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9 PM Current Affairs Monthly Compilation

For UPSC CSE mains examination

सत्यमेव जयते
UPSC

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India faces rising job gap despite economic growth

Source: The post India faces rising job gap despite economic growth has been created, based on the article "**In India, labour needs as much focus as capital**" published in "**Indian Express**" on 1st April 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3-Economy-employment

Context: India's working-age population rose by 9 crore since 2017-18, but formal jobs increased only by 6 crore, creating an **annual deficit of 50 lakh jobs**. This growing mismatch, along with rapid technological advancements and rising capital-intensive production, has triggered discussions on employment challenges and workforce skilling.

Current Employment Situation in India

1. **Rapid Population Growth vs. Job Creation:** Since 2017-18, India's working-age population has grown by about 9 crore, while formal sector jobs have increased by only 6 crore. This results in a **job deficit of nearly 50 lakh annually**.

2. **Sectoral Shifts:** Most of the recent employment growth is in **self-employment in rural areas and informal services**, not in the formal sector.

3. **Capital Intensity Increase:** Technological change has made even traditionally labour-heavy sectors more **capital-intensive**, reducing formal job opportunities.

4. **Skill Mismatch:** Less than **10% of the labour force has formal technical or vocational training**, leading to poor alignment with the skill demands of modern technologies.

Reasons for More Capital-Intensive Production

1. **Technological Advancements:** Falling global prices of capital and machine-based technology make them more affordable than labour.

2. **Cost Efficiency:** Capital-intensive methods offer **higher productivity at lower operational costs**, making them attractive even without major productivity gains.

3. **Decline in Labour-Intensive Production:** There is a steady fall in **labour-intensity across sectors**, including those traditionally dependent on manual work.

4. **Service Sector Growth: Value addition is highest in services**, pushing the sector towards more capital-intensive operations.

Current Government Initiatives Addressing Job Creation

1. **Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme:** Aims to expand high-value production, especially in **electronics, IT hardware, and drones**, which require highly skilled labour. Yet, the **highest job creation has occurred in food processing and pharmaceuticals**, showing a mismatch between funding and employment potential.

2. **Employment Linked Incentive (ELI) Scheme:** Encourages formal job creation through **EPFO-based cash transfers** and promotes initial skilling via internships. However, its long-term impact on **sustainable employment and skilling** remains uncertain.

State Governments 'Role in Job Creation

1. States are responsible for adopting **flexible labour policies**.

2. Such policies help lower the **artificially high cost of labour**.

3. This shift is essential for building **Viksit Bharat**, focusing on **high-value manufacturing** and a future-ready workforce.

Way Forward

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1. Link **production expansion with labour skilling** for a balanced job market.

2. This dual approach addresses both **demand and supply-side challenges**.

3. Modify ELI to offer **graded incentives** based on certified skills and enhance **on-the-job training**.

4. Improve the performance of **ITIs based on employment outcomes**.

5. **Labour law reforms** can help reduce excessive labour costs and promote labour-intensive growth.

Question for practice:
Examine the factors contributing to the growing mismatch between job creation and the working-age population in India, and suggest measures to address this challenge.

Sarada Muraleedharan's post questions colour bias in India

Source: The post Sarada Muraleedharan's post challenges colour bias has been created, based on the article "**In India, labour needs as much focus as capital**" published in "**Indian Express**" on 1st April 2025
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper1-Society
Context: A Facebook post by Kerala's Chief Secretary, Sarada Muraleedharan, responding to a disparaging comment on her skin colour, has sparked public reflection on colour-based prejudice in India. Drawing parallels with Rammanohar Lohia's 1960 essay, the article explores the deep-rooted social, cultural, and political dimensions of colourism and the ongoing resistance against it.

Importance of Sarada Muraleedharan's Facebook post
1. **Personal Experience:** Sarada Muraleedharan shared her childhood memory of wanting to be reborn fair-skinned, which highlights lifelong struggles with skin color discrimination.

2. **Public Resonance:** Her post reflects the experiences of countless Indians facing similar biases, making it a moment of collective identification and solidarity.

3. **Courage and Privilege:** By openly embracing her skin color with the statement "I dig black," she utilized her public platform and privilege to challenge societal norms.

4. **Cultural Impact:** The post sparked a broader conversation about deep-rooted prejudices within Indian society, resonating with historical critiques like Lohia's essay on beauty standards and power.

How is colourism rooted in Indian culture and markets?
1. **Cultural Portrayals:** Indian cinema often glorifies fair skin as a synonym for beauty, referring to fair women as *gori*.

2. **Literary Language:** Literature stigmatizes dark skin with derogatory terms like *kali-kaluti*.

3. **Market Influence:** The Indian skin-care market, predominantly featuring skin-whiteners, is substantial, valued at Rs 35,000–40,000 crore. It grows annually by 6%.

4. **Matrimonial Preferences:** Matrimonial advertisements frequently specify a preference for fair skin, highlighting societal biases.

5. **Protest Symbols:** Negative connotations of black are evident in terms like "black laws" during protests, showing how deeply ingrained such biases are in language and societal attitudes.

Rammanohar Lohia challenge colour-based beauty standards
1. Lohia's **1960 essay 'Skin Colour and Beauty'** critiqued the link between fairness and beauty.

2. He said **beauty standards are shaped by power**, not nature. If Black people ruled the world, darker features would be admired.

3. Lohia argued that **aesthetic judgments are political**, and what is seen as beautiful reflects the values of those in control.

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4. He called for an **"aesthetic revolution"**, which he believed could be as transformative as any political or economic revolution.

Way forward

1. **Celebrate Diversity:** Embrace all skin tones. Muraleedharan's phrase "I dig black" reclaims black as strong and beautiful.

2. **Cultural Campaigns:** Support efforts like **Nandita Das's "Dark Is Beautiful"**, which aim to change public attitudes.

3. **Educational Efforts:** Share personal stories and ideas like Lohia's to expose how beauty ideals are constructed.

4. **Media Representation:** Challenge advertisements and shows that promote fair skin as the standard.

5. **Market Influence:** Encourage inclusive marketing that respects all skin tones and moves away from fairness-focused messaging.

Question for practice:
Examine how Sarada Muraleedharan's Facebook post highlights the issue of colourism in Indian society and connects with historical and cultural critiques like Rammanohar Lohia's essay.

The Arctic is becoming a global hotspot.

Source: The post The Arctic is becoming a global hotspot. has been created, based on the article "**Why are tensions high in the Arctic?**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 1st April 2025
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2-International Relations-Important International institutions, agencies and fora-their structure, mandate.
Context: **The Arctic**, long isolated by ice, is now attracting **global attention** due to rapid **climate change**. **Melting ice caps** are exposing **untapped natural resources** and **new trade routes**. This shift has triggered **territorial claims**, **military posturing**, and **fears of conflict** among global powers.
Reason for the Arctic Becoming a Hotspot of Global Interest

The Arctic, once inaccessible due to thick ice, is now opening up. **Melting ice** is revealing major resources and trade paths. The region is estimated to hold:

• **13% of the world's undiscovered oil**

• **30% of untapped natural gas**

• **Rich deposits of rare earth elements and copper**

• **Valuable fishing grounds**

• **The Northeast Passage**, a shorter route for China-Europe trade, saving around **8,000 km**

Control and Claim on the Arctic

1. **Control and Governance**: The Arctic is managed by **eight countries** — Canada, Denmark (via Greenland), Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden, and the U.S. These form the **Arctic Council**, focusing on environment and indigenous rights.

2. **Legal Framework**: The Arctic is governed under **UNCLOS**, which allows countries to extend **seabed claims** beyond **200 nautical miles**, based on geological continuity of the **continental shelf**.

3. **Claims and Infrastructure**: **Canada, Denmark, and Russia** have submitted **overlapping seabed claims**. **Russia** stands out with the **largest fleet of icebreakers**, including **nuclear-powered vessels**, vital for asserting presence.

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4. **Tensions and Military Posturing**: Multiple nations are expanding **military infrastructure** to strengthen their Arctic positions, especially **Russia**, which seeks dominance.

Sources of Tension

1. **U.S.–Greenland Issue**: Former U.S. President Trump showed interest in **buying Greenland**, questioning **Danish sovereignty**. Denmark responded by pledging to **boost security** on the island.

2. **U.S.–Canada Dispute**: Ongoing dispute over the **Northwest Passage**. **Canada** claims it as internal waters, while the **U.S.** considers it **international waters**.

3. **Russia–NATO Strains**: After Russia's **2022 invasion of Ukraine**, ties within the **Arctic Council weakened**. Russian officials claimed **Norway's Svalbard** should be under **Russian control**.

4. **Strategic Military Importance**: The **Greenland-Iceland-UK (GIUK) gap** is a key **NATO choke point**. It's the only passage for **Russian submarines** to reach the Atlantic.

Non-Arctic Countries 'Involvement

1. **China**: Declared itself a **"Near-Arctic State"** in 2018. Seeks to use the **Northeast Passage** for trade. Plans to build a **nuclear icebreaker**. Russia remains cautious about giving port access.

2. **India** and other **observer states** are closely watching developments.

3. The **UK** highlights the Arctic's **strategic value** for NATO.

Growing Military Interest in the Arctic

1. In **2007**, Russia planted a **flag on the seabed** at the North Pole.

2. It continues to operate **Soviet-era Arctic military bases**.

3. In **2022**, **Russia and China** held **joint naval drills** in the East China Sea.

4. After **Sweden and Finland** joined NATO, the alliance held **large-scale exercises** in **Finland (2024)**.

5. Analysts warn that **NATO lacks strong Arctic capabilities**, while **Russia remains better prepared**.

Question for practice:

Discuss why the Arctic has become a hotspot of global interest and the sources of tension among major powers in the region.

Disinformation poses serious short-term threat to India

Source: The post Disinformation poses serious short-term threat to India has been created, based on the article "**Tackling the disinformation threat in India**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 2nd April 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- Security

Context: **The World Economic Forum's Global Risks Report 2025** identifies **disinformation** as the top short-term global threat. Rapidly growing **AI-generated content**, **algorithmic bias**, and **deepening social divides** make it difficult to separate truth from falsehood. The article focuses on **India's vulnerability**, given its large online population and complex sociopolitical landscape, and suggests measures to address the issue.

For detailed information on **Controlling Fake News in India and associated challenges** read this article here

Reasons for Considering Disinformation as the Biggest Global Risk in the Short Term

1. **Global Impact**: Disinformation now affects **politics, economies**, and **international relations**, making it the leading short-term risk according to the WEF.

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2. **Technological Acceleration**: The rise of **AI-generated content** and **algorithm-driven feeds** increases the spread and believability of false information.

3. **Social Divisions**: It exploits existing **social and political divides**, helping misinformation travel faster on **social networks**.

4. **Political Manipulation**: In India, **political disinformation** is the most common type, making up **46%** of all misinformation. It **influences voters** and **distorts public opinion**.

5. **Economic Disruption**: Misinformation leads to **consumer boycotts**, **economic tensions**, and can harm **global trade** and diplomatic ties.

Why India is Especially Vulnerable

1. India is set to cross **900 million internet users**, widening the reach of false information. Its cultural, linguistic, and political diversity creates fertile ground for narrative manipulation.

2. Falling trust in **mainstream media** pushes citizens towards **social media**, where misinformation is unchecked. People often trust **unverified information** if it comes from friends or family.

3. According to a study by the **Indian School of Business and CyberPeace Foundation**:

• **46%** of disinformation is **political**

• **33.6%** is about **general issues**

• **16.8%** is **religious**

4. Indian politicians and parties have shared **deepfakes** and **unverified content**.

5. Since the **2017 Doklam standoff**, **China has targeted India** with disinformation, prompting bans on over **300 Chinese apps** including TikTok. Chinese platforms like **Weibo** are used to spread **distorted narratives** about India.

6. If companies like **Meta** end **fact-checking partnerships**, disinformation could worsen, as seen in the U.S.

Actions Taken or Recommended

1. India launched **Shakti – India Election Fact-Checking Collective** and the **Deepfake Analysis Unit** during the **2024 elections**.

2. The **ban on Chinese apps** reduced external interference.

3. The **RBI's Financial Literacy Campaign**, featuring **Amitabh Bachchan**, aims to raise awareness and build **critical thinking**.

4. The same study confirms **46%** of disinformation is political, showing the **targeted nature** of these campaigns.

Way Forward

1. Increase funding for **cybersecurity research**.

2. Ensure **transparent content policies** and disclosure of **online ad funding**.

3. **Expand public awareness**, using trusted campaigns like **RBI's initiative**.

4. Enact **strong laws** to protect **journalists** and support **independent research**.

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5. Work with other countries to develop **cross-border coalitions** to **fight disinformation** and protect **democratic values** and **social harmony**.

Question for practice:
Examine why disinformation is considered the biggest short-term global risk and how India is particularly vulnerable to it.

India should consider granting dual citizenship to diaspora

Source: The post India should consider granting dual citizenship to diaspora has been created, based on the article "**Dual citizenship is an idea whose time has come**" published in "**Indian Express**" on 2nd April 2025
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3-Indian diaspora.
Context: **In the last 50 years, global migration has surged, and India has played a central role.** As the world's top recipient of remittances and the country with the largest diaspora, India must reassess its relationship with its overseas citizens. The upcoming 25th anniversary of the High-Level Committee's report has renewed discussions on **granting dual citizenship**to Indians abroad.
For detailed information on **Arguments related to Dual Citizenship** read this article here
Importance of Indian Diaspora for the Indian Economy

1. The **Indian diaspora is vital for the economy**, mainly through the flow of remittances.

2. India receives around $130 billion annually in remittances, far more than the **$42 billion from foreign direct investment (FDI)**.

3. These funds help cover **India's trade and current account deficits** and strengthen **foreign exchange reserves**.

4. The source of remittances has **shifted from the Gulf to advanced economies**, showing a change in the diaspora's economic profile.

5. This financial contribution is substantial and **greater than other inflows**, proving the **economic value of Indians abroad**.

India's Policy Response So Far

1. In **2005**, India launched the **Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI)** scheme, based on the **2001 High-Level Committee's** recommendation.

2. The committee had found that **dual citizenship was legally and constitutionally feasible**, and could strengthen the diaspora's connection with India.

3. However, **OCI does not provide full rights** — it excludes **voting**, **public office**, and **ownership of agricultural land**.

4. It can also be **revoked**, which makes it feel like a **privilege rather than a right**.

5. As a result, many Indians abroad see **OCI as "second-class" citizenship**.

Reasons for the Demand for True Dual Citizenship

1. **Global migration has tripled** in the last five decades. India has the **largest diaspora** — over **3.5 crore Indians live abroad**.

2. Their **$130 billion annual remittances** play a major role in supporting **India's economy**.

3. Many migrants are **forced to renounce Indian citizenship** due to legal and practical needs in their host countries. Dual citizenship would offer them **legal stability and emotional assurance**.

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4. The **OCI scheme does not meet these needs**, as it lacks political rights and can be withdrawn arbitrarily.

5. Many countries offer **dual citizenship with restrictions**, balancing national security with diaspora inclusion.

Benefits of Granting Dual Citizenship

1. Stronger Economic Ties: Dual citizenship would **encourage remittances** and maintain a **positive economic link**with India.

2. **Legal Security:** Indians abroad would enjoy **greater protection for their property and personal rights**.

3. **Emotional Connection:** It would reduce the **emotional difficulty** of giving up Indian citizenship and **strengthen loyalty** to India.

4. **Skill and Knowledge Transfer:** Dual citizens could bring their **expertise and experience** to benefit India's growth.

5. **Identity Recognition:** It would acknowledge the **dual identities** of global Indians, helping them feel **respected and connected**.

Question for practice:
Discuss the importance of granting dual citizenship to the Indian diaspora in the context of their economic and emotional contributions to India.

India Can Lead Global Clean Energy by 2047

Source: The post India Can Lead Global Clean Energy by 2047 has been created, based on the article "**India can lead the charge in creating a global and seamless energy network**" published in "**Indian Express**" on 2nd April 2025
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- Infrastructures- Energy
Context: **As India approaches 2047**, its 100th year of independence, it aspires to become a global superpower. One key obstacle is its dependence on imported fossil fuels. The article argues that India must secure its energy future and also become a global exporter of clean electricity.
For detailed information on **Self-reliance in Energy Sector** read this article here
Importance of Energy Independence for India's Future

1. **Economic Drain**: India spends over **$130 billion every year** on oil and gas imports. This weakens the rupee and fuels inflation.

2. **Strategic Imperative**: Reducing reliance on foreign energy is crucial for long-term stability and economic growth.

3. **Global Electrification Trend**: The world is moving towards clean electricity. India can shift from being an energy importer to an energy exporter.

4. **Technological Advancements**: **HVDC transmission** and related technologies now make global electricity trade possible.

5. **Financial Benefit**: By 2047, India could become a **$100 billion clean electricity exporter**, improving its economic and global standing.

India Benefits from the Changing Global Energy System

1. **Shift to Renewables**: The global transition to solar and wind power opens new opportunities for India.

2. **Technological Advances**: Innovations like **HVDC transmission, battery storage**, and **submarine cables** now support international electricity trade.

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3. **India's Strategic Initiatives**: Projects like **One Sun One World One Grid (OSOWOG)** and **$100 billion in planned grid investments** aim to connect India with regions like Saudi Arabia and Japan.

4. **Economic Opportunity**: Cutting energy imports and exporting clean electricity could reverse India's energy trade deficit.

5. **Cost Competitiveness**: India's solar power may drop to **1.5 cents per unit**, making it highly competitive globally.

India's Capability to Export Clean Electricity

1. **Robust Infrastructure**: India has a strong national grid already linked with Nepal, Bhutan, and Bangladesh.

2. **Tech Readiness**: Advanced **HVDC lines** and **deep-sea cables** allow long-distance power transfer.

3. **Geographical Advantage**: India's location between the Middle East and Southeast Asia gives access to key energy markets.

4. **Strategic Vision**: Government-led efforts like **OSOWOG** show a long-term commitment to renewable energy leadership.

5. **Economic Potential**: Investment in solar and wind energy aims to further lower costs and increase global competitiveness.

Challenges in Clean Energy Transition

1. **Storage Bottleneck**: Storage is essential to use surplus renewable power when demand is high.

2. **Global Requirement**: Bloomberg estimates **4,000 GW of storage** is needed globally by 2050, requiring **$177 billion annually**.

3. **India's Task**: India must deploy **50 GWh of battery and pumped hydro storage every year** for the next decade.

4. **Cost Advantage**: Battery prices have dropped by **30%**, and India can use its hydropower for pumped storage.

Way Forward

1. **Build Domestic Capacity**: Manufacture **HVDC tech, submarine cables, storage systems**, and **cable-laying vessels**.

2. **Expand Global Links**: Award **10 GW of HVDC corridor projects every 3 years** to build connectivity.

3. **Integrate Neighbors**: Provide **General Network Access (GNA)** to nearby countries, like Indian states today.

4. **Connect Global Grids**: Link with **Europe, Middle East, Africa, Asia-Pacific**, and by 2035, **Russia and the US**.

5. **Enable Trade**: Create a global **electricity trading system like UPI**, with India at the center.

6. **Ultimate Goal**: Transition from a **$130 billion importer** to a **$100 billion exporter** of clean power by 2047.

Conclusion

India has the **technology, vision, and natural resources** to lead the global energy transition. With **bold and timely action**, it can become **energy dominant by 2047**, powering not just its own growth but also the world.

Question for practice:

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Examine how India can transition from an energy importer to a global exporter of clean electricity by 2047.

West Asia conflict escalates as US and Israel act

Source: The post West Asia conflict escalates as US and Israel act has been created, based on the article "**The ring of fire around Iran is tightening**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 3rd April 2025

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

Context: Renewed conflict in West Asia has erupted after Donald Trump offered to negotiate Iran's nuclear programme. Soon after, the U.S. launched air strikes on the Houthis in Yemen. Israel also resumed attacks on Gaza and Lebanon. These moves, targeting Iran's allies, reflect rising tensions between Iran, the U.S., and Israel.

Background: Iran Nuclear Deal and Its Collapse (JCPOA)

1. The **JCPOA**, signed in 2015 under President Obama, aimed to limit Iran's nuclear programme in return for lifting sanctions.

2. It **restricted uranium enrichment** but allowed Iran to keep its nuclear infrastructure and support regional allies.

3. **Israel and its lobby** in the U.S. opposed the deal, fearing it would make Iran a stronger conventional power.

4. In **May 2018**, Trump withdrew the U.S. from the deal, calling it flawed, and reimposed sanctions.

5. Iran responded by **expanding its nuclear and weapons programmes** after the deal collapsed.

Renewed Conflict in 2025: Escalating Tensions

1. **U.S.–Iran Tensions:** On March 7, 2025, President Trump offered to negotiate Iran's nuclear programme, demanding restrictions on its nuclear capabilities.

2. **Military Actions:** On March 15, the U.S. launched preemptive strikes on the Houthis in Yemen. Israel resumed bombing Gaza, killing over 400 Palestinians, and on March 22, targeted Hezbollah in Lebanon.

3. **Support for "Axis of Resistance":** These groups — Houthis, Hamas, and Hezbollah — form Iran's regional alliance.

4. **Increased Military Presence:** The U.S. deployed more fighter jets and a second aircraft carrier to West Asia, signaling military escalation.

Israel's Strategy to Weaken Iran's Regional Influence

1. **Targeting Allies:** Israel bombed Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon to dismantle Iran's support base.

2. **Assassinations and Bombings:** An IRGC general was killed in Syria; the Iranian embassy in Damascus was bombed.

3. **High Casualties:** Over 50,000 Palestinians were killed in Gaza.

4. **Ceasefire Violations:** Despite ceasefires, Israel didn't withdraw troops from Gaza or southern Lebanon.

5. **Nuclear Concerns:** The IAEA reports Iran has enough 60% enriched uranium to make **six nuclear bombs** if further refined.

Favourable Shifts for Israel in the Region

1. **Trump's Re-election:** His return gives Israel strong U.S. support for its military agenda.

2. **Collapse of Assad Regime:** Iran loses Syria as a strategic supply route to Hezbollah.

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3. **Sunni Islamist Regime in Syria:** This new regime is hostile to Shia Iran, weakening its influence further.

4. **Continued Pressure:** Israel keeps its forces in Gaza and Lebanon, refusing full withdrawals despite ceasefires.

Can a War with Iran Be Avoided?

