article "**A BANK OF INNOVATORS**" published in "**Indian Express**" on 20th May 2025

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

Context: MTech enrolment in India has reached a seven-year low, with over two-thirds of seats vacant. This signals a deeper structural problem in India's higher technical education, urging reforms to make postgraduate studies more appealing and viable for students.

Understanding the Decline in Postgraduate Enrolment

1. **Sharp Fall in Numbers:** In 2023–24, fewer than 45,000 students enrolled against an offered intake of 1.3 lakh seats. This is a significant drop from the approved intake of 1.81 lakh in 2018–19.

2. **Early Employment Preference:** Today's graduates often choose immediate employment after BTech, motivated by strong industry demand and attractive salaries.

3. **Shift to Foreign Institutions:** Many bright students prefer studying abroad due to better infrastructure, scholarships, global exposure, and job opportunities.

Key Barriers Discouraging Postgraduate Pursuits

1. **Low Perceived Value of MTech Degrees:** Unless obtained from premier institutes, MTech is often not seen as significantly improving employability or skill levels.

2. **Inadequate Financial Assistance:** The current PG scholarship of Rs 12,400 per month, unchanged since 2015, is insufficient to meet urban living expenses amid rising inflation.

3. **Lack of Research Ecosystem:** Several institutions lack advanced labs, mentorship, industry collaboration, or interdisciplinary opportunities, weakening student motivation for research.

4. **Reduced Appeal of Academic Careers:** With limited faculty job growth, concerns over job security, salary parity, and promotion avenues have made academic careers less attractive.

AICTE's Efforts to Address Immediate Challenges

1. **Proposal for Scholarship Hike:** AICTE has recommended increasing the monthly scholarship to Rs 18,600 for GATE-qualified students to address affordability concerns.

2. **Expanding Scholarship Eligibility:** It has proposed including students with a CGPA of 8.5+ from AICTE-approved institutes, even if they haven't cleared GATE, to broaden access.

Structural Reforms for Research and Education Quality

1. **PhD Oversight and Quality Standards:** AICTE plans to regulate PhD programmes to ensure regular evaluations, promote interdisciplinary research, and introduce effective monitoring.

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2. **Upgrading Research Infrastructure:** Through the YASHASWI scheme, AICTE is investing in labs, innovation hubs, and Centres of Excellence to attract PG and PhD students.

3. **Industry Collaboration in Curriculum:** By embedding internships, live projects, and co-designed syllabi, AICTE aims to link academic learning with real-world relevance.

Rebuilding the Appeal of Postgraduate Education

1. **Strategic National Need for Researchers:,**India's technological future in AI, green energy, and quantum tech depends on a strong pool of advanced researchers and specialists.

2. **Making Teaching Careers Attractive:** The Council is working to improve pay structures, mobility, and professional development to make academia a viable career choice.

3. **Commitment to Reform and Excellence:** AICTE remains dedicated to making postgraduate education aspirational, accessible, and essential to national growth and innovation.

Question for practice:

Examine the factors responsible for the decline in MTech enrolment in India and the measures being taken to address them.

Scheme-based workers demand recognition fair wages and rights

Source: The post Scheme-based workers demand recognition fair wages and rights has been created, based on the article "**Scheme-based workers, the struggle for an identity**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 21st May 2025
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2- governance-Governance-mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections.
Context: Despite playing vital roles in public welfare schemes, millions of scheme-based workers (SBWs) in India lack formal recognition as workers. Their ongoing demands for minimum wages, social security, and legal identity as workers have triggered strikes, legal battles, and policy debates at state and national levels.
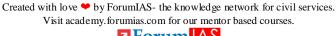**Expanding Workforce in Social Welfare Delivery**

1. **Large Workforce in Critical Sectors:** Over 60 million workers are engaged in government schemes such as the ICDS, NHRM, and Mid-Day Meal Scheme. This includes Anganwadi workers and helpers, ASHAs, and mid-day meal workers, who perform crucial socio-economic and health-related functions.

2. **Key Social Functions:** SBWs provide services for children, lactating mothers, and nutrition. They serve as links between communities and the public health system, improving school enrolment and public health outcomes.

Persistent Denial of Worker Rights

1. **Lack of Legal Identity:** Although their contributions are acknowledged publicly—even by the Prime Minister and WHO—SBWs are denied recognition as formal workers. They do not enjoy basic rights like minimum wages or social security.

2. **Three Major Demands:** SBWs have consistently demanded: (1) legal identity as government workers, (2) assured minimum wages, and (3) inclusion in social security schemes.

3. **Modes of Protest:** Their strategies include frequent strikes, legal actions, and negotiations through social dialogue platforms like the Indian Labour Conference (ILC).

Labour Mobilisation and Political Constraints

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1. **Role of Trade Unions:** Central trade unions such as AITUC, BMS, and CITU have mobilised SBWs across states. However, the absence of structured wage negotiation timelines leads to sporadic and frequent strikes.

2. **Varied State-Level Responses:** States differ in their response depending on union strength and political considerations. For instance, Kerala's Anganwadis recently ended a 13-day strike, while Maharashtra used the Essential Services Maintenance Act to restrict strikes.

3. **Recognition of Essential Services:** Despite suppressive policies, state actions like invoking essential service laws indirectly recognise the critical roles SBWs play.

Judicial Interventions and Policy Shifts

1. **Initial Legal Setbacks:** In *State Of Karnataka vs Ameerbi* (2006), the Supreme Court denied worker status to Anganwadis, stating they did not hold statutory posts.

2. **Judicial Relief in Recent Years:** In *Maniben Maganbhai Bhariya* (2022), the Court ruled Anganwadis eligible for gratuity under the Payment of Gratuity Act. In 2024, the Gujarat High Court directed that AWWs and AWHs be paid minimum wages and proposed their regularisation as Class III and IV employees.