1. Trump demands that Iran **halt its nuclear programme**, curb its **military power**, and **cut ties** with regional allies.

2. Iran is only willing to discuss its **nuclear programme**, not broader concessions.

3. **Two military options:**

• **Airstrikes:** Iran's underground facilities are hard to destroy completely.

• **Full invasion:** Iran is larger, more stable, and strategically located than Iraq.

4. A war may **encourage Iran to build a bomb**.

5. Israel sees a chance to **permanently weaken Iran** but needs U.S. support.

6. Trump, though once critical of "forever wars," now seems ready to back **forceful regional reshaping**.

Question for practice:
Examine how the renewed conflict in West Asia in 2025 reflects the strategic objectives of the U.S. and Israel in countering Iran's regional influence.

India must act against AI-generated CSAM

Source: The post India must act against AI-generated CSAM has been created, based on the article "**Digital child abuse, the danger of AI-based exploitation**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 3rd April 2025
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2- Governance-mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections.
Context: The release of the UK's International AI Safety Report 2025 and its upcoming legislation targeting AI-generated Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM) have sparked urgent global discussions. The developments highlight how emerging technologies like AI are being misused, urging countries like India to strengthen their laws to tackle AI-enabled child exploitation.
CSAM and Emerging Threat of AI-Generated CSAM

1. The *International AI Safety Report 2025* from the UK warns about the use of AI tools to create, possess, and distribute CSAM.

2. CSAM includes sexually explicit portrayals of children in audio, video, or image form.

3. AI-generated CSAM can be created without using real children, making detection and regulation harder.

4. This poses new challenges in preventing harm and protecting children's mental health.

5. Traditional laws in most countries were not designed to address AI-generated materials.

India's Current Readiness
1. India is currently not fully equipped to respond to this challenge:

2. **Legislative Gaps**: Key laws like Section 67B of the IT Act and the POCSO Act do not clearly include AI-generated CSAM.

3. **Rising Cybercrime**: NCRB 2022 data shows a notable increase in cybercrimes against children.

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4. **High Volume of Reports**: As of April 2024, the *National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal* logged **1.94 lakh cases** of child pornography.

5. International Alerts: Since 2019, India received **69.05 lakh CSAM-related reports** from the *NCMEC* in the USA.

Existing Indian Law to Tackle Child Pornography

1. **Section 67B, IT Act 2000**: Punishes those who publish or transmit explicit child content online.

2. **Sections 13–15, POCSO Act 2012**: Ban the use of children in pornography and storing such content.

3. **Sections 294 & 295, Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita**: Penalise the sale or public display of obscene materials, especially to children.

4. Xx**Current Limitation**: These laws do not cover CSAM generated solely by AI tools.

UK's New Approach to Combat AI-generated CSAM

1. **Tool-Centric Focus**: The UK's upcoming law targets the *tools* used to create CSAM, not just the user.

2. **Prevention-Oriented**: It allows action during the preparation stage of the crime.

3.**Expanded Scope**: It includes AI-generated images, not just real child images.

4.**Supporting Data**: The *International AI Safety Report 2025* identifies AI misuse for CSAM as a growing global risk.

Way Forward

1. **Broaden Legal Terms**: Replace "child pornography" with "CSAM" in the POCSO Act (as advised by *NHRC, October 2023*).

2. **Clarify Definitions**: Define "sexually explicit" under Section 67B of the IT Act.

3. **Update Intermediary Roles**: Include VPNs, cloud services, and virtual servers under the IT Act.

4.**Modernise Laws**: Amend laws to tackle AI-related risks.

5. **Support Global Treaties**: Adopt the UN Draft Convention on ICT and crime.

6. **Strengthen Digital Law**: The proposed *Digital India Act 2023* must include specific provisions to counter AI-generated CSAM, inspired by the UK

Question for practice:
Examine how AI-generated CSAM challenges India's current laws and the steps needed to address it.

Government pushes Waqf Bill despite community concerns

Source: The post Government pushes Waqf Bill despite community concerns has been created, based on the article "**Modi government's Waqf Bill is what myopic community leaders should have feared**" published in "**Indian Express**" on 3rd April 2025
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2- Governance-mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections.
Context: The government is pushing the **Waqf (Amendment) Bill** despite widespread discontent. The Bill proposes major changes to the **Waqf Act, 1995**, including renaming it as the Unified Waqf Management, Empowerment, Efficiency and Development Act, 1995. This has raised concerns over its **legal, religious, and community impact**, especially among Muslims.

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Historical Background of Waqf Law in India

1. **Pre-Independence**

• The concept of **waqf** began during the Prophet Muhammad's time as a **religious endowment to Allah**.

• The **Waqf Validating Act, 1913** was the first major legal framework under British rule.

• It recognised **waqf-alal-aulad** (for descendants) and allowed Muslims to dedicate property for **religious and charitable purposes**.

2. **Post-Independence**

• The **Waqf Act, 1954** introduced a formal system for managing waqf properties.

• It was replaced by the **Waqf Act, 1995**, which introduced provisions for **waqf by declaration, long-term use**, and **waqf-alal-aulad**.

• A **2013 amendment** sought to improve the Act but drew criticism from sections of the Muslim community.

• Waqf institutions are protected by **Articles 25 and 26** of the Constitution, which guarantee religious freedom and institutional autonomy.

• India has one of the **largest waqf landholdings** globally, with properties like **mosques, graveyards, and charitable centres**.

Major Changes Proposed in the Amendment Bill

1. **Eligibility and Definition of Waqf**

• Only a person who has **practised Islam for five years** can now declare a waqf.

• This contradicts Islamic doctrine, which defines a Muslim by **faith**, not by practice duration.

• The **removal of waqf by user** and changes to **waqf-alal-aulad** create **legal contradictions**, especially regarding inheritance.

2. **Concentration of Authority**

• Powers of the **waqf surveyor** are shifted to the **district collector or their nominee**, centralising control.

• The collector is also empowered to resolve **land disputes between waqf and government**, which is concerning due to past cases like the **123 waqf properties acquired in Delhi**.

3. **Structural and Representation Changes**

• **Including Muslim women** in Waqf Boards is a **positive inclusion**.

• However, appointing **two non-Muslims** goes against the **religious character** of the institution.

• The proposal to create **separate Auqaf Boards** for Bohras and Agakhanis, in addition to Sunni and Shia boards, could **fragment the Muslim community**.

4. **Administrative and Legal Reforms**

• A **central portal for waqf registration** is a modern and welcome move.

• But, new **mutation procedures under revenue laws** may **burden small waqfs** with limited resources.

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• Reducing tribunal members and removing experts in **Islamic law** weakens the tribunal's effectiveness.

• Allowing **appeals to the High Court within 90 days** may cause **delays in justice delivery**.

5. **Omission of Protective Clauses**

• Removing **Sections 107, 108, and 108A** reduces waqf protections.

• Making the **Limitation Act** applicable may prevent rightful claims.

• Elimination of provisions on **evacuee waqf properties** and overriding powers of earlier laws **weakens legal safeguards**.

Conclusion
The Bill, while presenting itself as a reform measure, **centralises authority**, weakens **religious and community autonomy**, and ignores the **development potential** of waqf properties. Rather than strengthening waqf governance, it may threaten **India's tradition of unity in diversity** by imposing **uniformity** on a **culturally distinct institution**.

Question for practice:
Examine how the proposed Waqf (Amendment) Bill affects the legal, religious, and administrative autonomy of waqf institutions in India.

India Balances Digital Connectivity and National Sovereignty

Source: The post India Balances Digital Connectivity and National Sovereignty has been created, based on the article "**The other space race — the geopolitics of satellite net**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 4th April 2025
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- Science and Technology- Achievements of Indians in science & technology; indigenization of technology and developing new technology.

Context: India's remote regions still lack fiber optic and cellular network access. Recent partnerships between SpaceX's Starlink and Indian telecom giants Airtel and Jio aim to bridge this digital gap. This move brings significant implications for economic value, national sovereignty, and geopolitical influence in an era where internet infrastructure is increasingly space-based.

Reason for India turning to satellite Internet like Starlink
1. Many regions in India **still lack fiber optic cables and cellular towers**.

2. **Starlink provides high-speed internet** to remote areas without needing terrestrial infrastructure.

3. For Airtel and Jio, the partnership **reduces the cost of expanding networks**.

4. For SpaceX, it **opens access to India's large market**.

5. It also helps **navigate India's complex regulatory landscape** by routing Starlink through domestic companies.

6. This move avoids reliance on Chinese systems like **China's GuoWang** and reflects a preference for a **democratic alliance**.

Geopolitical implications of using Starlink in India
1. **Increased U.S. Influence**: Starlink, a **U.S.-based network**, may bring **foreign control** over India's digital infrastructure. This is sensitive, especially as **China expands its GuoWang satellite system**.

2. **Strategic Realignment**: Choosing Starlink may reflect India's tilt toward **democratic partners** in the **Indo-Pacific region**.

3. **Monopoly Risks**: Starlink operates over **7,000 satellites**, while **OneWeb** has fewer than **650** and **Amazon's Kuiper** is still in early stages. This dominance raises concerns about **competition and pricing**.

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4. **Sovereignty Concerns**: Dependence on a foreign network raises security risks. **SpaceX once cut Starlink service to Ukraine** during a military operation, showing how private firms can exert state-level influence.

India balancing economic benefits and digital sovereignty
1. **Partnering with Private Players**: Collaborating with Airtel and Jio helps India access **advanced technology** while managing local **regulations**.

2. **Leveraging Local Control**: Requiring **local data storage** and **technology transfer** in agreements helps protect India's **digital autonomy**.

3. **Expanding Indigenous Capabilities**: Continued investment in **ISRO's satellite projects** can strengthen India's independent capabilities and long-term strategic position.

4. **Involving BSNL**: Including **state-owned BSNL**, which has strong rural presence, could offer **direct oversight** and reach. Its absence is a **missed opportunity**.

Challenges for the future
1. **Affordability**: Satellite internet may remain **too costly for rural users**.

2. **Government Subsidies**: May be required, putting pressure on **public finances**.

3. **Monopoly Risk**: Starlink's lead in **satellite count** poses long-term risks for **market fairness**.

4. **Private Control**: Starlink's role in **Ukraine's military situation** shows how private firms can influence **national affairs**.

5. **BSNL's Exclusion**: Reduces the government's role in **critical infrastructure**.

6. **Global Governance**: Lack of coordination on **space debris** and **satellite traffic** may worsen with time.

Opportunities for the future
1. **Expanding Internet Access**: Partnerships with Airtel and Jio can bring the Internet to **underserved regions**.

2. **Enhanced Strategic Control**: Data localization and tech-sharing provisions can strengthen **national control**.

3. Bottom of the Pyramid Innovation: Affordable packages can serve **low-income users** while staying profitable.

4. **Digital Sovereignty**: India can move towards autonomy by building its own satellite systems through **ISRO**.

5. **A Global Model**: The **Airtel-Jio-Starlink** approach may become an example of how to **balance market access with sovereignty**.

Conclusion: The Starlink partnership offers India a chance to improve digital connectivity, but it also brings **strategic, economic, and governance challenges**. India must act carefully to **maximize benefits without losing autonomy**.
Question for practice:
Examine how India's partnership with Starlink reflects a balance between expanding digital connectivity and safeguarding national sovereignty.

India should lower tariffs and boost global trade ties

Source: The post India should lower tariffs and boost global trade ties has been created, based on the article "**Should India reduce tariffs given the U.S.'s moves?**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 4th April 2025
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2-International Relations-Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.
Context: U.S. President Donald Trump imposed reciprocal tariffs on various countries, including India, causing uncertainty in global trade. In response, India reduced some tariffs and initiated talks for a bilateral trade deal. This article explores whether India should further reduce tariffs and how it should respond to U.S. trade moves.

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For detailed information on **India's import tariffs** read this article here
Impact of Tariffs on Economic Growth

1. **Lower Tariffs Promote Efficiency:** Economists agree that **lower tariffs reduce consumer prices** and **push domestic industries to become more efficient**. For example, if a car costs ₹5 lakh but a 20% tariff raises its price to ₹6 lakh, the consumer pays more, while the inefficient local producer gains.

2. **Uniform Tariff Rates Are Better:** It is better to have a **single or very few tariff rates**. Multiple and uneven rates distort decision-making in businesses and reduce overall efficiency in the economy.

3. **Example from India:** High tariffs in India have protected inefficient producers. Economists argue that if an Indian product, like a car, cannot compete without tariff protection, it should not be produced under such a system.

4. **Effect on Global Trade:** Tariffs **disrupt global supply chains**. They lower efficiency and slow down overall economic activity by increasing costs across countries.

Purpose and Effectiveness of Trump's Tariffs

1. **Reason for the Tariffs:** The **main goal was to pressure countries** to lower their trade barriers. Trump's administration believed this was necessary to fix trade imbalances and boost U.S. manufacturing.

2. **Effectiveness in Question:** The strategy led some countries to negotiate. But it also created uncertainty in global trade. Economists noted that this approach was likely chosen because **the WTO system has become slow and ineffective**.

3. **Long-Term Impact Is Unclear:** While the tariffs forced some changes, they also **damaged global trade relations**. The overall strategy lacked clear goals and may not bring lasting results.

Non-Tariff Barriers – A Bigger Concern

1. **Difficult to Identify: Non-tariff barriers (NTBs)** like safety rules and quality standards are hard to measure. For example, **Europe's strict sanitary standards** on grapes can indirectly act as trade barriers.

2. **Used Widely:** Almost every country, including India, uses NTBs. These **affect nearly all sectors** and are often not visible like tariffs.

3. **Harmful to Trade:** NTBs **raise compliance costs**, delay entry into markets, and are **more restrictive than tariffs** in some cases.

4. **Complex Regulations:** They often involve **lengthy procedures** and **vary between countries**, making trade difficult, especially for small exporters.

Best Path for India's Trade Policy

1. **Reduce Tariffs Gradually:** India should lower tariffs step by step. Example: **Yashwant Sinha's reforms in the 1990s** reduced peak tariffs annually and helped attract investment.

2. **Address Non-Tariff Barriers:** India should simplify standards and remove hidden restrictions that protect local firms unfairly.

3. **Negotiate Free Trade Agreements:** India should sign FTAs with key economies like the **U.S., EU, UK, and Japan**. This would open markets and improve global competitiveness.

4. **Ensure Policy Predictability:** Announcing tariff cuts in advance will help industries **plan better and invest with confidence**.

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Conclusion:
India must **shift from protection to efficiency**. Gradual liberalisation, tackling non-tariff barriers, and stronger trade partnerships can make India more competitive and better integrated into the global economy.

Question for practice:
Discuss how India can respond effectively to U.S. trade moves like tariffs to strengthen its global trade position.

India is improving its undersea cable network

Source: The post India is improving its undersea cable network has been created, based on the article "**Why are undersea cables important?**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 4th April 2025
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3-Achievements of Indians in science & technology; indigenization of technology and developing new technology.
Context: **India is witnessing the arrival of new undersea cable systems like Airtel's 2Africa Pearls**, significantly boosting international internet capacity. This development has renewed focus on the importance of **subsea cables**, India's current infrastructure, associated risks, and needed reforms to strengthen digital connectivity.
For detailed information on **Submarine Cables and India- Threats and Vulnerabilities** read this article here
Undersea Cables and Their Importance

1. Undersea cables are the main link connecting the world's internet networks.

2. These are **fiber optic cables** laid on the ocean floor, protected by thick padding to survive harsh sea conditions.

3. They carry about **90% of the world's data**, **80% of global trade**, and **$10 trillion in financial transactions**, according to **Goldman Sachs**.

4. There are around **600 undersea cables** operating globally.

5. At each "**landing point**," usually a manhole near the shore, these cables go inland to a **"landing station"** that connects them to major networks.

6. India's latest cable is **Airtel's 2Africa Pearls system**, with **Meta's investment**, adding **100 terabits per second** of capacity.

7. Earlier in **2024**, the **SEA-ME-WE-6 cable** also landed in **Chennai and Mumbai**.

These cables are **critical for internet access, trade, and secure communication.**

India's Current Cable Infrastructure

1. India connects globally through cable landing hubs mainly at **Mumbai** and **Chennai**.

2. Currently, **17 international cable systems** land in India.

3. Two key domestic projects are the **Chennai–Andaman & Nicobar Islands (CANI)** and the **Kochi–Lakshadweep Islands** systems.

4. About **95% of India's subsea cable capacity enters through a 6-km stretch in Versova, Mumbai**, increasing risk.

5. Despite this, India accounts for only **1% of global cable landing stations** and **3% of subsea cable systems**.

6. This shows the need for **greater investment in infrastructure** and **diversified routes**.

Risks and Vulnerabilities

1. Overdependence on **Versova** makes India's network **vulnerable to disruptions**.

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2. In contrast, **Singapore**, a much smaller country, has **more cable landings** than India.

3. A disruption in the **Red Sea** can impact **25% of India's internet traffic**. This happened two years ago due to **cable cuts caused by Houthi strikes**.

4. India lacks **domestic cable repair ships and storage depots**, which delays emergency repair.

5. Laying cables in India requires **51 permissions** from various departments like **Home Ministry, Environment Ministry**, and **local bodies**, causing long delays.

6. Fishing trawlers frequently damage cables near the coast, adding to the risk.

Steps to Improve India's Subsea Cable Infrastructure

1. **Streamline permissions:** Simplify the current 51-step approval process to speed up deployment.

2. **Expand landing hubs:** Reduce reliance on Versova by developing landing stations along other coastal areas.

3. **Increase domestic repair capacity:** Invest in **Indian repair ships** and **cable storage facilities** to reduce dependency on foreign help.

4. **Protect coastal cables:** Strengthen laws and practices to prevent damage from **fishing trawlers**.

5. **Diversify cable routes:** Avoid traditional trade routes to reduce risks and increase resilience.

6. **Plan for future demand:** With rising data usage, India must build capacity in advance.

Question for practice:
Examine the current state of India's undersea cable infrastructure and the steps needed to strengthen its digital connectivity.

Global South can lead Ukraine peace mission

Source: The post Global South can lead Ukraine peace mission has been created, based on the article "**A case for the Global South in securing Ukraine peace**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 5th April 2025
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2-Bilateral, Regional and Global Groupings and Agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.
Context: As the war in Ukraine approaches a fragile ceasefire, maritime and energy truces brokered in Riyadh signal a possible halt in hostilities. This development has sparked debate over who should oversee a peacekeeping operation. Western powers have proposed a European-led force. However, concerns about neutrality and strong Russian opposition have led to growing calls for a UN-backed mission led by the Global South.
Reason for the peacekeeping mission in Ukraine
1. **Fragile Ceasefire:** The conflict, now in its fourth year, is nearing a ceasefire, with truces brokered in Riyadh hinting at a possible cessation of hostilities.

2. **Exhaustion of Both Sides:** The prolonged, attritional nature of the war has worn down both parties, escalating the need for external intervention to maintain and solidify peace.

3. **Precedents of Successful Negotiations:** The recent Black Sea deal, following negotiations led by U.S. President Donald Trump, shows that diplomatic efforts can lead to substantial agreements.

4. **Avoiding Further Escalation:** Without a peacekeeping force, there is a high risk of the conflict escalating again or stalling the peace process.

European or NATO-Led Force Is Not Suitable
1. **Strong Russian Opposition:** Russia has **rejected any NATO involvement**, seeing it as a threat and a possible trigger for renewed conflict.

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2. Public Resistance in Europe: European leaders support peacekeeping, but **public opinion is against troop deployment**. For instance, **a majority of French citizens opposed Macron's plan** to send troops.

3. **Lack of Neutrality:** A European-led force is seen by Russia as a **NATO front**, which could worsen tensions rather than reduce them.

4. **Logistical and Financial Limitations:** Without **guaranteed U.S. support**, Europe may **struggle to sustain** a long-term mission in a complex setting like Ukraine.

Global South a better alternative for peacekeeping
1. **Neutrality:** Countries from Africa, Asia, and Latin America have largely stayed neutral in the conflict, gaining the trust of both Russia and Ukraine.

2. **Diplomatic Balance:** Prime Minister Modi's interactions with both Putin and Zelenskyy illustrate this balanced diplomacy.

3. **Peacekeeping Experience:** The African Union has effectively managed missions in volatile regions like Sudan and Somalia.

4. **Operational Expertise:** BRICS countries like India, Brazil, and South Africa have a strong track record in UN missions, contributing significant manpower and resources.

5. **Specialized Skills:** Chile's expertise in demining is crucial for post-conflict reconstruction in Ukraine.

For detailed information on **India's potential role in peace diplomacy for Ukraine** read this article here

Way forward

1. **Robust Ceasefire Agreement:** A clear and enforceable ceasefire is fundamental to stabilizing the region.

2. **Front Line Demarcation:** Clearly defined conflict lines must be established through careful negotiation.

3. **Support from the West:** Financial and logistical backing from Western nations, especially the EU, is crucial to sustain the peacekeeping operations.

4. **UN Approval:** The mission must receive authorization from the UN Security Council to ensure legitimacy and global support.

5. **Exclusion of NATO Troops:** To maintain neutrality and avoid exacerbating tensions, NATO troops should not be part of the mission.

6. **Inclusion of Female Peacekeepers:** Drawing from India's successful deployment of an all-women contingent in Liberia, incorporating female peacekeepers can enhance community trust and address sensitive issues effectively.

Question for practice:
Examine why a UN-backed peacekeeping mission led by the Global South is considered more suitable for Ukraine than a European or NATO-led force.

Transgender people in India still face many challenges
Source: The post Transgender people in India still face many challenges has been created, based on the article "**A people still waiting to move out of the margins**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 5th April 2025
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2-Governance- mechanisms, laws, institutions and bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections.
Context: International Transgender Day of Visibility, observed on March 31, brings attention to the challenges faced by transgender individuals in India. Despite legal progress through the **Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019**, widespread social stigma, economic exclusion, and discrimination persist. The article highlights barriers to education, employment, and health care, demanding deeper inclusion.

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For detailed information on **The challenges transgender individuals face in India** read this article here
Legal and Social challenges faced by transgender persons
1. **Weak Legal Implementation**: The *Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019* is poorly enforced. By December 2023, out of 24,115 applications for identity cards, only 15,800 were issued, with over 3,200 pending beyond the mandated 30-day period.

2. **Bureaucratic Hurdles**: In Delhi, with a transgender population of about 4,200, only 23 identity cards were issued by April 2022, showing significant bureaucratic delays and inefficiencies.