3. **Policy Directions from Courts:** The Gujarat High Court also urged central and state governments to jointly frame policies for the regularisation of Anganwadi workers.

State Apathy and the Fight for Recognition

1. **Government's Stalling Tactics:** While recognising the long-term policy implications, the government has cited high costs as a barrier to formalising SBWs. No clear timeline has been set for implementing worker status.

2. **Privatisation Concerns and Protests:** Amid delays, there are efforts to privatise schemes like ICDS. SBW organisations continue to resist these moves while demanding stronger labour protections.

3. **Struggle for Identity and Dignity:**, SBWs seek not charity or applause, but legal worker status and fair wages. Their struggle reflects a broader movement across sectors, where workers demand recognition, not honorariums, for their hard-earned labour.

Question for practice:

Discuss the challenges faced by scheme-based workers in India and the efforts made to secure their recognition and rights.

India needs a unified climate risk framework

Source: The post India needs a unified climate risk framework has been created, based on the article "**Progress should not just be fast but future-proof**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 21st May 2025
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- Environment
Context: India faces rising climate threats, from floods and droughts to heatwaves. Over 80% of its population lives in high-risk districts. Despite this, the country lacks a unified, forward-looking framework to assess and manage climate physical risks (CPRs).
For detailed information on **How India's new government should scale up climate action** read this article here
Understanding Climate Physical Risks

1. **Broadening Nature of Risks:** CPRs include both sudden shocks like floods and heatwaves and long-term stresses like droughts and shifting monsoons. These threats are now systemic and recurring.

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2. **Limitations of Short-Term Approaches:** Forecasts and warning systems reduce immediate losses but fail to support long-term planning. Climate projections help detect evolving risks over time.

3. **Impact on Systems and Stability:** These risks affect not just the environment but also health, the economy, and national security, disrupting normal life and development.

Global and Domestic Gaps in Adaptation Efforts

1. **Imbalance in Climate Funding:** Most funding goes toward mitigation—like renewables—rather than adaptation. Resilient infrastructure receives less attention and support.

2. **Adaptation as a Universal Necessity:** Climate change now challenges both the Global South and the Global North. Wildfires and cyclones in developed nations show the need for adaptation everywhere.

3. **Economic Gains from Adaptation:** The UN Environment Programme states that each $1 spent on adaptation yields $4 in savings through reduced losses and lower recovery costs.

Deconstructing Climate Risk: Hazard, Exposure, Vulnerability

1. **IPCC's Risk Formula:** CPRs are defined by hazard (type of event), exposure (who or what is at risk), and vulnerability (ability to recover). All three shape actual risk levels.

2. **Beyond Frequency of Disasters:** Understanding exposure and vulnerability is key. Risk is not just about how often events occur but also about who is affected and how prepared they are.

3. **Need for Integrated Risk Thinking:** This approach allows governments and businesses to move from reactive to proactive planning.

Institutional Responses and Regulatory Evolution

1. **Mandatory Climate Disclosures Emerging Globally:** Regulators worldwide now demand CPR disclosures. The IFRS ISSB S2 sets global reporting standards.

2. **India's Financial Response:** The Reserve Bank of India is integrating CPRs into its regulatory framework, linking climate risks with economic and financial stability.

3. **Business Continuity at Stake:,** Climate disclosure is becoming central to investment, operations, and risk management.

Fragmented Approach in India and Emerging Efforts

1. **Scattered Risk Assessments:** India's CPR data is spread across agencies and research bodies, each using different tools and priorities.

2. **Lack of Standardised Data:** Despite having flood maps and vulnerability atlases, there is no central system. This limits policy and business decision-making.

3. **Global Models Fall Short:** Existing international models fail to capture India's local climate variations accurately.

Towards a Comprehensive Climate Risk Framework

1. **Initial Steps Underway:** India submitted its first Adaptation Communication in 2023. A complete National Adaptation Plan is in progress, covering nine sectors at the district level.

2. **Need for a Dedicated CPR Tool:** India must build a unified, localised CPR tool combining standardised data, risk models, and transparent methods to support public and private planning.

3. **Future-Proofing Development:** This tool is essential to align climate resilience with India's development goals under *Viksit Bharat*.

Question for practice:

Examine the challenges India faces in managing climate physical risks and the steps needed to build a comprehensive framework for climate adaptation.

Supreme Court revives rule affecting judicial exam entry

Source: The post Supreme Court revives rule affecting judicial exam entry has been created, based on the article "**3-year rule: a setback to judiciary aspirants**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 21st May 2025

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

Context: The Supreme Court has revived the requirement of **three years of legal practice** to appear in subordinate judicial services exams. This verdict, delivered on **May 20, 2024**, has reignited debates around **judicial recruitment and talent accessibility**, especially since the Court cited **no empirical evidence** for reinstating the rule.

Historical Background and Legal Shifts

1. **Law Commission's Early Recommendations:** The **14th Law Commission (1958)** suggested that only those with **three to five years of legal practice** be allowed to appear for lower judiciary exams. It recommended practical tests, including **judgment writing, drafting, and evidence analysis**. Yet, most current exams still rely on **rote learning**.

2. All India Judicial Services (AIJS) Proposal: The Commission proposed a separate system—**AIJS**—for higher judiciary, with **no experience requirement**. Graduates aged **21–25** would undergo **rigorous training** in courts to build necessary skills.

3. **Judicial Endorsements and Reversals:?**In **1992**, the Supreme Court supported the AIJS model. But in **1993**, it reversed its stance, ruling that **fresh graduates lacked courtroom maturity** and **practical insight**. It made **three years 'practice mandatory**, considering judicial officers decide on **life, liberty, and property** from day one.