3. **Social Stigma and Exclusion**: Despite legal recognitions, transgender individuals face widespread social stigma, discrimination in education, employment, and healthcare, leading to economic and social marginalization.

4. **Lack of Comprehensive Protections**: The Act lacks specific provisions to address critical issues like police harassment, family rejection, and broader social exclusion, making the legal framework inadequate in protecting the rights and dignity of transgender individuals.

Barriers to Economic Empowerment
1. A 2018 **National Human Rights Commission report** reveals **92%** of transgender people are excluded from economic participation.

2. A 2022 study shows a staggering **48% unemployment rate** among transgender individuals, significantly higher than the national average of 7%-8%.

3. Workplace discrimination includes hiring biases and hostility, with reports of inadequate gender-neutral facilities and resistance from colleagues.

4. Positive example: Tata Steel has proactively hired over **100 transgender employees**, but such inclusive practices are not widespread across industries.

5. Financial services are still inaccessible, despite the 2024 provision allowing LGBTQ+ joint bank accounts and partner nominations.

Hurdles in Education
1. **Low Literacy Rate:** The 2011 Census reported a transgender literacy rate of 56.1%, significantly lower than the national average of 74.04%.

2. **High Dropout Rates:** In Kerala, 58% of transgender students have dropped out of school because of bullying, harassment, and unsupportive environments.

3. **Lack of Inclusive Policies:** Though some states like Maharashtra have introduced transgender cells in colleges and the University of Kerala offers reserved seats and hostel facilities, comprehensive and supportive educational policies are still lacking nationwide.

Health-Care Challenges
1. **Denial of Care:** 27% of transgender persons were denied healthcare due to their gender identity, as per a National Legal Services Authority survey.

2. **High Costs:** Gender-affirming treatments range from ₹2 lakh to ₹5 lakh, with limited insurance options.

3. **Insurance Gaps:** The Ayushman Bharat TG Plus card provides ₹5 lakh coverage annually, but implementation shortfalls persist.

4. **Lack of Specialized Care:** There is a significant shortage of healthcare professionals trained to address transgender-specific medical needs.

5. **Inadequate Mental Health Support:** Mental health services for transgender individuals are severely lacking, exacerbating their marginalization.

Way Forward

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1. Awareness is rising, but **media often shows stereotypes**.

2. Social prejudice remains strong in **families**, **schools**, and **workplaces**.

3. Campaigns like **'I Am Also Human 'by Humsafar Trust** are helpful.

4. **Koovagam Festival** in Tamil Nadu promotes cultural acceptance.

5. Broader steps needed: **gender sensitisation**, **inclusive media portrayal**, **anti-discrimination laws**, and **support for transgender entrepreneurs**.

Question for practice:
Examine the legal, social, and economic challenges faced by transgender individuals in India despite the enactment of the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019.

India must respond wisely to Trump's trade

Source: The post India must respond wisely to Trump's trade has been created, based on the article "**Pratap Bhanu Mehta writes: India must stand up to Donald Trump, the bully**" published in "**Indian Express**" on 5th April 2025

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

Context: Donald Trump's aggressive and unpredictable trade policies have disrupted the global trading system. His focus on bilateral trade balances and use of tariffs as political tools have raised global concerns. This situation has triggered a debate in India: whether to resist Trump's demands or align with them for short-term strategic gains.

For detailed information on **Trump's Policies Impact India's Economy and Workers** read this article here

Nature of Donald Trump's Trade Actions

1. **Imperialistic Intent**: Trump's actions are not about promoting global trade but about establishing American dominance. He focuses on **bilateral trade balances**, ignoring **multilateral norms** that ensure fairness.

2. **Discretionary Tariffs**: Tariffs are used as tools of **domestic patronage**. For instance, **chips were exempted** for national security, showing how **unpredictable and arbitrary** such decisions are.

3. **Institutional Instability**: Trump's actions **weaken the credibility** of U.S. institutions like the **Federal Reserve**, making the global financial system **less predictable and more vulnerable**.

4. **Zero-Sum Mindset**: He treats trade as a **zero-sum game** aimed at **American primacy**, rejecting the idea of **interdependence and cooperation** that global trade depends on.

5. **Impact on Allies**: Even **close allies like Israel** face unpredictable tariffs, showing that **no country is immune** to this unilateral approach.

Trump's Actions Affect Global Economic Credibility

1. **Erosion of Rules-Based Trade**: His policies disrupt the **predictable structure** of global trade. They are based on **power**, not rules.

2. **Arbitrary Tariff Implementation**: His selective imposition of tariffs introduces **uncertainty in global trade**, harming even trusted partners.

3. **Institutional Credibility Damage**: By politicising institutions like the **Federal Reserve**, he reduces global trust in the U.S. economic system.

4. **Promotion of Unstable Alternatives**: Trump's support for **cryptocurrencies** threatens the **stability of traditional global finance**.

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5. **Undermining Cooperation**: By abandoning the idea of **mutual interdependence**, Trump increases **global tensions and economic instability**.

Broader Concerns Beyond Trade

1. **Institutional Uncertainty**: U.S. institutions are becoming **less reliable** under Trump, affecting **global confidence**.

2. **Unpredictable Tariff Use**: Tariffs are no longer tools of economic correction but of **patronage and revenue**, as seen in arbitrary exemptions.

3. Collapse of Credibility: The **U.S.'s credibility as a stable partner is fading**, even among allies.

4. **Threat to Labour Mobility**: Trump's **anti-immigration stance** threatens India's gains from **labour movement**, especially in the U.S.

5. Disruption to Financial Stability: U.S. backing of **crypto-assets** can destabilise existing **financial frameworks**.

Why It's Risky for India to Placate Trump?

1. **Imperial Power Play**: Conceding on tariffs won't yield fair deals but will lead to **never-ending negotiations**, as shown in the case of **Israel**.

2. **Domestic Uncertainty**: The U.S. is using trade tools much like India did in the past—**for political patronage**, not economic logic.

3. **Strategic Short-Sightedness**: Any **quick deal** with Trump may look appealing but will likely be **unreliable and unsustainable**.

4. **Risk to Labour Gains**: Aligning with Trump **won't protect** India's labour interests abroad.

The Way Forward: Build Global Resistance
India must **reject the illusion** that giving tariff concessions under pressure brings progress. It must assert its **sovereignty**, pursue **development**, and work with other countries to build a **global coalition** against unilateralism. This is not just about trade—it's about **resisting a larger global power play**.

Question for practice:
Evaluate the impact of Donald Trump's trade policies on global economic stability and India's strategic choices in response to them.

Preventive healthcare can secure India's economic growth

Source: The post Preventive healthcare can secure India's economic growth has been created, based on the article "**Prescribe preventive medicine for a healthy India**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 7th April 2025
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2- Governance-Issues Relating to Development and Management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health.
Context: India aspires to become a $5 trillion economy. However, the country faces a major health challenge from non-communicable diseases (NCDs), which account for nearly two-thirds of all deaths. This "silent epidemic" threatens economic growth by reducing productivity and affecting the working-age population. The article stresses the urgent need for a preventive healthcare approach.
For detailed information on **India Needs to Prioritize Preventive Healthcare for a Healthier Future** read this article here
NCDs a major concern for India's future

1. **Rising Mortality:** NCDs cause around 5–6 million deaths in India every year, accounting for nearly two-thirds of all deaths.

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2. **Economic Burden:** NCDs could cost India 5%–10% of its GDP. A projected economic loss of $3.5–$4 trillion is expected between 2012 and 2030.

3. **Impact on Youth:** NCDs are now affecting younger people. Around **22% of Indians over 30** are at risk of dying from an NCD before age 70. This affects the productive workforce crucial for India's economic growth.

4. **Loss of Productivity:** A sick workforce means lower participation and reduced productivity, weakening national development.

Major Reasons for NCDs (Non-Communicable Diseases):

1. **Lifestyle Changes:** Sedentary behavior and physical inactivity are key contributors. Just 30 minutes of walking, yoga, or any exercise daily can help, but is often neglected.

2. **Unhealthy Diets:** High sugar, salt, and unhealthy fat consumption, and low intake of fruits and vegetables increase the risk of obesity, heart disease, and diabetes.

3. **Obesity:** Around **22%–23% of Indian adults are overweight**, raising the risk of chronic illnesses.

4. **Tobacco and Alcohol Use:** These lead to cancer, liver failure, and heart problems.

5. **Air Pollution:** It worsens lung diseases like COPD and causes heart attacks. Pollution must be seen as a public health threat.

6. **Early Age Impact:** Many people in their 30s and 40s now suffer from kidney or heart problems.

7. **Genetic Factors:** Family history also increases vulnerability

Important of early detection in fighting NCDs
1. **Prevents Progression:** Detecting diseases like cancer and diabetes early can prevent them from becoming more severe. For instance, removing a precancerous polyp can stop colon cancer.

2. **Reduces Mortality:** Early detection significantly lowers the risk of death. Screening tests like mammograms for breast cancer and HPV tests for cervical cancer can find diseases in treatable stages.

3. **Saves on Healthcare Costs:** Early intervention means less expensive treatments and fewer long-term healthcare costs.

4. **Improves Quality of Life:** Early treatment helps maintain better overall health, reducing complications and enhancing life quality.

Role play by technology and government in preventive care
1. **Technology's Role:**

• **Health Monitoring:** India has over **750 million smartphone users**. Apps and wearable devices can track health, give reminders, and assess risks.

• **Predictive Tools:** AI can analyze health data and predict who is at risk for diseases. It can also detect early signs in scans like X-rays, enabling timely action.

2. **Government's Role:**

• **National Programmes:** The **National Programme for Prevention and Control of NCDs** focuses on screening and early intervention.

• **Health and Wellness Centres:** These centers offer preventive care, health check-ups, and education to help people avoid serious illness.

Conclusion:
Preventive care is the best way to protect India's health and economy. With lifestyle changes, early screenings, digital tools, and strong public health programs, India can reduce the impact of NCDs and move towards its $5 trillion goal.

Question for practice:
Examine how the rising burden of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) poses a threat to India's aspiration of becoming a $5 trillion economy.

Improving India's Healthcare for Mothers and Newborns

Source: The post Improving India's Healthcare for Mothers and Newborns has been created, based on the article "**Bridging gaps, building resilience**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 7th April 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2- Governance-Issues Relating to Development and Management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health.

Context: World Health Day, observed on April 7, highlights global health priorities. The 2025 theme, *'Healthy Beginnings, Hopeful Futures'*, focuses on maternal and newborn health. For India, with a population of over 1.4 billion, it presents an opportunity to address existing healthcare challenges and push for a more inclusive and resilient health system.

For detailed information on **Maternal and Child Health** read this article here

Importance of Maternal and Newborn Health in India

1. Maternal and newborn health is crucial in India due to its vast population of over 1.4 billion, emphasizing the need for scalable and effective healthcare solutions.

2. India has made progress through **Ayushman Bharat** and **Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY)**, offering financial protection to **500 million people**.

3. **Health and Wellness Centres** aim to strengthen primary care, but challenges remain—**staff shortages**, **poor diagnostics**, and **irregular medicine supplies**.

4. While **70% of the population lives in rural areas**, only **35–40%** of the healthcare infrastructure is located there.

India's Dual Disease Burden

1. India faces a **dual disease burden**—infectious diseases and rising **non-communicable diseases (NCDs)**.

2. **NCDs cause 65% of all deaths**, driven by poor lifestyle choices like unhealthy diets, sedentary habits, and tobacco use.

3. According to the **International Diabetes Federation (2024)**, **101 million Indians** live with diabetes.

4. **Air pollution** caused **1.6 million deaths in 2019**, as reported by *The Lancet*.

5. **Malnutrition remains a concern**: 35% of children under 5 are stunted (NFHS-5); 57% of women aged 15–49 are anaemic

6. Programmes like **Poshan Abhiyaan** and **ICDS** target malnutrition but need better **data tracking**, **community engagement**, and **multi-sector coordination**.

Low Public Health Spending and High Out-of-Pocket Costs

1. India's public health spending remains low. In the **2025–26 Union Budget**, the **Health Ministry received ₹99,858.56 crore**, only **1.97%** of the total budget.

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2. **Out-of-pocket expenses** continue to burden families, pushing **55 million people into poverty** each year.

3. A shift towards **preventive healthcare** is essential, through **screenings**, **school-based health programmes**, and **public awareness campaigns**.

Digital Health: Expanding Access but with Gaps

1. India is making progress in **digital health**.Programmes like the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission and eSanjeevani have enabled over 10 crore teleconsultations.

2. However, **only 37% of rural households** have internet access. **Many patients and healthcare workers lack digital skills, limiting the benefits.**

3. If the **digital divide** is not addressed, it may worsen inequalities.

4. India must improve **rural connectivity**, train health workers, and pass **data privacy laws**.

5. Emerging tools like **AI**, **wearables**, and **remote monitoring** can improve early detection and care, if used **responsibly and fairly**.

Way Forward: Building a Resilient and Inclusive System

1. India's health goals align with **Sustainable Development Goal 3** (good health and well-being).

2. Unlike developed countries, India still needs stronger **public health systems**, **universal insurance**, and **early childhood care**.

3. India's **G20 presidency in 2023** showcased its leadership in **vaccine equity**, **digital health cooperation**, and **global health diplomacy**.

4. Aligning domestic policy with global frameworks like the **International Health Regulations** is important.

5. Mental health is a growing concern—**14% of Indians** suffer from mental disorders (NIMHANS, 2023). Programmes like **Tele-MANAS** need more support.

6. Climate change and health are linked. The **National Action Plan on Climate Change and Human Health** is a positive step.

Question for practice:
Examine how the theme of World Health Day 2025, "Healthy Beginnings, Hopeful Futures," reflects the healthcare challenges and priorities in India.

Improving India's Healthcare for Mothers and Newborns

Source: The post Improving India's Healthcare for Mothers and Newborns has been created, based on the article "**Human rights and wrongs**" published in "**Indian Express**" on 7th April 2025
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2-Governance- criminal Justice system
Context: **On 26th March 2025**, *Common Cause* and the *Lokniti Programme of CSDS* released a comprehensive report on police torture and lack of accountability in India. Based on interactions with **8,276 police personnel** across **17 states and union territories**, the report explores the **nature, causes, and extent** of police violence in India.
For detailed information on **Custodial Violence in India** read this article here
1. **Torture Targets:** Victims of police torture are mostly from **poor and marginalised communities**, such as **Dalits, Adivasis, Muslims, illiterates**, and **slum dwellers**. These groups are highly vulnerable and often lack access to legal safeguards.
2. **Custodial Deaths and Discrepancies:** There are major differences in data on custodial deaths. In 2020, the **NCRB reported 76 cases**, the **NHRC reported 70**, and the **NCAT recorded 111** cases. Disturbingly, between **2018 and 2022**, there were **zero convictions** for deaths in police custody.

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3. **Prevalence of Harsh Methods:** About **55% of police personnel** support using "**tough methods**" to instil fear among the public. This includes **20% who think it is very important** and **35% who think it is somewhat important**.

4. **Justification of Extra-Judicial Actions: One in four police personnel** justify **mob violence** in sensitive cases like **child lifting and sexual harassment**. Also, **22% believe** that killing dangerous criminals is better than giving them a legal trial.

5. **Procedural Non-Compliance:** Only **41%** of police personnel say that arrest procedures are **always followed**, while **24% admit** they are "**rarely or never**" followed. **Kerala** showed the best compliance, with **94%** reporting that procedures are followed.

6. **Inadequate Accountability Measures:** The report criticises the role of **judiciary and medical professionals**. **Magistrates** are often "**silent spectators**" during remand hearings. Medical examinations are sometimes conducted by **non-forensic experts**, such as **eye specialists** or **anaesthesiologists**.

7. **Training and Reform Support:** There is strong support for reform. 79% of police personnel favour human rights training and evidence-based interrogation techniques. Also, 71% support preventive steps against torture.

For detailed information on **India's Extradition Challenges and Anti-Torture Law Absence** read this article here

Way Forward

1. Torture is a **global issue**, with known cases in countries like the **US, China, Pakistan**, and **Russia**. But this cannot justify its use in India.

2. The report recommends that India should **enact an anti-torture law**, **ratify the UN Convention Against Torture**, and **insulate police from political pressure** as directed by the **Supreme Court**. 3. These steps can build a more **humane**, **lawful**, and **trusted police force**.

Question for practice:
Examine the key findings of the 2025 Common Cause–Lokniti report on police torture and lack of accountability in India.

Confusing IDs weakens India's electoral system integrity

Source: The post Confusing IDs weakens India's electoral system integrity has been created, based on the article "**Clean voter lists or the choice of Aadhaar linkage**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 8th April 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2-Polity- powers, functions and responsibilities of various Constitutional Bodies.

Context: In its March 20, 2025 issue, *The Economist* criticized India's obsession with issuing identity (ID) cards for different groups like teachers, doctors, athletes, gig workers, and even cattle. However, the real issue is not the number of IDs, but India's confusion between simple **IDs** and **Unique IDs**. This confusion, especially by the **Election Commission of India (ECI)**, has led to serious problems in the electoral system.

For detailed information on **India's electoral process faces transparency and trust issues** read this article here

Difference Between an ID and a Unique ID

1. An **ID** confirms someone's eligibility for a specific function (e.g., voting or driving).

2. A **Unique ID** confirms a person's identity across all functions, ensuring the person is who they claim to be.

3. India often **mixes these two**, which causes governance and electoral issues.

ECI's Misjudgment and the 2008 Claim

1. In **2008**, the ECI claimed each **Voter ID (EPIC)** was **unique** and used it to identify voters.

2. But in **2025**, the ECI decided to link Voter ID with **Aadhaar**, showing its own **admission** that Voter ID was never truly unique.

3. During the **2024 Maharashtra elections**, **40 lakh new voters** were registered in just **five months**, compared to only **32 lakh** in the **previous five years**.

4. This unusual rise suggests large-scale **duplicate or fake voter registration**.

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5. In **Bengal**, the same **Voter ID number appeared in multiple constituencies and states**, showing both duplication and identity mismatch.

6. These facts prove that **one person had many Voter IDs**, and **one ID was shared by multiple people**, proving the 2008 claim was **misleading**.

Challenges in Linking Aadhaar with Voter ID

1. **Legal Barrier**: Aadhaar is **optional by law**, so making it **mandatory** for voting is legally complex.

2. **Coverage Requirement**: Aadhaar linking must be done for **100% of voters**. Partial linkage won't stop duplication.

3. **Implementation Risk**: Incomplete linkage can lead to **exclusion of genuine voters** or **retention of duplicate entries**, weakening the electoral process.

4. **Data Evidence**: The **Maharashtra example** clearly shows how fake voters can enter the system if identification isn't foolproof.

Positive Impacts of Aadhaar Linkage

1. **Duplicate Voting**: Aadhaar can use **biometric verification** to ensure one person doesn't hold multiple Voter IDs.

2. **Multiple Voting**: It can stop people from **voting multiple times** by replacing the outdated indelible ink system, which is often bypassed using chemicals.

Essential Safeguards Needed

1. The **ECI must provide a legal and public guarantee** under oath that **no eligible citizen will be denied their right to vote**.

2. This is critical to avoid **repeat mistakes**, like the **false claim in 2008** about the uniqueness of Voter IDs.

3. The solution must be **all-inclusive, transparent, and fair**.

Question for practice:
Discuss how the confusion between IDs and Unique IDs has affected the integrity of India's electoral system, with reference to the role of the Election Commission and the Aadhaar linkage.

Lok Sabha seat readjustment needs fair approach

Source: The post Lok Sabha seat readjustment needs fair approach has been created, based on the article "**A case for a fair seat allocation**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 8th April 2025
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2-polity- issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure.
Context: A national debate is ongoing about the readjustment of Lok Sabha seats after the upcoming Census. However, this issue is often mistakenly called delimitation. While delimitation redraws constituency boundaries, seat readjustment—mandated by Article 82—is meant to reflect population changes. The freeze on seat numbers since 1971 has led to major imbalances.
For detailed information on **Delimitation Exercise in India** read this article here
Historical Background and Constitutional Basis for Seat Allocation
1. The current strength of the Lok Sabha (543 seats) was fixed using the 1971 Census when India's population was around 54.79 crore.

2. Despite the population increasing to an estimated 141 crore by 2025, the number of seats has remained frozen due to a constitutional amendment extending this freeze until 2026.

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3. Article 81 mandates that the ratio of seats to population should be the same across States, and Article 82 requires readjustment after each Census.

Population Disparities and Regional Concerns
1. States like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar witnessed a disproportionate rise in population due to the poor implementation of family planning.

2. For instance, Uttar Pradesh's population grew from 8.38 crore (1971) to 24.1 crore (2025), and Bihar from 4.21 crore to 13.1 crore. In contrast, southern States, particularly Kerala, successfully controlled population growth—Kerala's population increased by only 68% in 50 years.

3. If readjustment follows Article 81 strictly, northern States would gain many more seats. Uttar Pradesh could rise from 80 to 240 seats, while Kerala would only go from 20 to 36. This raises concerns in southern States about political marginalization, as they could lose relative representation despite better governance.

Equity-Based Readjustment Approach

1. A fair method is to apply a **uniform 68% increase in seats**, based on Kerala's population growth.

2. This would give **UP 134 seats**, **Kerala 34**, and **Tamil Nadu 66**, maintaining inter-State balance.

3. Total Lok Sabha strength would rise to **912**.

4. Although this **violates Article 81(2)(a)**, the article argues that this rule is now outdated and unfair.

Alternative Formulae for Seat Allocation
Several formulae are proposed to ensure equity:

1. **15 lakh per seat model:** UP gets 160 seats; Kerala will get only a few seats more than 20. This increases the gap between northern and southern States.

2. **Historical average-based model:** In 1952, each constituency had 7.6 lakh people; in 1971, it became 10 lakh. Using the new Parliament's capacity (800 seats), each seat could represent about 18 lakh people. Under this, UP gets 134 seats, Kerala 34, Tamil Nadu 66.

Conclusion
Readjustment must uphold the constitutional principle of equity, not just population-based arithmetic. As India is a "Union of States," seat allocation should balance regional representation fairly. The issue, though technical, has significant political implications and must be approached with sensitivity and foresight.

Question for practice:
Examine how the proposed readjustment of Lok Sabha seats after the upcoming Census could impact the balance of regional representation in India.

Reservation in private universities is urgently needed

Source: The post Reservation in private universities is urgently needed has been created, based on the article "**A case for a fair seat allocation**" published in "**Indian Express**" on 8th April 2025
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2- Indian Constitution- historical underpinnings, evolution, features, amendments, significant provisions and basic structure.
Context: The issue of reservation in private higher educational institutions (PHEIs) has returned to public discussion after Congress leader Jairam Ramesh reiterated support for it. The legality of such reservations is already settled. What remains is political will. The idea is timely, and action is now needed.

Necessary Reservation in Private Universities

1. The idea has **legal backing since 2005**, with **Article 15(5)** allowing reservation for **SCs, STs, and OBCs** in **aided and unaided private institutions** (excluding minority institutions).

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2. The **Supreme Court upheld** this in cases like *IMA vs Union of India* (2011) and *Pramati Trust* (2014).

3. The **Congress party has long supported** this policy. Its **2024 manifesto** included the demand.

4. However, **political will is still lacking**, even though the idea's time had "come long ago".

Private higher education key to social inequality

1. Higher education now reflects what scholars call **"effectively maintained inequality"**.

2. As SCs, STs, and OBCs enter education, **elite private institutions** (with better faculty, classrooms, and placements) remain out of their reach.

3. Meanwhile, **public institutions**, which these groups depend on, are **underfunded, overcrowded, and declining in quality**.

4. Example: From **2015 to 2024**, private universities rose from **276 to 523**, and now form **26%** of enrolments. Private unaided colleges host **45%** of total college students.

Social composition of students in private vs public institutions

1. **Upper-caste Hindus** (20% of population) form **over 60%** of students in private universities.

2. In contrast, **SCs (6.8%)**, **STs (3.6%)**, and **OBCs (24.9%)** are severely underrepresented, despite making up **17%, 9%, and 45–50%** of the population respectively.

3. Muslims (15% population) form only **3.8%** of enrolment.

4. **Public universities**, which follow reservation: SCs: **14.6%**, STs: **6%**, OBCs: **31.2%**

This shows that **quota-based affirmative action does work**.

Change in higher education landscape in India

Two major trends:

1. Increased enrolment by disadvantaged groups: Between 1990–91 and 2018–19

• Universities: **5.5× rise**, Enrolment: **7.5× rise**, GER: **2.5× rise**

• Growth is **faster among SCs, STs, OBCs, Muslims**, and **women** within these groups.

2. **Collapse of public education + rise of private education**:

• Public colleges are turning into **"time-pass" institutes**, lacking quality and job prospects.

• Private institutions now offer **top-tier education**, but with **no social diversity**.

Way forward

1. **Strengthen public institutions**: More funds, better governance, regular faculty, autonomy, updated curriculum.

2. **Enforce reservation in private HEIs**: Mandate quota for SC, ST, OBCs in all non-minority private institutions.

3. **Add freeships and scholarships**: A fixed share of students must get financial support.

4. Despite the **National Education Policy's promises**, it has done little to stop **privatisation and commercialisation**.

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5. This policy shift can also help **unite Dalits, Adivasis, and OBCs** under a **common social justice platform**.

Conclusion:
The legal and moral arguments for reservation in private education are clear. What's missing is **political urgency**. Without state intervention, the divide in educational access will only grow, reinforcing **caste and class inequalities**.

Question for practice:
Examine the need for implementing reservation policies in private higher educational institutions in India in light of legal provisions, social inequality, and current trends in higher education.

India needs citizen-centric healthcare data governance model

Source: The post India needs citizen-centric healthcare data governance model has been created, based on the article "**Giving people incentive to digitise medical data can help fill critical gaps in health information**" published in "**Indian Express**" on 9th April 2025
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2- Governance-citizens charters, transparency & accountability
Context: **India's vast population and rapid technological growth suggest that the value of data generated by Indians may soon rival that of OECD countries.** However, poor data governance—especially in healthcare—is a major barrier. The article critiques current digital governance models and proposes a **citizen-centric approach** to unlock the full value of data.

Current State of Healthcare Data Governance in India

1. India generates huge volumes of data every day due to its 1.4 billion population. Despite active digital policy efforts, there is a **fundamental confusion** in governance: policymakers do not clearly differentiate between **data as identity** and **data as property**.

2. This misunderstanding **restricts innovation and economic potential**, especially in the healthcare sector. While large hospitals and government facilities are digitizing health records, **most medical consultations happen in small private clinics**, which lack the incentive or capacity to digitize. This results in **fragmented or missing patient records**, limiting long-term access and continuity of care.

Barriers to Effective Data Sharing in Healthcare

1. A major barrier is the **dominance of privacy-first policies** influenced by Western countries. The U.S.'s **HIPAA** allows patients to access their own data but not to share it freely. Hospitals and insurers can trade anonymized data for profit, but **patients get no share**.

2. In the UK, health data is owned and controlled by the **NHS**, not patients. While both systems are rooted in protecting privacy, they **deny individuals the right to control or monetize their own data**.

3. These models are not suitable for **India's decentralized and privatized healthcare system**, where empowering individuals is more practical than a top-down model.

Challenges Addressed by the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM)

1. The **ABDM**, by the National Health Authority, is a framework to make citizens **owners of their health data**. It enables access across facilities through registries, processing systems, and a **consent management platform**.

2. However, implementation faces a key problem: **clinical data is not naturally recorded during doctor-patient interactions**, as neither party sees future value in it. Without this value recognition, data remains underutilized.

Proposed Changes to Enhancing Data Governance in India
1. A **citizen-centric model** is proposed, where **data is treated as a tradable asset**. People should have the right to **hold, share, or monetize** their data. With the help of **privacy-preserving tools** like anonymization and digital forensics, individuals can safely participate in **a free and secure data market**.

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2. This approach can boost **healthcare efficiency**, support **AI-based solutions**, and enable **economic benefits** for citizens. It aligns with India's unique system and unlocks data's true value.

Conclusion:
India needs to rethink its data governance approach. Empowering citizens to control and benefit from their data will unlock economic value, especially in health, and position India as a global leader in digital innovation.
Question for practice:

Examine how a citizen-centric approach to data governance can address the challenges in India's healthcare data ecosystem.

MHA is shifting towards reform oriented governance

Source: The post MHA is shifting towards reform oriented governance has been created, based on the article "**The gradual transformation of the Home Ministry**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 9th April 2025
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2- Governance-Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountabilit
Context: The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), once mainly seen as a crisis-response body in India, has gradually shifted towards a reform-driven approach. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's motto of "Reform, Perform, and Transform" reflects this change. Governance today is not just about managing crises but building lasting systems.

From Reactive to Reform-Oriented Governance
1. Historically, the MHA responded to terrorism, insurgency, and industrial unrest. Its approach was reactive.

2. Agencies like the CISF were created to handle strikes in the 1970s–80s. The Rapid Action Force (RAF) was used for riot control. Due to weak state policing, Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) were heavily relied on.

3. However, these steps only addressed short-term issues without ensuring structural reforms.

Strategic Shift and Institutional Overhaul
1. In recent years, the MHA has changed its role. It is now focused on long-term internal security planning.

2. It has strengthened counter-terror laws, modernised forces, adopted technology, and improved coordination among intelligence agencies.

3. Over **27 legislative reforms since 2019** show this shift from reactive laws to a structured legal framework.

Legislative and Institutional Reforms
1. Earlier laws such as **TADA**, **POTA**, and the creation of **NIA** came after specific terror attacks. Now, the approach is more proactive. Amendments to the **NIA Act** and **UAPA** define terrorism in Indian law and target terror funding. The **Multi-Agency Centre (MAC)** has been revamped, and intelligence-sharing has improved.

2. Reforms also cover criminal justice. Three new laws — **Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita**, **Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita**, and **Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam** — have been enacted. The **Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and Systems (CCTNS)** now links over 17,000 police stations, courts, jails, and forensic labs. The **National Forensic Sciences University (NFSU)** has also been set up. States are now encouraged to separate forensic work from investigations.

Budgetary and Operational Strengthening
1. The shift is visible in rising financial support. The **MHA budget crossed ₹1 lakh crore in 2019** and reached **₹2.33 lakh crore in 2025**.

2. Spending on Central Paramilitary Forces rose from **₹38,000 crore in 2013–14 to ₹97,000 crore in 2024–25**. This shows the government's focus on security and modernisation.

Impact on Ground Security
1. The reformist approach has delivered results. Violence in **Kashmir**, the **North-East**, and **Naxal-affected areas** has declined by **70%**.

2. Measures like the **dilution of Article 370**, peace deals in the North-East, and combined security-development efforts in Naxal areas have improved political stability and social integration.

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3. Stone pelting in Kashmir has reduced, insurgency has weakened, and development is visible in former conflict zones.

Conclusion
The MHA has moved from a reaction-based institution to a proactive and reform-oriented body. Its long-term vision and institutional reforms have strengthened India's internal security and built a future-ready governance framework.

Question for practice:
Discuss how the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) in India has transformed from a reactive body to a reform-oriented institution.

Judicial orders often fail due to enforcement gaps

Source: The post Judicial orders often fail due to enforcement gaps has been created, based on the article "**Strengthening enforcement of judicial orders**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 9th April 2025
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2-Structure, Organization and Functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary
Context: Judicial directives in India often fail to produce real-world impact due to weak enforcement. A recent example from Jaipur, where the National Green Tribunal's (NGT) order on limiting air horn usage remains unimplemented, highlights broader systemic challenges in translating court orders into action.

Legal Provisions and Execution Gaps
1. Under **Section 38** and **Order 21** of the **Code of Civil Procedure (CPC)**, courts have the power to execute their own decrees or delegate execution to another court.

2. However, many judicial orders remain unenforced due to **questions over decree validity**, **lack of follow-through**, and **concerns about judicial misconduct**.

3. These gaps reflect a wider issue of **weak institutional enforcement capacity**.

Enforcement Challenges and Judicial Foresight
1. Despite the NGT's directive, enforcement agencies like the **traffic police**, **transport department**, and **pollution control board** have failed to act.

2. The NGT also did not assess whether its order was **practically enforceable** or explore more impactful alternatives, such as a **complete air horn ban**.
3. Often, agencies dismiss violations as "minor," which causes a **disconnect between judicial intent and real-world outcomes**.

4. This shows the need for **judicial foresight** in designing rulings that account for **on-ground realities and implementation challenges**.

Case Studies Highlighting Enforcement Issues
1. In *State of Tamil Nadu v. K. Balu (2017)*, the Supreme Court banned **liquor sales within 500 metres of highways** to reduce **drunk driving**.

2. However, poor enforcement followed. Authorities **reclassified highways** or **relocated outlets** just beyond the 500-metre mark, effectively bypassing the order.

3. This demonstrates how **loopholes and lack of anticipation** can undermine judicial decisions.

Examples of Successful Enforcement
1. Some rulings have succeeded due to **clarity, specificity, and oversight. In *Common Cause v. Union of India* (2018),** the legalisation of passive euthanasia was upheld. It was accompanied by **detailed guidelines, monitoring mechanisms, and institutional oversight, ensuring effective compliance.**

2. Similarly, in the **Taj Trapezium Zone case**, a green belt was established near the Mathura refinery. This followed the **Varadarajan Committee's recommendations**. Air quality monitoring was also mandated, showing that inter-agency collaboration and well-defined mandates lead to successful enforcement.

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Strategies for Strengthening Enforcement
1. Each department should appoint a **dedicated officer** accountable for **executing court orders**, conducting **regular audits**, and facing **penalties for failure**.
2. **Technology** can help by linking court directives to the **relevant agencies**, with systems for **timely reporting** and **tracking compliance**.
3. **Transparency and public awareness** further support enforcement. The **Kathmandu model**, where strict noise regulation was paired with **citizen education**, shows how public cooperation can drive meaningful change.

Conclusion
Judicial decisions often fail to translate into tangible results due to **weak enforcement systems**. Strengthening **accountability**, integrating **technology**, encouraging **public participation**, and ensuring **inter-agency coordination** are crucial. **Enforcement should be treated as central to justice**, not just an afterthought.

Question for practice:
Examine the key reasons why judicial directives in India often fail to achieve their intended real-world impact, drawing insights from recent enforcement challenges and successful case examples.

RBI responds to global trade war challenges

Source: The post RBI responds to global trade war challenges has been created, based on the article "**RBI MPC's rate cut is a signal to support growth amidst global economic turmoil**" published in "**Indian Express**" on 10th April 2025
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2-International Relations-Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests.
Context: **Global trade tensions** are rising, creating uncertainty for many economies, including India. In response, the **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has cut interest rates and adopted a **growth-supportive stance**. This shows concern about slowing growth, both in India and globally, and the need for timely action to support the economy.
For detailed information on **India must respond wisely to Trump's trade** read this article here
RBI's Actions Against the Global Trade War

1. **Rate Cuts:** The RBI's **Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)** reduced the **policy rate by 25 basis points**. It also changed its stance from **neutral to accommodative**, indicating the possibility of **further rate cuts**.

2. **GDP Forecast:** The RBI lowered India's **GDP growth projection for FY26** from **6.7% to 6.5%**, due to the possible adverse effects of the trade war.

3. **Inflation Management:** It also reduced the **CPI inflation forecast** for FY26 to **4%**, from its earlier estimate of **4.2%**, due to easing food inflation.

4. **Forex Interventions:** The RBI plans to **intervene in the forex market** to manage volatility. It has a strong buffer of **$676 billion in forex reserves**, covering **11 months of imports**.

Impacts of the Global Trade War on India's Economy

1. **GDP Growth Forecast Reduction:** The trade war has already led the RBI to lower its **growth forecast**.

2. **Exports-to-GDP Ratio:** India's economy is **less export-dependent**, with **goods and services exports at 21% of GDP**, and **goods exports alone at 12%**. This is lower than **Thailand (65%)** and **Vietnam (87%)**, making India **less vulnerable** to U.S. tariffs, though risks still remain.

3. **Direct and Indirect Impact:** The trade war could directly reduce India's GDP by **0.2–0.3%**. Indirectly, it could affect **global growth**, **capital flows**, and **private sector investment**, which had just begun to recover post-COVID.

Factors Supporting India's Economy

1. Normal Monsoon and Agricultural Output: A **normal monsoon** is expected to boost **agriculture**, supporting **rural demand** and economic stability.

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2. **Tax and Inflation Reductions:** A **lower income tax burden** and **reduction in food inflation** (from **8.5% in late 2024 to 3.8% in February 2025**) are likely to encourage **consumer spending**.

3. **Comparatively Lower U.S. Tariffs:** The **U.S. imposed a 26% tariff on Indian goods**, which is **lower** than those on **China (104%)**, **Vietnam (46%)**, and **Thailand (36%)**. This opens a **window of opportunity** for India to **increase its export market share** in the U.S.

India's Inflation Outlook

1. Current CPI Inflation: CPI inflation fell to **3.6% in February 2025**, from an average of **8.5% between October and December 2024**.

2. **Food Inflation:** Food inflation dropped sharply to **3.8%** in February.

3. **Core Inflation:** Core inflation has stayed **low**, averaging **3.5% over the past year**.

4. RBI's Projection: The RBI revised the **FY26 CPI inflation forecast to 4%**, down from **4.2%**.

5. **External Factors:** A **normal monsoon** and **stable global commodity prices** may help keep inflation in check.

Impact of Currency and Global Factors on India's Economy

1. US Dollar Dynamics: From **October 2024 to mid-January**, the **US dollar strengthened 9%**, then **weakened 6%**, creating uncertainty.

2. **Yuan and Rupee Fluctuations:** The **Chinese yuan** weakened **4.6%** in the last six months. The **rupee** also weakened by **4.4%** between **October 2024 and February 2025**.

3. **Forex Reserves and RBI Action:** With **$676 billion in reserves**, the RBI can stabilize the rupee, expected to trade around **88–89 per USD** by the fiscal year-end.

4. **Global Uncertainty:** Ongoing trade tensions and financial volatility may limit **capital inflows**, affecting the **rupee's stability** and **growth outlook**.

Question for practice
Examine how the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has responded to global trade tensions and assess the potential impact of these tensions on India's economic growth, inflation, and currency stability.

Governors must act fairly to protect federal democracy

Source: The post Governors must act fairly to protect federal democracy has been created, based on the article "**Supreme Court's judgment on Tamil Nadu governor: Why governors are so partial to the Centre**" published in "**Indian Express**" on 10th April 2025
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2- Polity-Appointment to various Constitutional posts, powers, functions and responsibilities of various Constitutional Bodies.
Context: The article discusses the declining role and rising controversy surrounding governors in India. It highlights the Supreme Court's recent judgment (April 8) that curbs arbitrary actions by governors and strengthens federal democracy. It also reviews historical perspectives and suggests reforms to ensure governors function as impartial constitutional heads, not political agents.
For detailed information on **Office of Governor- Issues and Suggested Reforms** read this article here
Original idea behind the role of Governor

1. **Governors were intended to be sagacious counselors** who consult, warn, and encourage, while staying above party politics.

2. Historical leaders like **Jawaharlal Nehru and B.R. Ambedkar supported appointing eminent, non-political, and academically inclined individuals** to ensure neutrality in office.

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3. **B.N. Rau, Sardar Patel, and Jayaprakash Narayan proposed that governors be elected by the legislature** or chosen from a panel by MPs and MLAs of the state to ensure independence.

4. However, **these proposals were not adopted.**

5. Dr. Ambedkar concluded that governors should act as figureheads, representing the people of the state and not the central government. He also expected that the central government would **consult state chief ministers while appointing governors**, ensuring political neutrality.

Change in governor's role in recent times

1. There is a **rise in political interference** by governors, especially those appointed by the current central government.

2. They have become **more assertive and interventionist**, often stepping beyond their constitutional role.

3. **Legislative disruptions** have become common, with governors delaying or denying assent to state bills, interfering in appointments, and altering customary speeches.

4. This contrasts sharply with the **limited, advisory role** originally envisioned.

5. A major intervention came through the **Supreme Court's judgment on April 8, 2024,** which strongly criticized the misuse of gubernatorial powers and sought to **establish accountability through strict timelines**.

6. **Example:** The Tamil Nadu governor withheld assent to **10 bills for several months**, and later referred them to the President. The Court ruled this **arbitrary and unconstitutional**.

Supreme Court's April 8, 2024, ruling

Context: The ruling addressed the misuse of power by governors in not assenting to bills passed by state legislatures.

Main Points:

1. **Article 142 Application**: The Court used its special powers to set strict timelines for governors to act on bills.

2. **Limits on Discretion**: It clarified that governors under Article 200 do not have absolute discretion in assenting to bills.

3. **Mandatory Timelines**: Justices J.B. Pardiwala and R. Mahadevan mandated deadlines for bill assent, reconsideration, or presidential referral.

4. **Constitutional Protection**: This move aimed to strengthen federal democracy by curbing undue central interference through governor actions.

Problems with the current system of appointing governors

1. **Political appointees dominate**, often chosen from among retired politicians or central ruling party loyalists.

2. **Governors act on central directives**, reducing their independence and undermining state autonomy.

3. **They lack job security**, unlike other constitutional authorities like judges, making them vulnerable to political pressure.

4. The **Sarkaria Commission (1983)** recommended that the **Chief Minister, Vice-President, and Speaker of Lok Sabha be consulted** in governor appointments.

5. **None of these suggestions were ever followed** by any ruling party.

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Example: The Tamil Nadu case shows how **centralized appointments can disrupt state governance** and lead to legal challenges.

Nature of a governor's discretion should be

1. Used with reason and caution, based on facts.

2. Must be **independent and free from dictation**, especially from the Centre.

3. Should follow **proper application of mind**, after reviewing all facts.

4. Must serve a **legitimate purpose**, not driven by bias or bad faith.

5. Decisions should not be arbitrary or whimsical.

Question for practice:
Discuss the changing role of Governors in India and the challenges it poses to federal democracy.

The world is still learning from COVID

Source: The post The world is still learning from COVID has been created, based on the article "**The pandemic — looking back, looking forward**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 10th April 2025
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2- Governance-Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health.
Context: **In March 2025, we marked five years of the COVID-19 pandemic.** Countries across the world organised events and reflected on the crisis. Many global discussions took place. But a central question remains: **Have we truly learnt from the pandemic?** Have we built a world that is **healthier, more inclusive, and innovative**, especially in the **Global South and North**?
For detailed information on **Covid taught us five lessons for future** read this article here
Fragile Public Trust
1. The pandemic revealed the **fragility of public trust** in healthcare systems.

2. **Low confidence** among people reduced the adoption of essential measures like **testing and vaccines**.

3. In India, **underreporting of deaths** in the early stages reflected this lack of trust.

4. In many countries, especially vulnerable economies, **poor communication** worsened the health crisis. **Strong trust in institutions is essential** for effective public health response.

Technology and the Digital Divide
1. There was a rapid **increase in digital health technologies**, such as **telemedicine** and **AI in drug research**.

2. A study using patent data from the **University of Sussex** showed a surge in **AI-related pharmaceutical patents** after the pandemic began. But many in the Global South **lacked access** to these tools.

3. The **digital divide excluded vulnerable populations**, showing that innovation alone is not enough without equal access.

Health System Weaknesses
1. COVID-19 exposed serious **flaws in health systems**, especially in developing countries.

2. In India, **weak infrastructure and institutional gaps** were evident.

3. The need for **universal health insurance** became clear. **Oxygen supply systems were** found lacking, raising concerns for future respiratory outbreaks.

4. Solutions like **hybrid healthcare models**—combining digital tools with physical systems—and **public-private partnerships** gained attention but were not sustained.

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5. In decentralised systems, the role of a **central public health coordinator** became important to reduce coordination gaps.

Deepened Vulnerabilities
1. The pandemic **intensified existing inequalities**, especially for **women**, who faced more pressure in childcare, job losses, and mental health issues.

2. **Marginalised groups** struggled to access healthcare. Progress toward the **Sustainable Development Goals** was affected.

3. A **global mental health crisis** emerged. New **remote work models** brought challenges in productivity and well-being, with no long-term solutions found yet.

Equity and Global Access
1. COVID-19 highlighted global issues of **equity and access**.

2. Debates over **intellectual property rights** and **vaccine distribution** became intense.

3. **Africa suffered delays** due to **vaccine nationalism**, as rich nations prioritised their own needs.

4. The situation showed the need for stronger **South-South cooperation** to ensure fair access in future health emergencies.

Conclusion
Some progress has been made in **healthcare, innovation, and recovery**, but major challenges remain. The goal of **"One World, One Health"** is still out of reach. The key question now is whether the world is truly **learning and acting** to build a **resilient, inclusive global health system** for the future.