Challenges in Talent Attraction and Retention

1. **The Shetty Commission's Observations:** Formed in **1996**, the Commission found the rule **ineffective**. Many selected candidates were already aged **27–30**. In **2002**, the SC accepted this finding and **abolished** the rule, noting that **bright graduates lost interest** in the judiciary after three years in practice.

2. **Changing Realities for Law Graduates:** Graduates from **National Law Universities** now seek **lucrative corporate jobs** due to **high education costs** (₹12–₹40 lakh). They rarely consider judicial services.

3. **Mismatch in Career Paths:** Those focused on **judicial services** seldom want to **practice first**, while future litigators rarely aim for **judicial roles**. The rule **discourages both groups**.

Barriers to Entry and Inclusion

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1. **Economic and Social Disadvantages:** The rule disproportionately affects **SC/ST/OBC** and **economically weaker** candidates who cannot afford **career delays**and need to **earn early**.

2. **Gender-Based Challenges: Women**, especially those with **maternity breaks**, may drop out. This could reduce gender gains—like the **38% women**in the district judiciary and their dominance in **Bihar's exam**.

3. Age and Delay Factors: With **five-six years of legal education** and **three years of experience**, candidates grow **older and financially strained**—unlike **civil services aspirants**, who apply earlier.

4. **Financial Insecurity for Junior Lawyers:** Junior lawyers earn just ₹**15,000–₹20,000/month**, often **less than unskilled workers** in Delhi. Many lack **professional connections** to sustain practice.

5. **Irregular Recruitment Cycles:** Exams are **infrequent**, forcing eligible candidates to **wait years**, further disincentivizing judicial careers.

Proposed Reforms and the Road Ahead

1.**Enhanced Training and Mentorship:** A **two-year structured training** can bridge the experience gap. Trainees may serve under **District Judges** and **senior lawyers** to gain courtroom exposure.

2. **Reforming Examination Patterns:** Exams should shift to **scenario-based questions** and emphasize **judgment writing**, reducing reliance on memory.

3.**Inclusive Talent Recruitment:** Excluding fresh graduates risks **losing bright minds**. A balanced approach that combines **early recruitment with strong training** is essential to strengthen the judiciary.

Question for practice:

Examine the implications of reinstating the three-year legal practice requirement on judicial recruitment and inclusion in India.

Urban biodiversity conservation is key to sustainable development

Source: The post Urban biodiversity conservation is key to sustainable development has been created, based on the article "**Development without the savaging of urban biodiversity**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 22nd May 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- Environment

Context: The article explores the urgent need to protect urban biodiversity amid rapid urbanisation and environmental loss. With the 2024 International Day for Biological Diversity themed **"Harmony with nature and sustainable development,"** it highlights the importance of city planning and citizen engagement in conserving **green and blue spaces**.

For detailed information on **Urban Biodiversity in India- Significance and Challenges** read this article here

Understanding the Biodiversity Crisis

1. **Global Loss and Urgent Action:** Biodiversity is essential to human life, planetary health, and economic prosperity. Yet, **25% of global species face extinction**. The **Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)** and its **Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF)** aim to protect 30% of global land and sea biodiversity by 2030.

2. **Urban Expansion and Ecological Pressure:** Nearly **half the world's population lives in cities**, with a projection of 70% by 2050. Urban spaces face multiple pressures, and **uncontrolled growth** is damaging biodiversity. **Target 12 of GBF** and **SDG 11** call for sustainable, greener urban planning—but ground-level implementation remains weak.

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Why Urban Biodiversity Matters

1. **Health and Environmental Gains:** Urban greenery plays a critical role in regulating heat, controlling floods, conserving water, reducing pollution, and **absorbing carbon**. Tree lines can reduce **noise pollution by 5 decibels**. In Frankfurt, green belts lowered temperature by **3.5°C** and raised humidity by **5%**.

2. **Economic Benefits of Green Cover:** Trees in mega cities provide services valued at **$967,000 (₹8 crore) per sq. km annually**, according to Professor Theodore Endreny. Investing in urban parks, tree avenues, and natural waterbodies supports both ecology and **community well-being**.

3. **Shrinking Urban Forests:** India's urban green cover is low: Mumbai (25.43%), Delhi and Hyderabad (12.6%), Bengaluru (6.85%), Chennai (4.66%), Ahmedabad (3.27%). Between 2021 and 2023, **Chennai and Hyderabad lost forest area**, showing declining trends despite growing awareness.

Tools and Frameworks for Greener Cities

1. **Planning through Global and Local Guidance:** The **GBF urges cities to build ecological connectivity**, protect native species, and improve health through greener spaces. The **UN Habitat's 3-30-300 rule** suggests three visible trees per home, **30% canopy cover**, and a **green space within 300 metres**.

2. **City Biodiversity Index and Action Plans:** ICLEI Asia created a **23-indicator index** to assess biodiversity in cities like Kochi, Gangtok, and Nagpur. Based on this, cities draft **Local Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans (LBSAPs)** to set goals for conservation and human welfare.

Urban Conservation Models and Successes

1. **Koyambedu Market Regeneration:** In Chennai, the **Care Earth Trust** transformed the Koyambedu market in 2021. Within two years, **141 native plant species** regenerated naturally, attracting **35 bird and 27 butterfly species**. This layered forest model is more effective than the Miyawaki method for small urban plots.

2. **Waterbody Restoration Efforts:** Urban waterbodies like Chennai's **Pallikaranai marsh**, once polluted and degraded, are now being restored. It has been declared a **reserved forest and Ramsar site**. Protection must include **pollution control, legal safeguards, and sewage treatment** through eco-friendly solutions.