Question for practice:
Examine how the COVID-19 pandemic exposed and deepened global health inequalities between the Global North and South.

India Expands Social Security for Gig Workers

Source: The post India Expands Social Security for Gig Workers has been created, based on the article "**Drop the piecemeal ways to social security for workers**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 11th April 2025
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2-Social Justice – Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector.
Context: India is moving towards establishing social security for gig and app-based workers, with a central scheme awaiting Cabinet approval. It includes Ayushman Bharat coverage, pension policies, and registration on the eShram portal. This effort marks a shift in acknowledging gig workers outside traditional employment structures and highlights the need for a universal social protection framework.
For detailed information on **Gig Workers in India – Challenges and Way Forward** read this article here
Problems with India's Current Social Security System

1. **Lack of international commitment**: India has not ratified the ILO's Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952, despite being a founding member.

2. **Weak legal framework**: The Code on Social Security has vague definitions, reduced protections, and has faced many implementation issues.

3. Underperforming welfare boards:

• ₹70,744.16 crore collected for construction workers 'welfare remains unused.

• A **CAG 2024 report** revealed ₹221.8 crore in delayed remittances by 99 local bodies in Tamil Nadu.

• In **Kerala**, only 5 of 16 welfare boards functioned properly; some boards had no recorded beneficiaries.

Why is India Focusing on Social Security for Gig Workers?

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1. **Gig workers lack formal benefits** because they operate outside traditional employer-employee structures.

2. The government's new scheme aims to fill this gap. It includes:

• **Health coverage under Ayushman Bharat**.

• **Registration on the eShram portal**.

• **Transaction-based pension** using a **universal account number** to track earnings across platforms.

3. This model ensures **multiple companies contribute** to a single worker's welfare, reflecting the reality that gig workers often have several employers.

4. The move comes after the **failure of existing welfare systems**, where large funds remain unused.

5. It reflects a shift toward a **future-ready workforce**, aiming to ensure **no worker is left behind**.

Way Forward for India's Social Protection System

1. **Treat the Social Security Code as a foundation**: Use the Code as a starting point. States should go beyond its basic mandates to create stronger protections.

2. **Implement universal protection**: Design a system that covers **all categories of workers**, without exclusions based on job type.

3. **Reform welfare boards**: Ensure better use of funds and timely delivery of benefits, addressing past failures like the ₹70,744.16 crore unutilized fund.

4. **Avoid piecemeal approaches**: Stop relying on fragmented welfare schemes for specific worker groups. Build an **inclusive and unified system**.

5. **Adapt to workforce changes**: Create flexible systems that can respond to **technological and economic shifts**, protecting future worker categories.

Question for practice:

Examine the challenges in India's current social security system and how the proposed scheme for gig and app-based workers aims to address them.

Judicial accountability system needs urgent effective reform

Source: The post Judicial accountability system needs urgent effective reform has been created, based on the article "**Are existing mechanisms effective in combating judicial corruption?**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 11th April 2025
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2-Governance-Appointment to various Constitutional posts, powers, functions and responsibilities of various Constitutional Bodies.
Context: The recovery of unaccounted cash from the residence of former Delhi High Court judge Justice Yashwant Varma has sparked serious discussions about the **effectiveness of mechanisms to combat judicial corruption**. The Chief Justice of India initiated an **in-house inquiry**, leading to wider debates on **judicial accountability and transparency**.

For detailed information on **Judicial misconduct needs transparent and accountable investigation** <u>read this article here</u>

Transparency in Judicial Inquiries

1. **Public Trust Requires Openness:** The judiciary must function transparently to retain public trust. In the Varma case, the Supreme Court proactively released the video footage of the cash recovery. This helped curb public speculation and demonstrated a commitment to openness.

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2. **Beyond Crisis-Based Transparency:** While the release was effective, transparency should not be an ad hoc response. It needs to become institutionalised. At the same time, the judiciary must protect the accused's right to a fair trial by making disclosures on a case-by-case basis.

3. **Better Public Communication:** Dedicated communication personnel should be appointed to manage media narratives, reduce misinformation, and strengthen the public's confidence in judicial processes.

Need for Reform in In-House Mechanisms

1. **Origin and Purpose:** The in-house mechanism was introduced to protect judges from unfair targeting, especially by the executive. It was shaped by the Supreme Court's 1991 judgment in the *Delhi Judicial Service Association* case, which set standards for handling judicial officers.

2. **Systemic Weaknesses:** Despite its protective goals, the mechanism lacks effectiveness in serious cases. The acquittal of judges in corruption cases—even with substantial evidence—shows delays and inefficiencies in the process. Legislative reform can help close these gaps and improve internal accountability.

Limitations of the Impeachment Process

1. **High Threshold, Low Impact:** Impeachment requires a **two-thirds majority in both Houses of Parliament** and an **absolute majority of all members**. This high threshold makes it nearly impossible to use and fails to serve as an effective deterrent.

2. **Shielding Misconduct:** Instead of promoting accountability, this process often shields judges. It is rarely successful, and serious misconduct can go unpunished due to procedural barriers.

3. **Protecting Independence, but at a Cost:** Though designed to protect judges from political targeting, delays like the 15-year-long case involving a former High Court judge show how the process can also undermine justice.

Judicial Appointments and Executive Influence

1. **Informal Role of Government:** Though the collegium system handles appointments, the government often holds a de facto veto. It delays or ignores recommendations, effectively blocking the elevation of several deserving judges.

2. **Eroding Transparency:** The collegium has become a search-and-selection body influenced by executive preferences. A short-lived practice of publishing reasons for appointments brought hope for transparency, but it has been discontinued.

Critique of the Judicial Standards and Accountability Bill, 2010

1. **Lack of Enforceable Standards** The Bill fails to define clear judicial standards. It does not require judges to disclose if their relatives are practicing in the same court—an obvious conflict of interest.

2. **Oversight Bodies Not the Solution:** Proposing new oversight bodies, often staffed by retired judges, would repeat existing systemic flaws. Instead, peer reviews—already informally practiced—should be institutionalised to catch early signs of misconduct.

Question for practice:

Examine the current mechanisms for judicial accountability in India in light of Justice Yashwant Varma's case, highlighting their strengths and limitations.

India needs urgent push for deep-tech growth

Source: The post India needs urgent push for deep-tech growth has been created, based on the article "**India's startup ecosystem is catching up with China**" published in "**Indian Express**" on 11th April 2025
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2-Economy-Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilisation, of resources, growth, development and employment.

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Context: The launch of Sputnik in 1957 pushed the US into a new era of scientific exploration. A similar urgency is now needed for India as deep-tech innovations like generative AI, robotics, and fusion tech reshape the world. Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal's remarks on India's deep-tech startup shortage signal a crucial call to action. For detailed information on **India's Startup Growth Opportunities and Key Challenges** read this article here

Importance of Deep Tech in Today's World

1. **Historical Context**: The importance of deep tech today mirrors the urgency seen during the 1957 space race, which propelled the U.S. into rapid scientific progress after the Soviet launch of Sputnik.

2. **Current Relevance**: Deep tech is driving key innovations — reusable rockets, generative AI, humanoid robots, and advanced medical drugs — which are transforming industries and societies.

3. **Global Leadership**: China has filed **over 38,000 generative AI patents between 2014 and 2023,** clearly outpacing other nations and taking a lead in frontier technologies.

4. **Economic Impact**: Generative AI alone could **add $1 trillion to India's GDP by 2030,** proving deep tech's power to shape national economies.

5. **National Security**: Deep-tech strengthens **self-reliance** and acts as a buffer against **geopolitical risks and supply chain shocks**.

India Stands Globally at a Developing Stage in Deep-Tech Innovation

1. **Patent Filings**: India lags behind while **China leads with 38,000 GenAI patents** during 2014–2023 — far ahead of the US.

2. **Global Rankings**: China dominates **57 out of 64 critical technologies**, according to the Australian Strategic Policy Institute.

3. **R&D Investment**: India spends **less than 1% of its GDP** on R&D. In contrast, the US, UK, Germany, and Japan spend **over 3%**, while China allocates **2.68%**.

4. **Notable Startups and Sectors**: Despite the gap, India is showing promise with innovative startups like **Skyroot**, **Agnikul**, **Ola**, and **Ather**.

India's Major Deep-Tech Achievements and Startups

1. **Space Launch Vehicles**: **Skyroot's Vikram-S** launch in 2022 was India's **first private space mission,** marking a major milestone.

2. **Flying Taxis & Electric Mobility**: Startups like **Sarla**, **ePlane**, **Blu-J**, **Ultraviolette**, and others are driving innovation in **urban air mobility and electric vehicles**.

3. **Robotics & AI**: **Addverb**, **CynLR**, and **Perceptyne** are advancing **automation and AI applications**.

4. **Satellite Technology**: Firms like **Pixxel**, **Dhruva Space**, and **Digantara** are building **next-gen satellites** for space communication and observation.

5. **Biotech & Semiconductors**: **CrisprBits** is working on **gene editing**, while **Mindgrove** is progressing in **semiconductor design**.

Government Support to Deep-Tech Growth

1. **India Semiconductor Mission (2021)**: Allocated **Rs 76,000 crore** to develop fabrication and design capabilities.

2. **IndiaAI Mission (2024)**: Set aside **Rs 10,371 crore** to build a robust AI ecosystem.

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3. **Deep Tech Fund of Funds**: Introduced with **Rs 10,000 crore** to bridge funding gaps in deep-tech startups.

4. **Space-tech Venture Capital Fund**: Allocated **Rs 1,000 crore** to boost space innovation.

Challenges for India's Deep-Tech Growth

1. **Low R&D Spending**: India's investment is **under 1% of GDP**, far below global leaders.

2. **Funding Gaps**: Deep tech needs long-term funding, but venture capital focuses on quick returns — a **"long gestation conundrum."**

3. **Talent Shortage**: Too few engineers are trained in **frontier technologies** like AI, robotics, and chips.

4. **Slow Patent Approvals**: Delays **discourage innovation and product development**.

Solutions for India's Deep-Tech Growth

1. The **IndiaAI Mission** and **Deep Tech Fund of Funds** aim to provide **patient capital** to startups.

2. The **National Deep Tech Startup Policy (NDTSP)** encourages **STEM education** and advanced training.

3. India must **accelerate patent approvals** and strengthen **university–startup collaboration**.

4. Startups like **Skyroot**, **Qnu Labs**, and **CrisprBits** prove India can lead with bold innovation when backed well.

Question for practice:
Discuss how deep-tech innovation can transform India's economic and strategic future, and what challenges need to be addressed to achieve global leadership.

Gender and Climate Crisis – 30 Years after the Beijing Declaration

Source: The post Gender and Climate Crisis – 30 Years after the Beijing Declaration has been created, based on the article "**The Beijing India Report as milestone and opportunity**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 12th April 2025
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2-Governance-mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections.
Context: The article reflects on the 30-year journey since the adoption of the **Beijing Declaration for gender equality**. While it helped India improve laws like the **Domestic Violence Act** and **POSH Act**, gaps remain in their implementation. A major concern today is the **intersection of gender and climate change**, which is largely overlooked in policymaking and reporting.
For detailed information on **India's Progress in Advancing Gender Equality** read this article here

Impact of Climate Change on Women's Health, Work, and Safety

1. **Health**: Over **50% of pregnant women in India** are anaemic. Food insecurity, worsened by climate change, makes women **1.6 times more likely** to suffer from anaemia.

2. **Safety**: Rising temperatures have been linked to increased violence. A **1°C rise** leads to an **8% increase in physical violence** and **7.3% in sexual violence** against women.

3. **Livelihoods**: Extreme weather affects **agriculture and infrastructure**, reducing women's income opportunities and access to services.

4. **Workload**: Climate change increases women's **unpaid care responsibilities**, impacting their **productivity and wellbeing**.

Gender Integration Is Crucial in Climate Policies

1. **Vulnerability**: Women in **rural India** are more affected by climate change. **Girls drop out of school** due to climate-induced migration. Health risks from **malnutrition** and **heat exposure** are higher among women.

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2. **Economic Impact**: Climate change causes **about 33% loss in income** from **non-farm activities**, weakening women's economic stability.

3. **Policy Gaps**: Only **6% of climate policies** mention women, showing the need for **inclusive frameworks** that reflect women's experiences.

4. **Unpaid Labor**: Due to climate-related scarcity of water and fuel, **women's unpaid work** may rise to **8.3 hours daily by 2050**, increasing physical and emotional stress.

Role of Women in Climate Adaptation

1. **Traditional Knowledge**: Women apply their understanding of **sustainable agriculture** and **natural resource management** to protect local ecosystems.

2. **Seed Preservation**: They preserve **climate-resilient seeds**, vital for adapting to changing weather patterns.

3. **Food Production**: Women produce **half of the world's food** and have adapted their farming techniques to climate variations.

4. **Community Leadership**: They lead **collectives** that share work, raise productivity, and respond first in disasters.

5. **Urban Engagement**: In cities, women focus on **waste management** and **pollution control**, leading community-level initiatives.

What Must Be Done to Make Climate Policies Gender-Responsive?

1. **Incorporate a Gender Lens**: The **Beijing+30 India Report** should address gendered climate vulnerabilities and women's roles in climate resilience.

2. **Develop Gender-Audited Budgets**: Design **climate budgets** that directly address women's needs and prevent **greenwashing** or misuse of funds.

3. **Enhance Women's Leadership**: Encourage women's participation in **climate decisions**, both in **local governance**and **green energy projects**.

4. **Establish Support Hubs**: Create **community centers** focused on **health**, **disaster support**, and **migration-related risks** for women.

5. **Invest in Research**: Increase **gender-specific climate research** to guide inclusive policy actions and monitor outcomes effectively.

How Can Partnerships and the Private Sector Support Women in Climate Action?

1. **Fund Women-Led Innovations**: Prioritize **green funds** for women-led and supportive climate resilience projects.

2. **Ensure Technological Access**: Provide women with access to **climate-resilient technologies and services**.

3. **Promote Green Entrepreneurship**: Support women in starting **green businesses** and sustainable services.

4. **Build Skills**: Offer **training and skilling programs** that prepare women for **non-farm livelihoods** affected by climate change.

5. **Encourage Cooperation**: Promote partnerships among **government**, **civil society**, **private sector**, and **international groups** to build women's leadership in climate resilience.

Question for practice:

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Examine how climate change disproportionately affects women in India and the measures needed to make climate policies gender-responsive.

NEP promotes interdisciplinary higher education

Source: The post NEP promotes interdisciplinary higher education has been created, based on the article "**Giving shape to the university of the future**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 12th April 2025

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

Context: The National Education Policy (NEP) aims to transform India's fragmented higher education system by **promoting large multidisciplinary institutions**. This shift focuses on **encouraging cross-disciplinary and interdisciplinary** education and research to address real-world challenges more effectively.

For detailed information **National Education Policy, 2020 – Provisions and Significance** read this article here

Vision of NEP for higher education transformation

1. **Integrate Disciplines**: Replace isolated disciplines with a unified framework allowing interaction and integration of multiple fields within academic programs.

2. **Encourage Interdisciplinary Learning**: Support cross-disciplinary collaboration to solve complex problems. For example, **IITs are expanding humanities and social sciences departments** alongside technical fields.

3. **Create Multidisciplinary Universities**: Target of establishing **at least one such university in or near every district by 2030** to enhance access and promote diverse educational environments.

4. Foster Research and Dialogue: Promote a pedagogical shift towards **discussion, debate, and research across disciplines**.

Differences between multidisciplinary, cross-disciplinary, and interdisciplinary approaches

1. Multidisciplinary: Multiple disciplines coexist within the same project or program without actively interacting. Each discipline maintains its methods and perspectives independently, such as in an educational institution hosting separate departments under one roof.

2. **Cross-disciplinary**: Involves collaboration between different disciplines without integrating their knowledge bases. An example from the article is an educationist and economist co-authoring a research paper. This approach fosters dialogue but stops short of blending disciplinary insights.

3. **Interdisciplinary**: Integrates ideas, methods, and tools from various disciplines to solve complex problems. The article cites an integrated approach in fields like biotechnology and medicine, where knowledge from chemistry and biology is combined, leading to innovative solutions and knowledge synthesis.

Multidisciplinary campuses creation or expansion

1. **Adding Departments**: Institutions like **IITs** are broadening academic offerings by incorporating humanities and social sciences, and offering **integrated master's programs in economics and allied fields**.

2. **Clustering Institutes**: Merge existing single-discipline institutions into cluster universities. For example, a **commerce college may join with arts and science colleges**. This is cost-effective and resource-efficient but requires administrative restructuring.

3. **District-Wide Expansion**: The NEP plans **one multidisciplinary university in or near each district by 2030**. Establishing a **single-campus university** per district is more efficient than spreading campuses across locations

Cross-disciplinary learning promotions in universities

1. **Course Diversification**: Encourage students to explore subjects outside their core disciplines to gain broader perspectives.

2. **Collaborative Projects**: Promote projects involving multiple departments. For example, a course titled **"Economic changes and class structures in Indian cinema"** developed jointly by economics, sociology, and film studies faculties.

3. **Funding and Support**: Ensure long-term financial backing for such initiatives. The **NSF's IGERT program in the U.S.** is a model, offering structured interdisciplinary training with both depth and breadth.

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4. **Administrative Reforms**: Institutions must adopt **governance structures** that support and institutionalize cross-disciplinary teaching and research.

Challenges in achieving interdisciplinary research

1. **Publication and Career Paths**: Fields such as engineering and architecture face difficulties finding suitable publication venues for interdisciplinary research, which affects academic careers.

2. **Institutional Bias**: Academic and research institutions often favor discipline-specific studies, limiting interdisciplinary integration.

3. **Funding and Support**: Interdisciplinary projects require sustainable funding models, similar to the NSF's IGERT program in the US, which are not yet widely implemented in India.

4. **Cultural Resistance**: There is often resistance within academic communities towards integrating methods and concepts across disciplines.

5. **Regulatory and Administrative Hurdles**: Necessary changes in faculty hiring, promoting practices, and governance structures are needed to support interdisciplinary efforts.

Question for practice:

Examine how the National Education Policy promotes interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary approaches in higher education.

Trump Tariffs offer India opportunity for crucial economic reforms

Source: The post NEP promotes interdisciplinary higher education has been created, based on the article "**India's second 1991 moment**" published in "**Indian Express**" on 12th April 2025

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

Context:. **The article discusses the Trump Tariffs (TT) announced on April 2, 2025, which have reshaped global trade dynamics.** Although framed as reciprocal, the tariffs are primarily aimed at China and mark a broader U.S. strategy of economic containment. This shift presents a timely opportunity for India to pursue long-delayed trade and investment reforms.

For detailed information on **India should lower tariffs and boost global trade ties** read this article here

Introduction of Trump Tariffs (TT)

1. TT were introduced on April 2, 2025, imposing a base 10% tariff on all countries and a 125% tariff on China.

2. These tariffs are not focused on correcting trade deficits but serve as a strategic tool to counter China's ambition of replacing the U.S. as the global economic leader.

3. **China's Mercantilist Model**: In 2010, China's consumption-to-GDP ratio stood at just 35%, reflecting a strong export-led model. Its share of global manufactured goods exports rose from 4% in 1996 to 30% today.

4. **US Response**: The tariffs signal continuity in the U.S. policy of containing China, defying earlier expectations of a reversal under President Biden.

China's Long-Term Strategy and Success

1. **Strategic Goal**: China's objective is to displace the U.S. as the economic hegemon using mercantilist tactics—high exports, low imports, and foreign reserve accumulation.

2. **Strengths**: Its large, skilled population and strategic policymaking have helped achieve this goal.

3. **Historical Trajectory**: In 1960, the U.S. held 25% of global manufactured goods exports. China had only 4% in 1996 but has now surged to 30%.

4. **Sustained Policies**: China has consistently applied mercantilist policies since its reforms began in 1978, enabling long-term growth.

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Why India Has Failed to Reform Trade and Investment Policies

1. **Policy Complacency**: India's steady 6.2% annual growth over the past 33 years led to a "don't rock the boat" attitude among politicians and the policy establishment.

2. **Restrictive FDI Norms**: The 2015 Bilateral Investment Treaty required foreign firms to resolve disputes in Indian courts. This discouraged investment, leading FDI to fall below 1% of GDP—levels last seen in the 1990s.

3. **Missed Manufacturing Shift**: After 2010, as China exited low-end manufacturing, countries like Bangladesh and Vietnam adapted. India did not.

4. **Domestic Resistance**: Political leaders avoided reform due to past backlash (e.g., the farm laws protest), and big industrialists resisted competition that reforms would bring.

Opportunity for India to Pursue Reforms

1. **External Pressure**: The April 2 tariffs, especially those targeting China, present a geopolitical opening for India to reposition itself.

2. **Investment Magnet**: With China facing 125% tariffs, India could attract global manufacturers seeking alternative destinations.

3. **Workforce Edge**: India now has a large, educated, and AI-capable workforce. Its prime working-age population may soon exceed China's.

4. **Export Potential**: India can step into the global manufacturing space China is vacating.

5. **Bilateral Trade Agreements**: The upcoming India-U.S. Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA), and those under negotiation with the UK and EU, could trigger much-needed liberalization.

Choices Before India

1. **Growth Path**: India must choose between continuing at 6.2% or pushing to 7.5–8.5% growth through trade openness and deregulation.

2. **Declining FDI**: India's share of FDI has dropped, signaling the urgent need to revisit its policies.

3. **Global Integration**: BTAs can serve as a model for broader reforms and deeper economic integration with the world.

4. **Strategic Timing**: The second "1991 moment" is near—India must act before the opportunity passes.

Question for practice:

Examine how the Trump Tariffs of 2025 create an opportunity for India to reform its trade and investment policies.

Supreme Court defines limits of Governor's powers

Source: The post Supreme Court defines limits of Governor's powers has been created, based on the article "**A Governor's conduct and a judgment of significance**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 14th April 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2- Polity-Appointment to various Constitutional posts, powers, functions and responsibilities of various Constitutional Bodies.

Context: In *The State of Tamil Nadu vs The Governor of Tamil Nadu*, the Supreme Court ruled on the constitutional limits of gubernatorial authority. The case arose when the Tamil Nadu Governor delayed action on Bills passed by the State Assembly, prompting the Court to reaffirm democratic norms and constitutional constraints.