3. **Household and Plot-Level Initiatives:** The disappearance of **home gardens** due to apartments has reduced green space. Policies can mandate **five trees per plot above 2,400 sq. ft.**, and encourage **rooftop and kitchen gardens**. These decentralised efforts support both biodiversity and urban health.

Enforcement and Public Participation

1. **Strict Action and Judicial Oversight:** City managers must act against deforestation and pollution. The **Supreme Court's action in Hyderabad's Kancha Gachibowli area** shows the importance of judicial intervention in protecting green spaces from reckless development.

2. **Stakeholder Involvement for Mass Impact:** Resident associations, NGOs, and corporates must be involved in tree planting and **waterbody protection**. Biodiversity conservation must become a **mass movement** to ensure long-term urban sustainability.

Question for practice:

Examine how urban biodiversity conservation contributes to sustainable development and what tools and initiatives support this effort.

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India's global diplomacy faces truth and legitimacy challenges

Source: The post India's global diplomacy faces truth and legitimacy challenges has been created, based on the article "**Narrating the nation abroad**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 22nd May 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2-International Relations

Context: India has launched a global diplomatic outreach following recent military tensions with Pakistan. This initiative seeks to clarify its position and manage global perception. But it raises deeper concerns about truth, legitimacy, and the credibility crisis in today's media environment.

Strategic Purpose of India's Diplomatic Move

1. **Proactive Image Management:** India's delegation aims to shape the global narrative, explain its military actions, and prevent misinterpretation. It presents India as a responsible power defending its sovereignty against terrorism.

2. **Performing Legitimacy Globally:** In the current global order, conviction alone is insufficient. States must prove their legitimacy before an international audience of allies, institutions, and media.

3. **Confidence in Persuasion:** India believes its calibrated action, if communicated properly, can secure global support and moral high ground by showing restraint and focusing only on non-state actors.

4. **Sign of a Legitimacy Concern:** Yet, the very need for clarification shows concern that India's intent might be misread or lost in global noise. This reflects both strategic control and a recognition of vulnerability.

Erosion of Credibility in the Information Age

1. **Misinformation and Viral Content:** During the conflict, fake visuals—old videos, disaster clips, and digital game scenes—went viral. AI-generated images made it harder to separate truth from fiction.

2. **Public Role in False Narratives:** Falsehoods are no longer just top-down. Citizens now produce and circulate content that supports their beliefs, eroding the line between truth and illusion.

3. **Displacement of Reality:** Emotionally charged and viral content often replaces fact-based reporting. What spreads fastest shapes public opinion more than official versions.

4. **Media as Spectacle:** Baudrillard's idea—that war becomes a spectacle—now feels real. Media simulations override reality, making conflict more about performance than fact.

Crisis of Persuasion in Global Diplomacy

1. **Collapse of Shared Ground:** Without basic agreement on facts, meaningful debate becomes impossible. Diplomacy weakens when truth is fragmented or distrusted.

2. **Struggle to Restore Meaning:** India's campaign is not just strategic persuasion. It is a fight to preserve a space where truth can still be heard and trusted.

3. **Communication Risks:** If global audiences cannot distinguish a just act from a crafted illusion, India's message may lose meaning, despite its intent and precision.

4. **Authenticity at Stake:** This echoes India's legacy of Non-Aligned authenticity. But if audiences reject truth itself, diplomacy loses its foundation.

Question for practice:

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Discuss how India's diplomatic outreach reflects the challenges of legitimacy and truth in the current global media environment.

India's poverty reduction has significantly slowed down

Source: The post India's poverty reduction has significantly slowed down has been created, based on the article "**Analysing poverty levels in India by comparing various surveys**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 22nd May 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2- governance-Issues relating to poverty and hunger.

Context: India has not published official poverty data since 2011–12. A recent paper titled *'Poverty Decline in India after 2011–12: Bigger Picture Evidence'* addresses this gap using imputation-based methods. It finds that the pace of poverty reduction has slowed considerably after 2011–12.

For detailed information on **Understanding Poverty in India** read this article here

Challenges in Poverty Estimation

1. **Absence of Updated Official Estimates:** The last official poverty estimate was published in 2011–12. Since then, multiple unofficial and often conflicting estimates have emerged due to lack of fresh data.

2. **Survey Disruptions and Gaps:** The Household Consumption Expenditure Survey (HCES) for 2017–18 was scrapped over "methodological issues." The latest HCES (2022–23) cannot be easily compared with the 2011–12 survey, as no intermediate surveys exist.

3. **Limitations of UMPCE-Based Data:** From 2014 onwards, the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) introduced the Usual Monthly Per Capita Consumption Expenditure (UMPCE), based on a single vague question. This measure lacks consistency with past metrics and gives a poverty estimate of 26–30% in 2019–20.

Three Broad Estimation Methods Identified

1. **Alternative NSSO Surveys:** Some studies rely on alternate NSSO surveys such as the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS), but these suffer from limited comparability and depend on weak consumption indicators.

2. **National Accounts-Based Scaling:** Surjit Bhalla and colleagues used Private Final Consumption Expenditure (PFCE) from the National Accounts Statistics (NAS) to scale HCES 2011–12 data. This assumes uniform consumption growth, which may not reflect real conditions.

3. **Survey-to-Survey Imputation:** This method fills data gaps by linking compatible surveys. Though outcomes may vary based on survey choice, it helps track long-term trends in poverty.

New Approach and Findings on Poverty Trends

1. **Use of Consistent Survey Pairs and Poverty Lines:** The authors use the Tendulkar Committee poverty line. They impute consumption data from the Employment-Unemployment Survey (EUS) of 2011–12 and Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) from 2017–18 onwards. Both surveys share similar sampling and design features.

2. **Enhanced Accuracy via State-Level Modelling:** Unlike World Bank studies, the authors include State-fixed effects or State-level estimates, improving the precision and reliability of their poverty estimates.

3. **Main Findings:** Their results show poverty declined from 37% in 2004–05 to 22% in 2011–12, and only to around 18% by 2022–23. The number of poor fell marginally from 250 million to 225 million, showing that progress has slowed significantly since 2011.

Diverging Trends Across Indian States

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1. **Significant Gains in Uttar Pradesh:** Uttar Pradesh showed marked poverty reduction during this period, according to the authors 'estimates.

2. **Slow Progress in Some Poorer States:** Jharkhand and Bihar showed little improvement. In states like Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh, poverty reduction has largely stagnated.

3. **Call for Comparable Official Data:** The authors stress the need for consistent, publicly available government data to resolve current uncertainties.

Supporting Evidence from Broader Indicators

1. **Slower GDP Growth:** Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth slowed from an annual average of 6.9% (2004–2011) to 5.7% (2011–2023), reflecting a broader economic deceleration.

2. **Rural Wage Growth Falls:** Real rural wages grew at 4.13% annually until 2011–12, but slowed to 2.3% annually after that, indicating weakening income gains.

3. **Return to Agriculture:** Between 2004–05 and 2017–18, 66 million workers left agriculture. Since 2017–18, 68 million re-entered the sector, which has lowered productivity and wages, aggravating rural poverty.

Conclusion

This study shows a clear slowdown in poverty reduction since 2011–12. While it may not settle the debate, the authors call for urgent release of official data and renewed policy efforts to combat poverty.

Question for practice:

Examine the factors that have contributed to the slowdown in poverty reduction in India since 2011–12.

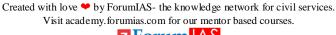### Indian States Face Unfair Borrowing Costs Without Credit Ratings

Source: The post Indian States Face Unfair Borrowing Costs Without Credit Ratings has been created, based on the article "**Complexities in rating States 'debt**" published in "**Businessline**" on 24rd May 2025
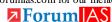**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper2- Polity-issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure, devolution of powers and finances up to local levels and challenges therein.
Context: A recent auction of State Development Loans (SDLs) has reignited debate over whether Indian States should be rated individually like corporate entities. Despite similar or better fiscal indicators, some States face higher borrowing costs. This inconsistency questions the fairness and transparency of current borrowing frameworks under RBI's implicit guarantees.
For detailed information on **Issues with borrowing powers of States** read this article here
Mismatch Between State Finances and Borrowing Costs

1. **Unlinked Yields and Fiscal Health:** The SDL auction revealed that States with stronger fiscal indicators sometimes faced higher yields. For example, Uttarakhand, with a 2.9% fiscal deficit, had to pay more than Rajasthan, which had a 4.3% deficit. Similar anomalies were noted between Himachal Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh.

2. **Corporate Bond Market Contrast:** In the corporate space, yields vary significantly based on credit ratings. AAA bonds yield 7.60%, while AA bonds yield 8.70%, reflecting a clear risk-based premium. This contrast shows the financial market values credit ratings for corporates but not for States.

3. **Anomalies in SDL Auctions:** Currently, SDLs do not carry individual ratings. This creates irregularities where fiscally prudent States are penalized, while less disciplined ones benefit. The absence of a rating mechanism distorts price discovery in the bond market.

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Credit Ratings and Their Absence in SDLs

1. **Proxy Ratings by Agencies:** Credit rating agencies evaluate States primarily when rating state-owned enterprises backed by government guarantees. CARE, for instance, rated Karnataka AA(-), Tamil Nadu A(-), Andhra Pradesh BBB, and Punjab BB(+), indicating wide disparities in fiscal health.

2. **Sub-Sovereign Status Limitation:** Despite different credit profiles, all States are treated similarly in the market due to their sub-sovereign status. This lack of differentiation in pricing mechanisms weakens the incentive for fiscal discipline.

3. **Rationale for State Ratings:** If States were rated like corporates, it would promote fiscal responsibility and provide better signals to the market. Higher deficits would lead to higher borrowing costs, nudging States toward prudent spending.

Challenges in Implementing State Ratings

1. **RBI's Implicit Guarantee:** States enjoy an implicit guarantee from the RBI, ensuring repayment regardless of fiscal performance. This undermines the effectiveness of a rating system and discourages market-based pricing.

2. **Federal Structure Constraints:** State governments, being part of a federal structure, are seen as extensions of the Centre. Removing or altering the implicit guarantee would face legal and constitutional challenges.

3. **Municipal Body Comparison:** Unlike States, municipal bodies do not have implicit guarantees and are rated independently. This sets a precedent for differentiated borrowing costs based on creditworthiness, raising questions on fairness in treatment.

Fiscal Flexibility and Welfare Priorities

1. **Centre's Conditional Relaxation:**The central government sometimes permits higher deficits for States under conditions, such as implementing power sector reforms. This allows some leeway but does not reflect in borrowing costs.

2. **Development Justification:** States argue that their welfare-driven spending should not be judged by commercial metrics. Welfare schemes, including direct handouts, drive consumption and growth, justifying higher spending in some cases.

3. **Risk of Undermining Development:** If ratings lead to pressure for fiscal tightening, States fear their development goals may suffer. This is crucial as States are at varying stages of development, requiring tailored spending strategies.

Toward a Balanced Rating Framework

1. **Proposal for Routine Budget Ratings:** To bridge the gap, budgets can be routinely rated by agencies like CARE, CRISIL, or ICRA. These ratings could be disclosed to aid market participants during SDL auctions.

2. **Market-Driven Price Discovery:** While removing RBI's implicit guarantee may be difficult, informal ratings could guide investors. This hybrid approach balances fiscal prudence with developmental needs.