For detailed information on **SC verdict on Governor's assent to Bills** read this article here

Tamil Nadu government approach the Supreme Court

1. **Governor's Inaction:** The Tamil Nadu government approached the Supreme Court due to the Governor's prolonged inaction on 12 Bills that were duly passed by the State Legislature.

2. **Political Dispute:** Among these Bills were key proposals to limit the Governor's power to appoint Vice-Chancellors, stemming from a historical dispute over control between the Governor and the State government.

3. **Legal Impasse:** The Governor did not grant assent or reject the Bills but instead referred them to the President, delaying their implementation.

4. **Democratic Principles:** The state argued that such indefinite withholding of assent subverts the constitutional order and disrespects the democratic mandate of the State Legislature.

The Constitutional Role of the Governor
1. Not an Independent Authority: The Governor is **not a Union representative** or an independent authority but is the **constitutional head** of the State. As per **Article 163**, he must act on the **aid and advice of the State Council of Ministers**.

2. **Limits under Article 200**: Article 200 gives the Governor **only three options**:

• Assent to the Bill

• Withhold and return it for reconsideration

• Reserve it for the President's consideration
• The Supreme Court **rejected a fourth option — withholding assent indefinitely (pocket veto)** — as unconstitutional.

3. **Judicial Review Permitted**: Though **Article 361** grants **personal immunity** to the Governor, the Court held that **his actions can be challenged** through judicial review.

4. Limited Discretion: The Governor may act **without ministerial advice only in three cases**:

• Under **Second Proviso to Article 200**, if the Bill affects **High Court powers**

• Under **Article 31C**, if the Bill seeks **immunity from judicial review**

• If the Bill **violates constitutional values**

Judicial Interpretation and Historical Context
1. **Interpretation of Article 200**: The Court ruled that the Governor **must act on a Bill** and **cannot delay indefinitely**. His options are limited to **assenting, returning**, or **reserving the Bill**.

2. **Constitutional History**: The **original draft** of Article 200 allowed the Governor to act "**in his discretion.**" But this phrase was **deliberately removed** during the Constituent Assembly debates, showing that the Governor must follow the advice of the elected government.

3. **Example from Punjab Case**: In *State of Punjab vs Principal Secretary to the Governor of Punjab (2023)*, the Court held that **pocket veto is not allowed** under Article 200.

4. **Example from Tamil Nadu**: The Governor delayed 12 Bills, including ones on **university appointments**, and later **referred 10 re-enacted Bills to the President** without ministerial advice.

5. **Final Step by Supreme Court**: Using **Article 142**, the Court declared that the **10 re-presented Bills would be deemed assented** on the date they were re-sent to the Governor. This was done to ensure **complete justice**.

What broader message does this verdict send?

1. **Governors Must Follow Law**: The Governor must act **based on the advice** of the State government. He is **not a political authority** but a **constitutional figure**.

2. **Legislative Supremacy Upheld**: The Court's decision upheld the **legislative will** of the elected State Assembly, which had passed all 12 Bills.

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3. Judicial Oversight Ensured: The verdict shows that **Governor's actions are not beyond judicial scrutiny**, ensuring they remain within **constitutional boundaries**.

Question for practice:

Examine how the Supreme Court's verdict in *The State of Tamil Nadu vs The Governor of Tamil Nadu* reinforces constitutional limits on gubernatorial powers and upholds democratic principles.

India must protect its disappearing traditional seeds

Source: The post India must protect its disappearing traditional seeds has been created, based on the article "**Saving traditional varieties of seeds**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 14th April 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- Agriculture

Context: India is witnessing the steady disappearance of its traditional seed varieties. These are being replaced by hybrid crops like wheat and rice. This shift is caused by farming practices, policies, and market preferences. It is happening at a time when biodiversity and climate resilience are more important than ever. The article explores the causes and solutions to this urgent problem.

For detailed information on **Pillars for development of Indian Agriculture** read this article here

Reasons for Disappearing Traditional Seeds

1. Market Demand and Consumer Preferences: Most consumers prefer high-yield crops such as wheat and rice. These dominate supermarket shelves and government food schemes. Traditional grains like millets, pulses, and indigenous rice are ignored. As demand falls, farmers stop growing them.

2. Weak Seed Conservation System: Hybrid seeds are mass-produced and sold. Traditional seeds depend on community sharing and local conservation. India lacks well-funded and accessible seed banks to protect them.

3. Policy Focus on High-Yield Varieties: For decades, government policies have promoted high-yield crops to boost food security. This led to reduced biodiversity and lower nutritional value. Though initiatives like the Odisha Millet Mission are trying to help, most subsidies and procurement systems still favour a narrow range of crops.

4. R&D Neglect of Biodiversity: Research and development mostly focus on increasing yields of a few crops. There is little effort to improve or conserve climate-resilient traditional varieties. This limits the ability to respond to climate risks.

Conservation and Revival Efforts

1. Role of Civil Society Organisations: Groups like MSSRF's Tribal Agrobiodiversity Centre have been preserving indigenous crops for over 30 years. A recent national consultation in Odisha created a roadmap for sustainable and inclusive seed systems.

2. Participatory Plant Breeding: Farmers should be partners in breeding programmes. Working with scientists, they can enhance traditional seeds while keeping their resilience and cultural value.

3. Strengthening Community Seed Banks: India must build a wide network of local seed banks. These should be well-funded and easily accessible to help farmers conserve valuable varieties.

Policy and Market Interventions Needed

1. Financial and Institutional Support: The government must support processing, marketing, and cultivation of traditional crops. Expanding Minimum Support Prices and including these crops in schools, hospitals, and ration shops will encourage their growth.

2. Consumer Awareness Campaigns: Changing food habits is key. Campaigns must promote the health and environmental benefits of traditional foods. Rising demand will drive production.

Conclusion

India can build a food system that is productive, sustainable, and resilient. This requires joint national efforts, farmer support, seed conservation, and public awareness. Traditional seeds are vital for India's future.

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Question for practice:
Discuss why traditional seed varieties are disappearing in India and what steps can be taken to conserve them.

Transforming India into a Global Talent Hub

Source: The post Transforming India into a Global Talent Hub has been created, based on the article "**India can use the legal migration route to leverage its demographic dividend**" published in "**Indian Express**" on 14th April 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3-Indian Economy and issues relating to Planning, Mobilization of Resources, Growth, Development and Employment

Context: **The world is facing a serious labour shortage**, with high-income nations expected to lack 40–50 million workers by 2030 and 120–160 million by 2040. **India, with its young and large workforce**, is uniquely positioned to benefit. It can emerge as a **global talent hub**, generating employment and boosting its global influence.
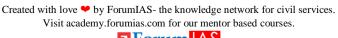
For detailed information on **The war for digital talent: India can emerge as a global hub for it** read this article here

Global Labour Crisis: A Major Opportunity for India

1. **Projected Labour Shortages:** Advanced economies face growing shortages in sectors like healthcare, engineering, teaching, and industrial work.

2. **India's Demographic Advantage:** India has a large young population ready for global employment. However, only **1.3% of Indians migrate abroad**, compared to **Mexico (8.6%)**, **Philippines (5.1%)**, and **Bangladesh (4.3%)**.

3. **Economic Benefits:** Indian migrants already send **$125 billion annually** in remittances, accounting for **3% of GDP**—higher than any single export sector.

4. **Poverty Reduction Impact:** A study of 71 low-income countries shows that a **10% rise in remittances** can **reduce poverty by 3.5%**.

5. **Untapped Potential:** India can significantly expand its global workforce with proper training, global alignment, and structured migration policies.

Seven Steps to Build India's Global Workforce Footprint

1. Build an Institutional Framework: India should strengthen the **migration department under the Ministry of External Affairs**. It must identify destination markets, negotiate agreements, and ensure skill-demand matching. States should support recruitment and protect workers. Indian embassies should set up **migration support desks** abroad. The **Philippines model**, with central, regional, and overseas offices, can guide India.

2. Align Skills with Global Standards: Integrate **foreign languages and international skill standards** into Indian education. Promote **joint certifications** and **mutual recognition agreements** with destination countries to make Indian workers globally job-ready.

3. Ease Financial Burden on Migrants: The cost of migration ranges from ₹**1–2 lakh for GCC countries** to ₹**5–10 lakh for Europe**. India should adopt the **Philippines 'ESA-pay model**, where employers or licensed agencies bear the major pre-departure costs such as visas, travel, and training.

4. Negotiate Stronger Bilateral Agreements: India should pursue **government-to-government agreements** to remove bureaucratic visa barriers, ensure recognition of Indian qualifications, and facilitate **socio-cultural integration**.

5. Create a Mobility Industry Body: A national mobility body can represent the overseas recruitment sector, promote **ethical recruitment standards**, align training with international benchmarks, and coordinate **government-private sector collaboration**.

6. Ensure Social Welfare in Host Countries: India must ensure that migrants get **fair wages, timely salaries, decent housing, healthcare access, legal aid**, and protection against exploitation. These align with **ILO migrant welfare guidelines**.

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7. Support Returning Migrants: Returned workers carry **global skills and experience**. India should help reintegrate them into the domestic economy to **enhance local development**.

Migration Strategy Enhances India's Global Role

1. **Boost in Remittances** will support India's economy.

2. **Legal Migration Pathways** will reduce dependence on unsafe and illegal routes.

3. **India's Reputation** as a responsible, skilled workforce provider will grow.

4. **Cultural and Economic Ties** with partner nations will deepen.

5. **Returning Migrants** can contribute significantly to economic progress.

Conclusion

With a robust migration strategy, India can convert its demographic dividend into global leadership. A focus on **responsible, structured migration** will not only **increase remittances** but also **create jobs**, **strengthen diplomacy**, and **raise India's global standing**.

Question for practice:

Examine how India can leverage the global labour shortage to position itself as a global talent hub.

History must guide nations not divide them

Source: The post History must guide nations not divide them has been created, based on the article "**History as battlefield — the perils of reversing the past**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 15th April 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper1- Society-Social empowerment, communalism, regionalism & secularism.

Context; In March 2025, **textbook revisions** that praised certain native rulers and **vilified Mughal figures** like Babur and Aurangzeb sparked public anger. These changes triggered **campaigns against Mughal monuments**, with calls for renaming or even destruction. The article highlights the risks of turning history into a political weapon, and contrasts **academic reinterpretation** with **ideological revisionism**.

Weaponising History for Ideological Ends

History should be studied with attention to **causes, consequences, and context**. When used for **ideological agendas**, it becomes a source of division. Recent textbook changes and efforts to erase Mughal legacies show attempts to reshape the past for political goals. Such efforts create **polarisation** instead of understanding.

Difference Between Reinterpretation and Revisionism

1. **Reinterpretation** is a legitimate academic process that uses new evidence to reshape historical understanding.

2. In contrast, **revisionist history**, especially with political intent, selects facts to justify **current agendas** related to **nationalism, identity, or territory**. It often deepens conflict instead of promoting clarity.

Global Lessons from History

1. **The Crusades:** The First Crusade (1096–1099) was launched to reclaim Jerusalem, ignoring its diverse religious heritage. It sparked **centuries of warfare**, worsening religious divides without achieving lasting peace.

2. **European Wars of Religion:** In the 16th–17th centuries, religious wars like the Thirty Years 'War were driven by efforts to **restore religious dominance**. The result was **massive destruction**, as old grievances turned into violent movements.

3. **Nazi Germany:** Hitler's drive to **reverse the Treaty of Versailles** and reclaim German glory led to **World War II and the Holocaust**. His ideology was built on distorted history, racial myths, and revenge.

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4. **Partition of India (1947):** Competing historical narratives between Hindus and Muslims led to **one of the deadliest communal conflicts**, killing over **a million** and displacing more than **10 million**. The violence was rooted in **selective memories**, not shared futures.

5. **Israel-Palestine Conflict:** Both communities claim the land based on **conflicting histories**. Attempts to **reverse past outcomes** through settlements and denial of rights have prolonged the conflict.

6. **Russia's Invasion of Ukraine (2022):** Russia justified the invasion by citing **historical unity** with Ukraine and rejected post-Soviet borders. This **revisionist move** caused **widespread suffering** and destabilised the region.

Learning from History, Not Repeating It
1. History must be a **guide**, not a **template** for revenge. Remembering past wrongs is important, but **trying to reverse them** leads to new conflicts.
2. Nations should reject the urge to restore a **glorious past** and instead focus on **reconciliation and building the future**.
3. As philosopher **George Santayana** warned, *"Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."* Equally dangerous are those who **remember the past only to relive it**.
4. The best way to honour history is to **learn from it with humility**, not manipulate it with pride.
Question for practice:
Examine how the misuse of history for ideological purposes can lead to societal division and conflict, with examples from both India and the world.

Feminism must be inclusive compassionate and context-sensitive

Source: The post Feminism must be inclusive compassionate and context-sensitive has been created, based on the article "**Feminism for polarised times**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 15th April 2025
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper1- society-Social empowerment
Context: **The Women's Reservation Bill, 2023** has brought **gender equity** to the center of political debates in India. While the mainstreaming of feminist discourse is a **historic milestone**, it has also created new **challenges**. The article reflects on the **limitations of current feminist narratives** and calls for a more **compassionate, inclusive, and context-sensitive feminism**.
Two Terrains of Women's Issues

Women's concerns exist in **two overlapping spaces**: **structural** and **interpersonal**.

• **Structural issues** include **societal norms and institutional designs** that keep women at the margins.

• **Interpersonal issues** involve **family dynamics and personal relationships**.

• Applying a structural lens too rigidly to personal spaces can **oversimplify relationships** that are shaped by **care, duty, and mutual negotiation**.

Why Current Feminist Narratives Need Rethinking

1. Risk of Oversimplifying Personal Dynamics

Applying structural feminism too rigidly can distort personal relationships. Feminist discourse often views small personal conflicts as power struggles. But many Indian men quietly work in tough environments out of love and responsibility for their families. For example, a husband may expect dinner at home but gives his full salary to his wife. Labeling such actions as oppression can misrepresent reality and alienate supportive men from the conversation.

2. Problems in Merging Diverse Gender Inequities

Treating all women's experiences as one hides important differences. The struggles of an urban woman balancing home and work are not the same as a village woman fearing rape while accessing a toilet. Feminist

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narratives often merge such realities into a single story, masking deeper inequities. This makes policy solutions less effective. Also, men facing emotional or economic stress — like humiliation at work — may feel ignored. While they are not against feminism, excluding their realities creates defensiveness. A more inclusive feminism should recognise all forms of suffering.

What Kind of Feminism is Needed Today?

1. Inclusive Feminism: Acknowledges **different challenges** faced by **urban and rural women**.

2. **Compassionate Feminism**: Recognizes **emotional and financial pressures on men**, encouraging **solidarity**. *Example*: **Men who support families silently, driven by care.**

3. Complexity-Embracing Feminism: Understands that **not all relationships reflect oppression**; many involve **negotiation and care**.

4. **Non-Antagonistic Approach**: Aims to **build support, not resistance**, by promoting **shared responsibility** and **context-sensitive solutions**.

Question for practice:

Examine how current feminist narratives in India may risk oversimplifying personal dynamics and masking diverse gender inequities.

Uyghur Militants in Syria Challenge China's Diplomacy

Source: The post Uyghur Militants in Syria Challenge China's Diplomacy has been created, based on the article "**Feminism for polarised times**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 15th April 2025

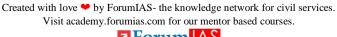**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper2- International Relations

Context: The fall of **Bashar al-Assad's regime** and the rise of **Ahmed al-Sharaa** in Syria have created a serious strategic concern for China. **Uyghur militants**, once linked to jihadist groups, have been integrated into Syria's formal military. This change challenges **China's counter-terror goals** and weakens its **diplomatic influence in West Asia**.

China's Recent Diplomatic Gains in the Arab World

1. China has shown **consistent support for Arab positions on Gaza**, including by **hosting Hamas** and other Palestinian groups in Beijing.

2. These moves have improved China's **standing in Arab public opinion**, with surveys indicating **greater popularity than the U.S.** in the region.

3. China's support has boosted its **geopolitical influence** and allowed it to project itself as a **key diplomatic player** in the Middle East.

4. Direct engagement with Palestinian causes has helped China **counterbalance Western influence**, especially that of the U.S.

Rise of Uyghur Militants in 'New 'Syria

1. **Uyghur fighters** from the **East Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM)**, also called the **Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP)**, now hold **formal ranks in Syria's military**.

2. This happened after **Ahmed al-Sharaa** (formerly **Abu Mohammed al-Jolani**) and his group **Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS)** took over **Damascus without resistance**.

3. These militants had strong ties with **IS and al-Qaeda**, and were featured in propaganda targeting **Assad's regime and China**.

4. In 2025, **about 2,000 Uyghur fighters** are reported to be active in Syria.

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5. Notably, **Abdulaziz Dawood Khodaberdi (Zahid)**, a former ETIM commander, is now a **senior military officer**in Syria.

Beijing's Strategic Concerns and Historical Context

1. China has long used the **global war on terror narrative** to **target Uyghur militancy**, especially in **Xinjiang**.

2. In **2002**, the U.S. labeled **ETIM a terrorist group**, aligning with China's position.

3. But in **2020**, the U.S. **delisted ETIM**, claiming no credible evidence of its activity existed.

4. China worked with the **Taliban in Afghanistan** to **relocate Uyghur fighters** away from its border in **Badakhshan**.

5. In contrast, Syria's new regime has **promoted Uyghurs**, creating a **diplomatic rupture** for China.

Western and Regional Powers Reshape Syria's Future

1. **Western countries and regional allies** are engaging with Al Sharaa to **stabilize Syria** and **prevent refugee flows**.

2. These moves aim to **limit the influence of China, Russia, and Iran** in Syria.

3. Many **former terrorists** are now taking on **official political roles**, complicating the global security framework.

4. China's **relations with Israel** have worsened due to its **stance on Gaza**.

5. Meanwhile, **Saudi Arabia and the UAE** have accepted Al Sharaa's regime and **reduced criticism of China's Xinjiang policy**, leaving Beijing **diplomatically isolated**.

Conclusion
The **elevation of Uyghur militants** into Syria's formal military is a **major security and diplomatic setback** for China. This shift reflects how **changing regional power structures** and **great-power rivalries** are **reshaping global fault lines**, forcing China to **rethink its strategy in West Asia**.

Question for practice:
Discuss how the integration of Uyghur militants into Syria's military impacts China's security and diplomatic interests in West Asia.

India needs electrification nuclear energy and hydrogen for net-zero
Source: The post India needs electrification nuclear energy and hydrogen for net-zero has been created, based on the article "**India, rising power demand and the 'hydrogen factor'**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 16th April 2025
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- Infrastructure- Energy
Context: **To achieve a net-zero economy**, India must shift from fossil fuels to massive electrification and clean alternatives like hydrogen. This transition requires the expansion of low-carbon energy sources. The article discusses India's rising electricity demand, its nuclear power strategy, and the integration of hydrogen production with electricity storage for economic and environmental benefits.
For detailed information on **Status of Nuclear Energy in India** read this article here

Electrification essential for a net-zero economy

1. **Replacement of Fossil Fuels**: Electrification reduces the dependence on fossil fuels in homes and industries. For example, coal is used for reducing iron ore in steelmaking, and natural gas provides hydrogen for ammonia in fertilizer production.

2. **Integration of Clean Energy**: Electrification supports the use of solar, wind, hydro, and nuclear energy. **India has set a target of 100 GW of nuclear capacity by 2047** to help meet clean energy goals.

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3. **Efficiency and Sustainability**: Electric systems are generally more efficient and climate-friendly. Electrification also supports **green hydrogen production**, which uses surplus clean electricity to produce hydrogen for industrial use.

How will electricity supply be balanced in a low-carbon energy future?

1. **Rising Demand and Stable Supply**: With higher electricity demand expected, **low-carbon sources including nuclear will be critical**. Nuclear provides steady power to keep the grid stable.

2. **Limits of Current Approach**: At present, coal plants are flexed to balance solar and wind supply. But this is **not viable in a low-carbon energy mix**.

3. **Hydrogen Production as a Solution**: **Using surplus electricity to run electrolysers and produce hydrogen** can help balance the grid without relying on coal or flexing nuclear plants.

India's plan for nuclear energy in achieving net-zero emissions

1. **Expansion of Nuclear Capacity**: To meet future energy needs, **India plans to install 100 GW of nuclear power capacity by 2047**.

2. **Development of New Reactors**: The **Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited (NPCIL)** is setting up multiple **700 MW Pressurized Heavy Water Reactors (PHWRs)** at sites like Kakrapar and Rajasthan. **A total of 26 such units are planned**.

3. **Introduction of Bharat Small Reactors (BSRs)**: NPCIL is also promoting **220 MW PHWRs**, named BSRs, for captive industrial use. These will strengthen India's domestic manufacturing in the nuclear sector.

4. **Role in Grid Balancing**: Nuclear energy will act as a **base load** power source, helping balance the **intermittent supply from solar and wind**.

Role of hydrogen and storage in managing electricity demand

1. **Managing Supply and Demand**: Hydrogen production through electrolysers helps absorb **excess electricity** from solar and wind.

2. **Industrial Use of Hydrogen**: The hydrogen produced is **not used to generate electricity again**, but directly for industrial processes, making the system efficient.

3. **Avoiding Flexing of Nuclear Plants**: This method avoids the **technical and cost challenges of reducing nuclear output**.

4. **Better Economics**: **Combining hydrogen production with electricity storage** improves overall system economics and efficiency.

Way forward

1. **Redefine Green Hydrogen as Low-Carbon Hydrogen**: Hydrogen from nuclear emits less than **2 kg CO_2 per kg H_2**, like renewable hydrogen. Reclassifying it as **low-carbon hydrogen** will allow its inclusion in clean energy incentives.

2. **Provide Equal Incentives for Nuclear Hydrogen**: Including nuclear in government schemes will help **scale up clean hydrogen production**.

3. **Synergise Hydrogen Generation and Storage**: These should be integrated to **reduce costs and improve system efficiency**.

4. **Use Surplus Electricity for Hydrogen Production**: This avoids the **need to flex high-cost nuclear plants** and supports **stable grid operations**.

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Question for practice:
Examine how electrification, nuclear energy, and hydrogen production can help India achieve a net-zero economy.

India considers revising its investment treaty model

Source: The post India considers revising its investment treaty model has been created, based on the article "**India needs a model BIT that balances investment protection with the right to regulate**" published in "**Indian Express**" on 16th April 2025

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

Context: **India plans to revise its 2015 model Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT)** to make it more attractive for foreign investors. This reflects the government's recognition that the current model has failed to gain international acceptance over the past decade.