3. **Limitations Remain:** Differential SDL weights or formal enforcement remains unlikely under the current guarantee regime. However, informal ratings can still inject transparency and encourage responsible fiscal behavior.

Question for practice:

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Examine whether the absence of individual credit ratings for Indian States affects fair price discovery in SDL auctions.

Supreme Court bail order raises concerns about free speech

Source: The post Supreme Court bail order raises concerns about free speech has been created, based on the article "**Pratap Bhanu Mehta writes: SC order in Mahmudabad case casts a shadow on our rights**" published in "**Indian Express**" on 24rd May 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2- Justices

Context: The Supreme Court recently granted bail to Professor Ali Khan Mahmudabad, arrested for a social media post. While the order offers short-term relief, its terms raise deeper concerns. The case highlights how judicial procedures and discretionary powers are being used to suppress constitutional freedoms, especially the right to free speech.

Bail with Punitive Conditions

1. **Relief That Restricts Liberty:** Though bail was granted, Professor Khan was asked to surrender his passport and refrain from writing. These conditions, despite the absence of proven wrongdoing, amount to preemptive punishment.

2. **Procedure as a Tool of Control:** In India, legal procedure often conceals rights violations. Instead of safeguarding liberty, it enables social control by appearing just while inflicting harm.

3. **Discretion Over Due Process:** Judicial discretion now overshadows constitutional safeguards. By masking punishment as procedural fairness, courts dilute citizens 'protections under law.

Questionable Use of Investigative Mechanisms

1. **SIT as a Disproportionate Response:** The Court appointed a Special Investigation Team of IPS officers to examine Khan's short post. This indicates an excessive legal response to what should be a judicial assessment.

2. **Presumption of Innocence Undermined:** Labeling the post as a "dog whistle" shifts the burden of proof onto the citizen. This implies guilt for exercising basic rights, which the state then investigates.

3. **Expanding State Surveillance Through Courts:** Assigning such investigations to police reinforces state control. Instead of directly judging content, the Court distances itself, legitimising broader scrutiny of speech.

Shrinking Space for Free Expression

1. **Eroding Article 19 Protections:** The Court's approach to free speech has become increasingly inconsistent. Restrictions now appear guided more by ideological conformity than legal principles.

2. **Speech Must Appear Patriotic:** A dangerous shift is visible—speech must now seem patriotic to be protected. This contradicts the very idea of free expression under the Constitution.

3. **Imposing Ideological Standards:** Patriotism is subjective. By requiring speech to meet vague nationalistic standards, the Court risks endorsing ideological bias over legal objectivity.

Alarming Trends in State and Judicial Conduct

1. **Political Use of Legal Action:** What began as local political grandstanding is now backed at higher state levels. Instead of de-escalating, the government seems intent on making an example of Khan.

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2. **Missed Chance for Judicial Leadership:** The new Chief Justice had an opportunity to reinforce liberal constitutionalism. By not doing so, the Court reinforces past inconsistencies.

3. **From Critique to Criminalisation:** While academic criticism of Khan's post is valid, jumping straight to prosecution reflects a disturbing shift. Legal action has become a first, not final, resort.

Broader Threats to Rights

1. **Fear Embedded in Relief:** Bail, now viewed as a favour, sends a troubling message. Rights are granted reluctantly, not protected assertively.

2. **Benevolence Undermining Liberty:** When relief comes with excessive conditions, it weakens trust in judicial protection. The current stance enables more suppression by treating basic rights as privileges.

Question for practice:

Discuss how the Supreme Court's bail order in Professor Ali Khan Mahmudabad's case reflects broader concerns about judicial conduct and free speech in India.

Green energy raises electricity costs despite popular belief

Source: The post Green energy raises electricity costs despite popular belief has been created, based on the article "**Let's not deceive the poor world with an expensive green illusion**" published in "**Live Mints**" on 24rd May 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- infrastructure- energy

Context: The article questions the belief that solar and wind power reduce electricity costs. Drawing from real-world data in Germany, the UK, and China, it shows that relying heavily on green energy can raise prices due to hidden infrastructure and backup costs.
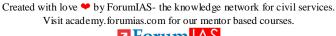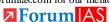
The Green Energy Cost Paradox

1. **Rising Costs in Rich Nations:** Solar and wind are believed to be cheap, but utility bills in **Germany and the UK show otherwise**. Electricity costs have increased with more green energy.

2. **Double Energy Systems:** Green power is not always available. **Fossil fuel backups are still needed**, meaning countries must pay for two systems.

3. **Cost Recovery Issues:** As backup plants run fewer hours, they must **recover capital over limited use**, pushing prices even higher.

Evidence from Global Studies

1. **High True Costs:** A Chinese study found solar power was **twice as expensive as coal**. A peer-reviewed study from Germany and Texas showed that solar and wind were **many times costlier than fossil fuels**.

2. **Strong Link to Higher Prices:** IEA data shows for every **10% rise in solar and wind**, electricity prices rise by **more than 4 cents per kWh**. Countries with low green energy pay around **11 cents per kWh**.

3. **Germany's Experience:** Germany pays **34 cents per kWh**, twice the US rate and nearly four times China's. Despite having enough installed capacity to **generate twice its demand**, actual supply often falls short.

Power Gaps and Storage Issues

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1. **Intermittency Problems:** On days with good sun and wind, **up to 70% of Germany's needs** are met. But on **cloudy, windless days**, solar and wind deliver **less than 4%** of required power.

2. **Battery Shortfalls:,**Germany's battery capacity lasts **only 20 minutes**. The rest of the day relies on fossil fuels. During such periods, **prices reached $1 per kWh**.