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

Idea of Dual BIT Models

A proposal suggests adopting two distinct BIT frameworks:

1. One for situations where **India is a capital importer**, giving the host state greater regulatory control and granting fewer rights to foreign investors.

2. Another for scenarios where **India is a capital exporter**, offering stronger protections to Indian investors and limiting host state regulation.
3. This idea is based on the belief that investment relationships vary by country and should be handled accordingly.

Problems with a Dual-Model Strategy

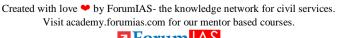1. **Changing Investment Roles**: A country's capital position is not fixed. For example, India signed a BIT with the UK in 1994 as a capital importer, but by 2021–22, India had become a major capital exporter to the UK. This dynamic nature makes it hard to apply a fixed model.

2. **Mixed Investment Flows**: Many relationships involve both capital inflows and outflows. This overlap makes it impractical to label countries strictly as capital exporters or importers.

3. **Legal Inconsistency**: Two different treaty models would lead to conflicting legal principles. For instance, one may require investors to exhaust **local remedies for five years** before arbitration, while the other allows **quicker access to ISDS**.

4. **Diplomatic Risks**: Inconsistent treaty practice could damage credibility in international negotiations. It may be used against the country in bilateral talks or in multilateral platforms like **UNCITRAL**, which is currently discussing ISDS reform.

Clarification on the MFN Clause

1. A concern was raised that the **Most Favoured Nation (MFN) clause** undermines the negotiated balance of BITs. However:

2. The MFN clause originated in **bilateral commercial treaties** as early as the 17th and 18th centuries, not just in multilateral agreements.

3. It supports fairness by **ensuring equal treatment** among treaty partners. Any benefit granted to one party is extended to others, maintaining a level playing field.

Conclusion

The issue is not the number of BIT models but the **quality and balance** of the model. A single, consistent BIT framework should balance **investment protection** with the **state's right to regulate**. This would improve legal clarity, boost investor confidence, and enhance the country's global credibility.

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Question for practice:
Discuss the challenges and implications of adopting a dual-model Bilateral Investment Treaty framework for India.

Supreme Court limits Governor and President assent powers

Source: The post Supreme Court limits Governor and President assent powers has been created, based on the article "**A proclamation of democracy in legislative process**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 16th April 2025
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2-Polity-Appointment to various Constitutional posts, powers, functions and responsibilities of various Constitutional Bodies.
Context: The Supreme Court's recent judgment in *State of Tamil Nadu vs Governor of Tamil Nadu* marks a **historic intervention in legislative processes**. By invoking **Article 142**, the Court imposed **time limits** on gubernatorial and presidential assent to State Bills. This challenges long-standing assumptions about **discretionary powers** and affirms **legislative supremacy**.
For detailed information on **Supreme Court defines limits of Governor's powers** read this article here

How Did the Court Interpret the Constitution?

1. **Articles 200 and 201**: The Court clarified the roles of the **Governor and President** in the State legislative process. If a Bill is **re-passed by the legislature**, the **Governor must assent**. The **President** too must respond **within a fixed time**.

2. **Use of Article 142**: The Court used this provision to **set deadlines** for gubernatorial and presidential responses, introducing the idea of **"deemed assent"** if no action is taken.

3. **Judicial Realism**: The Court adopted a **modern and dynamic interpretation** of the Constitution, similar to what it did in the **Puttaswamy (2017)** case on privacy.

4. **Precedents and Principles**: It relied on **Shamsher Singh** to restrict discretionary powers and **B.K. Pavitra (2019)** to promote **constitutional accountability**.
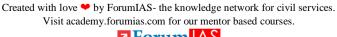
Constitutional Issues Addressed

1. Discretionary Limits: The judgment made it clear that **withholding assent must be justified**, not arbitrary.

2. **Deemed Assent Mechanism**: It introduced a provision where **assent is assumed** if a decision is not made within the time limit.

3. **Filling Constitutional Gaps**: Using **Article 142**, the Court addressed the **lack of timelines** and ensured that legislative processes **are not blocked**.

4. Use of Precedents: **Shamsher Singh** and **B.K. Pavitra** were central in affirming the **binding nature of cabinet decisions** and democratic values.

The Supreme Court's Judgment Considered Historic and Controversial
1. **Historic Nature**: The judgment is significant because it **limits the traditional discretionary powers** of the Governor and the President. It ensures that the **will of the legislature** is not stalled indefinitely.

2. **Controversial Aspect**: The **Governor of Kerala criticised** the ruling, calling it **judicial overreach**. He claimed that it **encroaches on Parliament's authority** and brings the **President under judicial review**, which he believes exceeds the Court's jurisdiction.

3. Examples and Precedents: The Court cited the **Shamsher Singh case (1974)** to reinforce that **Governors must act on Cabinet advice**. It also referred to the **Sarkaria Commission Report (1988)**, which advised that **policy differences with the Union are not valid grounds** to withhold assent.

4. **Impact on Governance**: The ruling requires **reasoned decisions** when assent is withheld. It removes the **perceived immunity** of high constitutional offices, promoting **accountability and transparency**.

Way Forward

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1. Quicker Judgments: Courts should deliver **shorter and timely verdicts**, as seen in the **UK Supreme Court's 24-page Brexit judgment (2019)**.

2. **Consistency in Hearing**: **Similar cases** should be **clubbed together** and heard by the **same Bench**.

3. **Better Internal Coordination**: The judiciary should improve **internal management** to ensure **clarity, predictability, and fairness** in constitutional cases.

Conclusion: The judgment redefines **executive accountability** in the legislative process. It upholds **democratic principles** by limiting **arbitrary delay** and emphasizes that **constitutional offices are not above scrutiny**.

Question for practice:
Examine how the Supreme Court's recent judgment in the State of Tamil Nadu vs Governor of Tamil Nadu redefines the limits of gubernatorial and presidential discretion in the legislative process.

India prepares response to US tariff changes

Source: The post India prepares response to US tariff changes has been created, based on the article "**Shaping a response to the U.S.'s reciprocal tariffs**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 17th April 2025
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2-International Relations-Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests.
Context: President Donald Trump's announcement of new reciprocal tariffs has surprised many. These tariffs combine existing commodity-wise duties with a new country-specific tariff structure. Though currently capped at 10% for most countries for 90 days, the tariffs are aimed at reducing U.S. trade imbalances and have significant implications for India.
For detailed information on **India must respond wisely to Trump's trade** read this article here
Structure and Calculation of Reciprocal Tariffs
1. The new tariff system introduces a **uniform country-wise tariff** on all goods, applied alongside existing commodity-specific tariffs.

2. The formula used is:
Discounted Tariff Rate = (-1) × (½) × (U.S. exports – U.S. imports) / U.S. imports
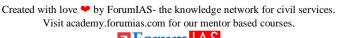
3. This formula **does not consider elasticity or specific duties** and can be misleading. A column titled 'charged to the US 'doubles the discounted rate, giving a distorted picture.

4. For **India**, based on 2024 data (exports: $41.8 billion, imports: $87.4 billion), the reciprocal tariff rate is **26%**.
5. This will be added to existing tariffs, except for certain **exempted commodities** like: **Pharmaceuticals; Steel and aluminum articles; Autos and auto parts; Copper, energy, semiconductors, bullion, and select minerals**

6. For countries not on the reciprocal tariff list, a **default 10% rate** will apply.

Impact on Indian Exports to the U.S.
1. India's export dependence is **moderate**, and exports to the U.S. have been **declining**. Hence, the **economic impact** of the 26% tariff will be **limited but uneven** across sectors.

2. **Major Indian exports likely to be affected: Electrical machinery**; **Machinery and mechanical appliances**; **Made-up textiles**

3. Items like **gems and jewellery** will be less affected due to **inelastic demand**. **Pharmaceuticals remain exempt.**

4. **Competitor countries** such as **China, Vietnam, Bangladesh** face **higher reciprocal tariffs**, offering India a relative **advantage**. **South Korea** faces a similar tariff at **25%**.

Recommended Indian Response
1. India should not retaliate aggressively like China, whose reciprocal action led to a U.S. tariff hike up to 245% on some items. Instead, India should adopt a balanced, multi-pronged approach:

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2. **Increase Imports from the U.S.:** Boosting imports from the U.S. could lower India's reciprocal tariff rate. For example, shifting $25 billion of oil imports from other countries to the U.S. would reduce India's reciprocal tariff from 26% to 11.8%, just above the 10% floor.

3. **Engage in Dialogue:** India should begin trade consultations with the U.S. to work out a long-term agreement that reflects mutual interests.

4. **Monitor Dumping Risks:** India should be vigilant about possible dumping by countries like China that are more adversely affected by U.S. tariffs.

Global Trade Outlook and WTO's Role
These tariff changes indicate that global trade will face instability in the near future. The WTO must take leadership in promoting a global system based on low tariffs. While regional trade deals may offer temporary relief, they are no substitute for comprehensive multilateral solutions

Question for practice:
Examine how India can strategically respond to the United States' new reciprocal tariff policy announced by President Donald Trump.

Strategic hamleting failed and displaced tribals remain neglected

Source: The post Strategic hamleting failed and displaced tribals remain neglected has been created, based on the article "**Call for permanent settlement for tribals**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 17th April 2025
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2- Governance-Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes; mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections.
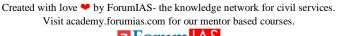**Context**: In 2005, nearly 50,000 Gond tribals were displaced from Chhattisgarh under the Government of India's 'strategic hamleting' programme, aimed at curbing Maoist influence. Two decades later, most remain in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, facing neglect and denial of tribal rights. The issue highlights gaps in policy, rights recognition, and interstate coordination.

Historical Background of Strategic Hamleting

1. The idea began in **1949**, soon after Independence. To suppress **Telangana communist revolutionaries**, the government relocated forest-dwelling tribals to roadside camps. Many were recruited as **special police constables** with little training and basic weapons like **spears and axes**. One such group was the **Koya "Tiger Squad"** with around **300 members**.

2. In the **1960s**, a similar approach was used in **Mizoram** to counter insurgents. This effort proved more effective and concluded with a **peace deal**.

3. In **2005**, the strategy was applied again in **Chhattisgarh** to fight Maoists. Around **50,000 Gond tribals** were forced to relocate. However, the programme failed. Many tribals returned to their forest homes, while others joined **security forces**, indicating the strategy did not achieve its original goal.

Current Situation of Displaced Gutti Koyas

1. **Displacement**: Around **50,000 Gond tribals**, referred to as **Gutti Koyas**, were displaced in 2005 under the strategic hamleting programme.

2. **Current Residence**: Most now live in **Andhra Pradesh and Telangana**, occupying **illegally held forest land**.

3. **Tribal Rights Neglected**:

• Under **Clause 3.1(m) of the Forest Rights Act**, tribals displaced before **December 13, 2005** are entitled to **alternative forest land**.

• Many Gutti Koyas have applied for land in their present states, but **Chhattisgarh** has delayed processing for over **five years**.

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• Though the clause permits land in other states, Chhattisgarh has failed to coordinate with **Telangana, Andhra Pradesh**, or the **Ministry of Tribal Affairs**.

4. Denial of Tribal Status:

• Both host states treat the Gutti Koyas as **migrants**, not tribals.

• This denies them **tribal welfare benefits** and legal recognition.

• In a **National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST)** meeting, it was noted that **10,000 tribals remain displaced** from Chhattisgarh, with **24,000 in Telangana** and **8,000 in Andhra Pradesh**.

• Though a survey was ordered in **2019** and repeated recently, Chhattisgarh cited **COVID-19** for inaction.

5. Push for Return:

• **Telangana** has taken over tribal farmland for plantations.

• **Andhra Pradesh** has destroyed newly built homes in forests, aiming to push them back to Chhattisgarh.

Denial of Tribal Status and Basic Rights

1. Both states **refuse to recognise Gutti Koyas as tribals**, denying them full support.

2. While limited **humanitarian aid** is provided, states argue that only **central intervention** can resolve the issue.

3. In contrast, under the **2019 Bru Rehabilitation Plan**, displaced Brus were given options for **permanent settlement**and **central aid**.

Major Challenges and Demands

1. Many **young tribals consider Andhra Pradesh and Telangana home**.

2. They face **discrimination**, **lack of recognition**, and are targeted by **locals, forest officials, and police**.

3. Their key demands include **permanent rehabilitation**, **land rights**, and **official tribal status** for a life of dignity.

Question for practice:
Examine the impact of the 2005 strategic hamleting programme on the displacement, rights, and current status of the Gutti Koya tribals in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

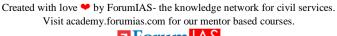## China responds to US tariffs with strength

Source: The post China responds to US tariffs with strength has been created, based on the article "**How China is fighting U.S. tariffs**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 17th April 2025
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2
Context: In early 2025, U.S. President Donald Trump revived his "America First" trade policy by proposing "reciprocal tariffs" to reduce trade deficits. While targeting 57 countries, China was excluded from a temporary 90-day pause. The move has sparked a trade war, with significant global economic implications and rising geopolitical tensions.

Trump's Strategy Behind Reciprocal Tariffs
1. The Trump administration claimed that "reciprocal tariffs" were necessary to eliminate "unfair trade

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practices." The aim was to pressure partner countries into signing bilateral agreements that benefit U.S. interests. On April 9, the tariffs were postponed for 90 days for all except China, to allow time for negotiation.

2. Key advisers like Stephen Marin and Peter Navarro supported the use of tariffs as a strategic tool to extract better trade and security terms. Navarro even stated that Trump himself would act as the chief negotiator, sidelining the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR). This centralised, personalised approach to trade talks raised concerns about the practicality of achieving meaningful deals.

Obstacles in Bilateral Trade Negotiations
Two key challenges undermine Trump's trade negotiation plan:

1. **Centralisation of Negotiation:** By bypassing formal institutions and placing Trump at the centre of all talks, the process risks inefficiency and diplomatic confusion.

2. **Overloaded Agenda:** The 2025 USTR's National Trade Estimate Report flagged major barriers in 57 countries, including India. These include issues like subsidies, public distribution systems, generic medicines, and data localisation. Addressing all of them within 90 days is nearly impossible.

3. Countries like India would have to accept deep changes in domestic policies, which seems unlikely under external pressure.

China's Defiance and Strategic Response
1. Unlike 2020, when China agreed to U.S. terms, Beijing now strongly retaliates. After facing a 34% tariff from the U.S., China imposed a 125% tariff on U.S. imports. The U.S. then raised its tariff to 145%, deepening the trade war. However, critical electronics like smartphones and semiconductors were exempted, showing U.S. vulnerability in this sector.

2. China has reduced its dependency on U.S. markets. From 19.2% in 2018, U.S. now accounts for just 13.5% of Chinese exports in 2025. ASEAN, India, and Russia have become key trade partners for China. This diversification limits U.S. leverage.

China's Economic Leverage Over U.S.

1. **Rare Earth Dominance:** China accounts for 92% of global rare earth output. It recently imposed export restrictions on seven types, affecting key U.S. industries that depend on these materials.

2. **U.S. Treasury Bonds:** In 2018, China held $1.2 trillion in U.S. Treasury bonds, which was 22% of the total. By January 2025, it had reduced this to $761 billion, less than 9%. This strategic drop strengthens China's position, as further reduction or selling of these bonds could impact U.S. financial stability in case of trade escalations.

Conclusion
Trump's trade war has created global economic uncertainty. While the U.S. seeks to force concessions, countries like China are pushing back with resilience and strategy. A coordinated global response is needed to urge the U.S. to return to multilateralism.
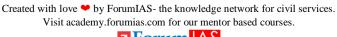
Question for practice:

Examine how China has strategically responded to the U.S. reciprocal tariffs and what economic leverage it holds over the United States.

Trump uses tariffs to reshape American economy and security
Source: The post Trump uses tariffs to reshape American economy and security has been created, based on the article "**Trumponomics deserves to be taken seriously**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 18th April 2025
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2-International Relations-Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.
Context: **U.S. President Donald Trump's aggressive tariff policy marks the beginning of a global trade war not seen since World War II.** While he has paused tariffs for most countries except China, he remains committed

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to reshaping the U.S. economy. His economic agenda, called **"Trumponomics," includes four pillars: tariffs, tax cuts, deregulation, and energy expansion**.

Key Propositions of Trumponomics

1. **Reviving U.S. Manufacturing:** Trumponomics seeks to bring back manufacturing jobs lost due to globalization and offshoring.

• Between 2000 and 2011, around **2 million jobs** were lost (Stephen Miran).

• Robert Lighthizer estimates a loss of **5 million jobs** from 2000 to 2009.
• This job loss has **devastated industrial communities**, leading to poverty, crime, and drug abuse. Manufacturing remains a key path to **high-wage employment** for most Americans.

2. **National Security:** Trump argues that **manufacturing is essential for national defence**. The U.S. should not depend on imports for vital materials like **steel, aluminium, and semiconductors**. He says, *"If you don't have steel, you don't have a country."*

3. **Unfair Trade Practices:** Trumponomics rejects trade with countries like **China**, which use **subsidies**, **slave labour**, and **technology theft** to give their firms an unfair advantage. These practices harm U.S. firms that follow market rules.

4. **Controlling Trade Deficits:** The U.S. runs a **trade deficit of $500 billion to $1 trillion annually**. This persists because the **U.S. dollar is a global reserve currency**, keeping it **overvalued**. A strong dollar makes **imports cheaper and exports more expensive**, worsening the deficit.

Use of Tariffs to Achieve Economic Goals

1. **Tariffs as a Strategic Tool:** Tariffs raise import costs and **discourage foreign goods**. This helps reduce the trade deficit and **promotes domestic manufacturing**. They also **attract foreign and American companies** to shift operations to the U.S.

2. **Economic Efficiency vs Strategic Goals:** Critics say tariffs hurt efficiency and cause inflation. Trumponomics counters that tariffs **reduce imports**, causing the **dollar to strengthen**. If the **currency offset** is perfect—say, a **10% tariff** balanced by a **10% appreciation** in the dollar—then **import prices remain stable** for consumers. Exporters, whose currencies weaken, **earn less** in return.

3. **Cost to Consumers:** If the currency offset is incomplete, U.S. consumers may see **higher prices**. Still, **Stephen Miran estimates the inflation impact at just 0.3 to 0.6 percentage points**, which is considered **manageable**.

4. **Efficiency Gains through Pressure:** As input costs rise, American manufacturers are pushed to **innovate and cut costs**. This pressure is leading to **relocation of production to the U.S.**, boosting output and **economic self-reliance**.

The Other Three Pillars of Trumponomics

1. **Tax Cuts:** Tariff revenues will help fund **tax cuts**, easing the burden of higher import costs on businesses.

2. **Deregulation:** Simplifying regulations will **reduce compliance and operational costs** for U.S. companies.

3. **Energy Expansion:** More drilling will **lower oil prices** and help **offset inflation** from tariffs.

A New Economic Model

Trumponomics challenges the idea that **efficiency alone should guide policy**. Trump prioritizes **jobs, national security, and self-reliance**. Despite criticism, he remains firm in pursuing his **"Make America Great Again"** vision, regardless of short-term global effects.

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Question for practice:
Examine how Trumponomics uses tariffs as a strategic tool to achieve economic and national security goals.

Indian startups face innovation challenges despite growing support

Source: The post Indian startups face innovation challenges despite growing support
has been created, based on the article "**Are Indian startups not scaling up on innovation?**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 18th April 2025

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

Context: **Union Minister Piyush Goyal's remark at Startup Mahakumbh** that Indian startups are not innovating enough and are limiting themselves to grocery delivery sparked a wider debate. The discussion focuses on the level of innovation in Indian startups, government support, availability of capital, and challenges in scaling technology ventures.

For detailed information on **Deep Tech Startups-Significance & Challenges** read this article here

The Startup India initiative has created a broad and growing ecosystem
1. **Dedicated Support**: Over **20 Central Ministries** now have startup-focused policies.

2. **Substantial Growth**: Around **1.65 to 1.70 lakh startups** are registered with the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT).

3.**Diverse Funding**: Startups are receiving both **equity and debt funding**, including support from banks.

4. **Institutional Engagement**: Many **Indian states** have launched startup policies, extending support beyond the central level.

5. **Cultural Shift**: There is a notable change in mindset. More people are now choosing entrepreneurship, showing growing confidence in starting new ventures.

Venture capitalists define innovation based on user value and market need

1. **Early Investment Trends**: Initially, innovation meant enabling online services, such as those offered by e-commerce platforms.

2. **Current Focus Areas**: Now, venture capital is moving towards **deep tech**—including **AI, blockchain, and electric mobility**—signaling a shift to more complex technologies.

3. **User Benefits**: Innovations that provide **clear user benefits** or a better experience are more likely to attract investment.

4. **Sustainable Competitive Advantage**: **Patents or long-term advantages** help startups stand out and secure investor confidence.

5. Market Relevance: Even strong innovations must **solve real and growing market needs** to be commercially viable.

Deep tech startups face structural and financial barriers to scaling

1. **High Capital Requirement**: These startups need significant investment early on, but usually generate no revenue at first.

2. **Insufficient Government Funding**: The **Startup India Seed Fund** offers around ₹**50 lakh**, which is not enough to scale deep tech ventures.

3. **Limited Private Investment**: After initial support, **follow-up funding** from the private sector is lacking.

4. **Dependence on Foreign Capital**: **Most risk capital comes from abroad**, mainly from the U.S., limiting local ownership and influence.

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Indian startups face several obstacles in moving up the value chain

1. **Limited Domestic Spending**: India's **per capita GDP is around $3,500**, far lower than **China's $12,000–15,000**, restricting market demand.

2. **Spread-Thin Funding**: Government support often goes to many startups in **small amounts**, making it hard for any to scale meaningfully.

3. **Bureaucratic Hurdles**: Complex regulations and approval delays **hinder startup growth and operations**.

4. **Lack of Strong Domestic VCs**: The absence of powerful **home-grown venture capital firms** prevents strategic long-term investment.

Startups are contributing to society, but their impact varies

1. **Earlier Impact**: Initial tech growth, especially in **IT and outsourcing**, created **mass employment** and broader impact.

2. **Recent Trends**: Today, many startups target **urban elites**, such as those offering fast delivery services, narrowing their impact.

3. **Success Stories**: Firms like **Freshworks**, listed on **NASDAQ**, show Indian startups can grow globally and inspire others.