Policy Models and Inequities

1. **Transparent vs Hidden Costs:** Europe includes green costs in bills, making impacts **visible**. In the US, they are **masked by tax deductions**, likely making actual prices **25% higher**.

2. **Harm to Poor Nations:** Poor countries are discouraged from using fossil fuels. Yet, in 2023, most new power in these nations came from **coal**, not renewables.

Way Forward

1. **Subsidy-Driven Illusion:,**Green energy growth in rich nations depends on **subsidies and existing fossil infrastructure**, not real cost advantages.

2. **Focus on Innovation:** Only when green energy becomes **genuinely cheaper** will transition succeed. Priority must shift to **cheaper batteries and fourth-gen nuclear**. First, the world must **accept the truth**.

Question for practice:

Examine how the reliance on solar and wind energy affects electricity prices in different countries.

Global Health Leaders Must Act to Ensure Oxygen Access

Source: The post Global Health Leaders Must Act to Ensure Oxygen Access has been created, based on the article "**A medical oxygen access gap SE Asia must bridge**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 24rd May 2025
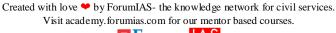
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2- governance-Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health.
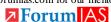
Context: Access to medical oxygen is a critical global health issue, especially in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). The COVID-19 pandemic exposed serious infrastructure gaps. Despite short-term emergency measures, **long-term access remains inadequate**. The WHO and The Lancet Commission urge **immediate and collective action** to close the oxygen gap.

Scale and Urgency of the Oxygen Crisis

1. **Widespread global deficiency: Five billion people lack access to quality medical oxygen**. The oxygen service coverage gap is **78% in South Asia** and **74% in East Asia-Pacific**, reflecting severe unmet demand. **COVID-19 as a Wake-Up Call**

2. **COVID-19 as a Wake-Up Call:** The pandemic revealed systemic vulnerabilities. Emergency steps were taken, but **lasting progress is still insufficient** to meet ongoing needs.

3. **Available roadmap for action:** WHO's Access to Medical Oxygen Resolution and The Lancet Commission provide **clear policy directions**, but their success depends on **prompt, coordinated implementation**.

Key Barriers to Oxygen Access

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1. Shortage of equipment and monitoring tools: Only **54% of LMIC hospitals have pulse oximeters**, and just **58% have oxygen access**. This causes **treatment delays and preventable deaths**, especially in respiratory emergencies.

2. **High financial burden:** Bridging the global oxygen gap needs **$6.8 billion**, with **South Asia requiring $2.6 billion**. Limited budgets and **competing health priorities** make large-scale investment difficult.

3. Workforce limitations: There is an **acute shortage of trained biomedical engineers and technicians**. Even when equipment is available, lack of expertise **leads to frequent breakdowns**, worsening rural access.

Need for Long-Term Investment and Innovation

1. **Governance and monitoring tools:** The WHO Medical Oxygen Scorecard supports **transparent, data-based tracking**. Countries must report progress by **2026, 2028, and 2030**.

2. **National strategies and capacity building:** Governments should create **tailored oxygen scale-up plans**. WHO-supported training in Nepal enabled Bhutan to install PSA plants, **showing the value of cross-border cooperation**.

3. **Sustainable regional collaboration:** Joint efforts help build resilient systems. **WHO-led initiatives in South-East Asia** show that **regional knowledge sharing** can lead to sustainable operations.

Infrastructure and Technological Innovations

1. **Local production and supply chains:** Local manufacturing reduces costs and **ensures last-mile oxygen delivery**. It also minimizes dependency on imports.

2. **Innovative, decentralised solutions: Portable concentrators, solar-powered systems, and booster pumps** can reach remote areas effectively when included in health plans.

3. **Addressing energy disruptions:** In LMICs, **solar-powered systems** offer **cost-effective, low-maintenance oxygen supply**. Ethiopia and Nigeria have implemented these successfully.

Building Sustainable Oxygen Ecosystems

1. **Policy and Regulations:** Governments should integrate oxygen into **universal health coverage** and establish standards for **quality, storage, and distribution**.

2. Private and global engagement: The private sector must invest in **affordable, scalable systems**. Global agencies should support **funding, infrastructure, and workforce training**.

3. I**nnovation through Research and Technology:** Academia can design **low-cost oxygen technologies**, while digital tools improve **real-time monitoring and supply chain efficiency**.

Conclusion

Access to medical oxygen is a **human right**, not a privilege. **Sustainable investments, political will, and global collaboration** can solve this crisis and ensure **no one is left behind**.

Question for practice:

Examine the key barriers that prevent long-term access to medical oxygen in low- and middle-income countries.

District level data reveals India's unequal economic growth

Source: The post District level data reveals India's unequal economic growth has been created, based on the article "**Growth: A district-led approach**" published in "**Businessline**" on 24rd May 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3-Growth and Development

Context: India's headline GDP growth hides regional disparities. District Domestic Product (DDP) data shows that a few districts drive most of the economy, while many areas remain underdeveloped. This undermines inclusive growth and highlights the need for granular policy planning.

Regional Concentration of Economic Output

1. Skewed Contribution Across States: A few districts dominate their State's economic activity. **In Uttarakhand, Haridwar, Udham Singh Nagar, and Dehradun generate 71% of the GSDP**, while the other 10 districts contribute less than 30%. In **Karnataka, Bengaluru alone produces 38%**, with the next highest district at just 5.5%. **In Maharashtra, Mumbai, Thane, Pune, and Nagpur account for over 60%** of total output.

2. **National Pattern of Imbalance:** This is common across India. **The top 10% of districts generate 50–60% of State output**, while hundreds of others contribute only marginally. Even in **Madhya Pradesh, Indore contributes 6.7%**, double or triple the average of other districts.

Consequences of Economic Concentration

1. **Migration and Urban Strain:** Uneven growth drives **large-scale migration to urban centres**, leading to housing shortages, poor infrastructure, and growth in informal jobs.

2. **Low Investment in Lagging Districts:** Left-behind districts receive **less investment in infrastructure and human capital**, keeping them trapped in low-productivity and low-income cycles.

3. **Misleading Aggregated Data: State or national GDP figures mask internal disparities**. Without district-level visibility, policies can be misaligned and ineffective.
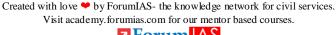
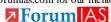**Challenges in Measuring District Economies**

1. **Outdated Distribution Methods:** Many States do not directly measure DDP. Instead, **State GDP is allocated using outdated formulas**, missing the real economic picture.

2. **Uncounted Informal Economy:** In underdeveloped areas, **informal work like small-scale manufacturing and services is not surveyed**, leading to underestimation of actual activity.

3. **Misreading Inequalities:** The issue is not overstating inequalities but **failing to grasp their real depth and distribution** due to poor data systems.

The Need for District-Led Development

1. **Reforming Data Infrastructure:** DDP must be estimated **annually using real data**, with sectoral Gross Value Added (GVA) for agriculture, manufacturing, services, and informal sectors.

2. **Regular Local Surveys: Frequent surveys of labour and unincorporated enterprises** can accurately capture district economies, especially in backward regions.

3. **District-Centric Planning:** Development planning should focus on districts. **Each district needs tailored strategies** based on local resources, trends, and capacities.

Toward Inclusive and Balanced Growth

1. Granular Data for Smart Policy: Real-time district dashboards will **enable better tracking of jobs, productivity, and investments**. This leads to more precise planning.

2. **Link Data with Incentives:** States should be incentivised to **build better district-level data systems**, possibly linked to central funding.

3. **Inclusive Growth Across 806 Districts:** India's future depends not just on fast growth but on **shared prosperity across all 806 districts** forming its economic base.

Question for practice:

Discuss how regional economic disparities in India affect inclusive growth and why district-level data is essential for effective policy planning.

Climate change is putting South Asia's children at risk

Source: The post Climate change is putting South Asia's children at risk has been created, based on the article "**Save children from climate extremes**" published in "**Financial Express**" on 24rd May 2025
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- Conservation, environmental pollution and degradatio
Context: South Asia is facing a severe climate crisis, with repeated extreme weather events affecting millions. These are no longer isolated occurrences but signs of a long-term emergency. The impact is particularly dangerous for children, whose health, learning, and development are increasingly under threat.
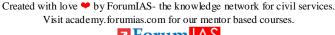For detailed information on **Planetary crisis puts children at risk: UNICEF report** read this article here
Scale of the Climate Crisis in South Asia

1. **Rising Frequency of Disasters:** In 2023, the region experienced record-breaking heat above 50°C, followed by devastating monsoon rains. Landslides, earthquakes, droughts, and cold waves further highlighted growing climate instability. In 2024, many areas are already under heatwave warnings.

2. **Regional Vulnerability:** According to the Global Climate Risk Index 2020, six South Asian countries—Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, India, Sri Lanka, and Afghanistan—rank among the top 25 nations worst hit by extreme weather between 1999 and 2018. India alone has faced the most disasters among over 1,000 recorded in the region since 2000.

Children's Exposure to Climate Risks

1. **High Vulnerability Levels:** Unicef's 2021 index shows all South Asian countries face high climate risks for children. Pakistan and Afghanistan are among the top 15 most climate-vulnerable economies. Challenges like poverty and poor healthcare worsen the situation.

2. **Air Pollution and Respiratory Diseases:** Air pollution is the second leading cause of death for children under five in South Asia, with a rate of 164 deaths per 100,000—far above the global average of 108. Children breathe faster, spend more time outdoors, and are exposed to pollutants like dust and emissions. As of 2023, 46 of the 50 most polluted cities are in South Asia, including 42 in India.

3. **Heat Exposure and Education Disruption:** Unicef estimates that 460 million children in the region are exposed to extremely high temperatures. In 2024 alone, 128 million students were affected. Many public schools lack cooling, ventilation, and electricity, making learning difficult. Floods also cause closures, disrupting education.

4. **Malnutrition and Food Insecurity:** South Asia accounts for over one-third of the world's stunted children—around 54 million. More than 25 million suffer from wasting. Climate-induced food insecurity is likely to worsen these problems.

Policy and Infrastructure Gaps

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1. **Lack of Child-Centric Climate Policies:** Most national climate policies do not address children's unique needs. Child-specific risks are often missing in health and adaptation plans.

2. **Weak Educational Infrastructure:** Many schools remain unprepared for climate stress, lacking even basic resilience. Digital options cannot fully substitute in-person learning during disruptions.

Actionable Solutions and Regional Cooperation

1. **Mainstreaming Child Welfare in Climate Policy:** Governments must adopt a "children in all policies" approach. Climate risks for children must be integrated into all national plans.

2. **Building Climate-Resilient Schools:** Green buildings, tree planting, rainwater harvesting, composting, and zero-waste systems should be scaled up to protect schools and students.

3. **Mental Health and Displacement Support:** Climate-linked trauma and displacement affect children's mental health. This must be included in climate adaptation strategies.

4. **Regional Action and Education Reforms:** South Asia must coordinate efforts through joint resilience programs, climate-focused curricula, early warning systems, and shared funding for child relief.

Conclusion

With the World Health Day theme "healthy beginnings, hopeful futures," it is clear that urgent, child-focused climate action in South Asia is essential. Safeguarding children today means securing the region's future.

Question for practice:

Examine how climate change is impacting children in South Asia.

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