4. **Spreading Innovation**: Successful founders often lead to a **second wave of startups** by mentoring or funding new ventures.

5. **Policy Reach**: The government's support across sectors reflects a broader aim to **promote inclusive startup growth**, beyond just IT.

Question for practice
Discuss the key challenges and opportunities faced by Indian startups in achieving innovation and scale.

Corporate board recruitment practices are rapidly evolving

Source: The post Corporate board recruitment practices are rapidly evolving has been created, based on the article "**Corporate board recruitment is taking a strategic turn**" published in "Live Mint" on 18th April 2025
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper4- Corporate governance
Context: **The article discusses the shift in corporate board recruitment practices in India and globally.** Traditionally dominated by promoters and insiders, board appointments are now being reformed due to **governance failures, legal changes, rising investor activism**, and the **demand for transparency**. A well-structured board is now essential for **corporate credibility and survival**.
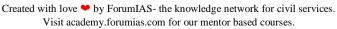
For detailed information on **Enhance board effectiveness to acquire a competitive advantage** read this article here

Outdated Board Composition and Its Weaknesses
In India, board positions were often filled by **promoters, family members, and loyal executives**. In public sector firms and family-run businesses, members echoed decisions rather than questioned them. **Startups** had tight boards led by **founders and investors**. Even large corporations included **retired bureaucrats or high-profile names**, often selected for their influence rather than strategic skills.

Why Reforms Became Inevitable

1. **Governance failures** revealed major flaws in board oversight.

2. **Conflict-of-interest rules** and **director liability** increased scrutiny.

3. **Investor activism** pushed for transparency and protection of minority shareholders.

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4. **Court judgments** highlighted the need for improved corporate governance.

What Modern Boards Now Look For

1. **Independence:** Preference is shifting to members who are **independent of promoters** and can protect broader stakeholder interests.

2. **DEI and ESG Awareness:** Candidates must engage with **Diversity, Equity, Inclusion (DEI)** and **Environmental, Social, Governance (ESG)** issues. Those ignoring them risk rejection.

3. **Strategic Skills:** Boards value **digital expertise**, strategic foresight, and global perspectives.

Changing Board Selection Process

1. **Multiple Interviews:** Replacing single sessions with one-on-one online interviews to assess diverse skills.

2. **In-Person Attendance:** Despite online trends, the ability to **attend physical meetings** is again a selection factor.

3. **Stricter Vetting:** Legal history, behavior (e.g. **domestic violence, substance abuse**), and digital footprints are reviewed.

4. **Credential Checks:** Academic degrees and job titles are now carefully verified to spot exaggerations.

Looking Ahead: The New Norm

1. **Reputation Matters:** Companies with ethical standards won't risk appointing individuals with questionable records.

2. **Public Sector Standards:** These boards too must meet high standards, as they handle public funds.

3. **Specialist Firms: Executive search firms** focused on governance, cybersecurity, and diversity are gaining importance.

4. A senior board member summed it up: "Real governance starts when independent minds replace obedient nods."

Question for practice:
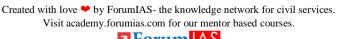Discuss how corporate board recruitment practices are changing in India and globally.

India needs cleaner logistics for future growth

Source: The post India needs cleaner logistics for future growth has been created, based on the article "**Steering the decarbonisation of India's logistics sector**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 19th April 2025
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3-Infrastructure
Context: India aims to become a developed nation by 2047 through inclusive growth. A critical component of this goal is building an efficient and future-ready logistics sector. However, the sector is highly carbon-intensive. Balancing growth with environmental responsibility is now urgent and essential.
For detailed information on **Logistics Sector in India and National Logistics Policy** read this article here
The Environmental Cost of Logistics

1. **Heavy Emissions from Road Transport:** Road transport dominates India's logistics, causing high carbon emissions. It makes up 88% of logistics emissions and 13.5% of the country's total greenhouse gases. Trucks alone contribute 38% of CO_2 emissions. Nearly 90% of passenger travel and 70% of freight movement happen via roads.

2. **Other Transport Modes and Emissions:** Domestic aviation contributes about 4% of emissions. Coastal and inland shipping have lower emissions but are expected to grow by 1.2 to 3 times by 2030. These modes offer more scalable and sustainable freight options if cleaner fuels are adopted.

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3. **Warehousing Adds to the Problem:** Warehouses, essential to freight movement, also emit large amounts of carbon. Their high energy consumption contributes significantly to the overall logistics emissions.

Pathways to a Cleaner Logistics Sector

1. **Shifting from Road to Rail:** Countries like China and the U.S. have cut emissions by moving freight from road to rail. China's rail share is almost 50%. India should follow this path. Rail transport in India is already electrified and emits near-zero carbon, making it a sustainable option.

2. **Electrifying Road Freight:** Road freight still plays a major role and needs structural changes. India has launched a pilot project using overhead electric wires on highways to power electric trucks. The Delhi-Jaipur corridor may become a model for clean and efficient freight movement.

3. **Greener Shipping Options:** The shipping sector is moving towards cleaner fuels like LNG, biofuels, ammonia, and electricity. India can lead this change with LNG-powered vessels, electric boats, and biofuel barges, helping cut emissions from coastal and inland waterways.

4. **Tackling Aviation Emissions:** Air transport is difficult to decarbonise due to its dependence on refined fuels. Progress in sustainable aviation fuels and improvements in other transport modes can help offset emissions.

5. **Sustainable Warehousing Solutions:** Warehouses should switch to renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, and geothermal. This can significantly lower their carbon output and support overall decarbonisation.

Conclusion

Decarbonising logistics is essential not just for the environment, but for creating a strong, resilient, and globally competitive sector. With smart policies, cleaner technologies, and focused investments, India can build a high-performing logistics network that powers sustainable development.

Question for practice:
Examine how India can reduce carbon emissions in its logistics sector while pursuing inclusive economic growth.

Technology diffusion decides future global power rankings

Source: The post Technology diffusion decides future global power rankings has been created, based on the article "**Diffusion is destiny**" published in "**Indian Express**" on 19th April 2025
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3-Science and Technology- developments and their applications and effects in everyday life.
Context: Technology is shaping modern global power rivalries. The book *Technology and the Rise of Great Powers* by Jeffrey Ding challenges old beliefs about how nations gain technological dominance. It argues that power depends not on leading sector dominance but on the **widespread diffusion of transformative technologies**.
For detailed information on **A global order as technology's much needed pole star** read this article here
Revisiting Conventional Wisdom

1. **Dominance in Leading Sectors:** Traditionally, nations were seen as powerful if they led in specific industries. Britain led in **textiles**, Germany in **chemicals**, and Japan in **electronics and cars**. Many now believe China may do the same with **electric vehicles**.

2. **First-Mover Advantage Theory:** This theory says that early innovators gain temporary advantages or **monopoly profits**, helping them rise in global rankings.

Ding's Core Argument

1. Focus on General Purpose Technologies (GPTs): Ding argues that sectoral dominance is not enough. **Real power comes from spreading General Purpose Technologies—** innovations that boost productivity across many areas.

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2. **Impact of GPTs:** Technologies like **electricity**, **computerisation**, and **artificial intelligence** create broad economic gains. These differ from sector-specific tools, as they can **transform entire economies**.

Historical Case Studies

1. **Britain and the First Industrial Revolution:** Britain's strength came not from textiles alone, but from **spreading iron-based machines** and **engineering skills** across industries.

2. **Germany, the US, and the Second Industrial Revolution:** Germany led in many sectors, but the **US pulled ahead** by spreading GPTs like electricity and creating **institutional standards** that enabled widespread adoption.

3. **Japan and the Third Industrial Revolution:** Japan led in consumer electronics. However, it **failed to diffuse computerisation** effectively. The US succeeded again by **broadly adopting digital technologies**.

Policy and Institutional Implications

1. **Diffusion Requires Different Institutions:** Institutions built to dominate sectors differ from those needed to spread GPTs. The latter require strong **education systems**, **infrastructure**, and **technological interoperability**.

2. **Shifting Policy Priorities:** Governments often focus on headline-grabbing sectors. But long-term power requires **investments in human capital** and systems that **enable widespread technology adoption**.

Lessons for India and Other Developing Nations

1. **Wider Reform Is Essential:** India must move beyond sector-specific policies. It needs **deep institutional reforms**, **broad-based skilling**, and **stronger technology channels** across small and large firms.

2. **Beyond Innovation Clusters:** India should support **small towns**, **local engineers**, and **small-sized firms** that connect frontier innovation to the broader economy. The goal is **system-wide diffusion**, not isolated excellence.

Geopolitical Implications

1. **China vs. the United States:** While China dominates sectors like electric cars, Ding believes the **US still leads in GPT diffusion**. Unless policies change, the US may maintain its edge by **spreading transformative technologies** more effectively.

2. **Evaluating Power:** The true test is not invention alone, but the **ability to diffuse technologies widely** across society.

Conclusion

Ding's work shifts the focus from leading sectors to **technological diffusion**. His key message: **national strength depends on how broadly technologies are adopted**. For countries like India, the way forward lies in **enabling system-wide change** — because **diffusion is destiny**.
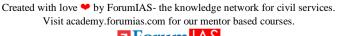
Question for practice:

Examine how Jeffrey Ding challenges traditional views on technological dominance and what lessons his argument offers for countries like India.

India must act on youth mental health crisis

Source: The post India must act on youth mental health crisis has been created, based on the article "**THE ADOLESCENT AT HOME**" published in "**Indian Express**" on 19th April 2025
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2- Governance-Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health.

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Context: India is facing a youth mental health crisis. **Academic pressure**, **digital stress**, and **emotional isolation** are common among adolescents. The crisis is deepening, but mental health continues to receive little policy focus or investment.

For detailed information on **Issues with Mental Health and Mental Healthcare in India** read this article here

A Silent Epidemic Among Youth

1. **Neglect in Public Health Policy:** The **National Mental Health Survey (2016)** found that **1 in 10 adolescents** suffers from a mental health disorder. Yet, India allocates **less than 0.5% of its health budget** to mental health. This is concerning, especially with **over 250 million Indians under age 20**.

2. **Warning Signs Ignored:** Despite the rising emotional distress among youth, mental health remains a neglected part of India's public health agenda. **Over 40,000 student suicides in five years** point to a growing but largely unaddressed crisis.

Digital Age and Emotional Struggles

1. **Pandemic's Deep Impact:** The **Covid-19 lockdown** disrupted school routines and social interactions. Many adolescents turned to digital platforms for connection. But this often increased **feelings of comparison, anxiety, and isolation**.

2. **Persistent Digital Habits:** Digital behaviour developed during lockdown has continued. Constant exposure to social media has **deepened emotional vulnerability** and **increased performance pressure**.

Cultural Influences and Emotional Suppression

1. **Toxic Online Masculinity:** Social media influencers often promote **toxic masculinity**. Boys are encouraged to **hide emotions**, act with **aggression**, and avoid seeking help. This fosters **misogyny and emotional repression**.

2. Redefining Masculinity: It is vital to present **healthier male role models**. Strength must be redefined as **emotional honesty**, not suppression. A culture of **empathy, self-awareness, and resilience** should be encouraged.
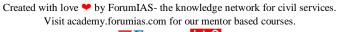
Changing Attitudes at Home and in Public Life

1. **Ending Stigma at Home:** The stigma around mental health often begins within families. Parents and caregivers must be trained to **identify signs of distress** and treat **mental health with equal urgency** as physical illness.

2. **Public Figures as Mental Health Advocates:** Celebrities, influencers, and politicians play a key role. By **sharing personal experiences**, they help **normalize mental health conversations** and promote emotional openness.

Way Forward

1. **Mental Health in Schools:** Support must be integrated into school systems. This includes **preventive counselling**, **emotional education**, and **digital literacy**. Students should be equipped to handle **emotional challenges** and engage safely in **online environments**.

2. **Increased Budget and Access:** India must **significantly raise its mental health budget** to expand services and improve infrastructure, particularly in **rural and underserved areas**. Lack of funding is no longer just a technical issue—it is a **life-threatening gap** for millions of vulnerable youth.

3. **Cultural and Moral Commitment:** India must respond to this crisis with **urgency and empathy**. The **emotional weight on youth** is too heavy to ignore. This is not only a public health issue—it is a **human crisis**. The **cost of inaction** will be measured in lost lives and lost futures. India must choose **compassion, courage, and connection**—and most importantly, must **listen to its young people**.

Question for practice:

Examine the key factors contributing to the youth mental health crisis in India and suggest measures to address them.

Heatwaves are hurting health work and equity

Source: The post Heatwaves are hurting health work and equity has been created, based on the article "**Tackle heatwaves with short- and long-term measures**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 21st April 2025

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

Context: **India experienced its first severe heatwave of 2025 on March 15—20 days earlier than in 2024.** Rising temperatures, frequent heatwaves, and worsening heat stress are threatening public health, economic productivity, and social equity. **This growing crisis demands urgent, people-focused solutions.**

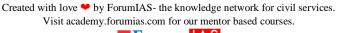For detailed information on **Heatwaves in India** read this article here
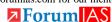
Rising Heatwaves and Their Impact

1. **Frequency and Intensity of Heatwaves:** Severe heatwaves are rising in India. **The year 2024 was the warmest on record globally.** December 2022 was **India's hottest December since 1901.** This shows a clear increase in the frequency and severity of heat events over the last two decades.

2. **Heat Stress and the Human Body:** Heat stress occurs when the **external temperature nears the body's 37°C.** The body fails to release internal heat, leading to stress. **It can damage organs like the brain, liver, and kidneys**, and may result in death.

3. **Impact on Agriculture and Labour:** High temperatures make **farming difficult**, reduce harvests, and harm livestock. India, with **labour-intensive sectors** like agriculture and construction, faces job losses and reduced income due to lower working capacity.

4. **Loss of Work and GDP:** About **75% of India's workforce (around 380 million people)** is exposed to heat. In 2023, **nearly 6% of work hours** were lost to heat stress. Economic losses due to heat are estimated at **3–5% of GDP** in countries like India.

5.,**Energy Strain and Economic Disruption:** Rising heat increases electricity demand and causes power cuts. This disrupts industrial production and slows **national economic growth.**

6. **Equity and Social Inequality: The poor, migrants, elderly, women**, and informal workers are most affected. Women face extra risk due to indoor cooking, dress codes, and sleeping arrangements. **Urban poor suffer more** due to poor housing and heat-retaining surroundings.

Evolution and Gaps in Heat Action Plans (HAPs)

1. **Global Learnings Ignored Initially:** As early as the **mid-19th century**, scientists observed that **urban areas are hotter than rural ones.** But formal Heat and Health Action Plans (HHAPs) emerged only **between 2003–2008** in Europe, mainly in **non-tropical regions.**

2. **India's First Step: Ahmedabad launched Asia's first HAP in 2013.** Now, **23 states and 140 cities** in India have heat action plans. The National Programme on Climate Change and Human Health (NPCCHH) also provides advisories.

3. Plan Components: Most HAPs include **early alerts, public awareness, health system preparedness**, urban greening, and **heat data tracking.**

4. **Key Gaps:** Implementation is weak in many areas. **Coordination is lacking, and data collection is poor**, limiting effectiveness.

5. **Way Forward:** Indian HAPs should adopt **global best practices**, include **humidity** in assessments, use **local vulnerability data**, and be **activated by early March.**

Recommendations for Strengthening Heat Responses

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1. **Update and Localize HAPs:** States should revise plans yearly, based on **humidity and local risk mapping.** Clear roles must be assigned.

2. **Improve Data Collection:** More precise data is needed to identify **at-risk locations and people.** This allows for better targeting and saving lives.

3. **Use Better Alert Systems:** India should adopt systems like the UK's **Heat Health Alert**, using **both day and night temperatures** for issuing timely warnings.

4. **Strengthen Infrastructure:** Promote **cool building materials and better urban design.** Provide **financial support to informal workers** during heatwaves.

5. **Context-Specific Advisories:?** "Stay indoors" may not help the **urban poor in dense areas.** Heat advisories must match **local geography and living conditions.**

6. **People-Centric Innovations:** Create **summer shelters** and promote **cool roof policies.** Encourage **science-backed cooling solutions.**

7. **Enable Supportive Work Environments:** Ensure **drinking water, ORS**, and flexible work hours. Outdoor work should pause during peak heat.

Conclusion

Heatwaves require a **shift from short-term relief to long-term planning.** Cities must invest in **cost-effective adaptation, better coordination**, and adopt a **people-first approach.** Recognizing heatwaves as an **equity issue** is essential to reduce the health and economic toll of rising temperatures.

Question for practice:

Examine how rising heatwaves in India are impacting public health, economic productivity, and social equity, and suggest long-term strategies to address these challenges.

India stays silent as world reacts to US tariffs

Source: The post India stays silent as world reacts to US tariffs has been created, based on the article "**Calling out American trade illegality**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 21st April 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2- International Relations-Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests,
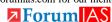
Context: On April 2, 2025, the United States announced reciprocal tariffs, triggering global concern. These tariffs, though paused for 90 days for most nations except China, violate World Trade Organization (WTO) rules. The move has drawn varied global reactions—some nations strongly opposed it, while others, including India, stayed silent.

For detailed information on **India prepares response to US tariff changes** read this article here

Global Responses to U.S. Tariffs

1. **Strong Criticism from Major Nations:** Countries such as **Singapore, Brazil, China, Japan, and Canada** have sharply criticised the U.S. actions as violations of WTO law.

• Singapore's Prime Minister called the tariffs a rejection of the **Most-Favoured Nation (MFN) principle**, a key pillar of the global trade system.

• Brazil and China noted the illegality of the tariffs under WTO commitments. China also imposed **retaliatory tariffs** and initiated a formal **WTO dispute**.

• Japan and Canada formally challenged the tariffs. Canada not only filed a **legal claim at the WTO** but also imposed **retaliatory tariffs** on U.S. automobiles and auto parts.

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2. **Moderate Disapproval by Some Countries:** Some nations, while avoiding legal language, expressed displeasure.

• **Fiji** called the tariff hikes '**unfair**'.

• **Italy's Prime Minister** described the U.S. move as a '**mistake**'.
These countries stopped short of accusing the U.S. of legal violations but made their dissatisfaction known.

3. Silence or Vague Reactions
• A few countries, including **India**, issued **muted or non-committal statements**.

• They did not formally oppose or endorse the U.S. tariffs.

• This silence reflects a cautious, observer-like stance.

Why India Remains Silent

1. **Bilateral Trade Negotiations with the U.S.:** India's silence is partly explained by ongoing bilateral trade talks with the U.S. However, this reason is weak. The U.S. has continued negotiating with India despite publicly criticising India's legal tariffs. Other nations also manage similar negotiations while still criticising the U.S. India could have asserted support for WTO rules without halting trade talks.

2. **India's Missed Opportunity:** India's silence undermines its position as a defender of multilateralism. A public statement could have reinforced its global credibility. It could have reminded the U.S. of its WTO obligations without escalating conflict. Choosing silence, instead, sends a weak signal about India's commitment to trade fairness.

The WTO Dispute System and Its Limitations

1. **Flawed Justification Based on WTO Dysfunction:** Another reason cited is the dysfunction of the WTO's dispute settlement body. Critics argue that filing a claim is pointless if no enforcement follows. But this view is too narrow. International law also helps distinguish legitimate authority from sheer power.

2. **Legal Action as a Symbol of Legitimacy:** Even without enforcement, legal claims express moral and legal authority. China and Canada filed WTO cases knowing the system's weakness. They understand that speaking up upholds principles and pressures violators. India's inaction shows a limited understanding of the power of legal norms.

India's Missed Leadership Role

1. **Absence in a Collective Global Statement:** Around 40 WTO members recently supported a joint statement backing multilateral trade and WTO rules. India, surprisingly, did not sign. This goes against its usual advocacy for a rules-based system.

2. **Opportunity to Lead the Global South:** India often speaks for developing nations. This was a moment to lead by defending trade rules and uniting the Global South. A public stand could have shown strength, fairness, and leadership in shaping a just global trade system.
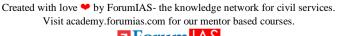
Question for practice:
Evaluate India's response to the U.S. tariffs announced on April 2, 2025, and its implications for India's global trade leadership.

India faces job crisis as AI reshapes work roles
Source: The post India faces job crisis as AI reshapes work roles has been created, based on the article "**What do we do when machines do everything?**" published in "**Indian Express**" on 21st April 2025
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- growth, development and employment. And GS3-Science and Technology- developments and their applications and effects in everyday life

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Context: India is facing an urgent employment crisis, made worse by technological change. While youth unemployment is visible, a deeper invisible crisis is transforming the very nature of work. The rise of AI and automation is reshaping job roles, requiring new skills and approaches to education.

For detailed information on **Impact of AI on jobs and how social forces shape technology development** read this article here

Visible and Invisible Employment Crisis

1. **Youth Unemployment:** Over **80% of India's unemployed are youth**, despite many having secondary or higher education. **One in three young people is disconnected** from both employment and learning. This reflects a gap between education and the skills needed for work.

2. **Job Creation Need:** India must generate **over 90 million jobs by 2030**, many of which do not yet exist. This requires new education and skill-building strategies to prepare the future workforce.

3. **Technology Disruption:** Artificial intelligence, automation, and data systems are transforming all job sectors. **From blue-collar work to creative professions**, technology is changing how tasks are done.

4.. **Skill Replacement Risk:** Jobs that are **low-skill but hard to automate** may remain secure for now. But roles that are **easily replaced by machines**, regardless of skill level, are at high risk. The only lasting advantage is the **ability to keep learning new skills**.

What Skills Are Needed?

1. **Technology Literacy**: People must understand how machines, digital systems, and automation tools work. This skill helps individuals adapt across industries and engage effectively with intelligent systems.

2. **Data Literacy**: Workers need to read, analyse, and act on data. In an algorithm-driven world, these skills are vital for decision-making. For example, a political science student might study data visualisation for public policy.

3. **Human Skills**: Skills like empathy, creativity, cultural understanding, and contextual reasoning remain irreplaceable by machines. These are essential for innovation and leadership.

4. **Adaptability and Lifelong Learning**: As job roles evolve rapidly, the ability to learn new skills quickly is critical. Micro-credentials, like short, focused certifications, support this need. A historian, for instance, may learn AI-assisted archival research.

5. **Interdisciplinary Thinking**: Workers must transfer knowledge across fields. This helps them lead in a world where technology impacts every profession—from healthcare to arts.

6. **Education System Reform**: To prepare youth, tech and data literacy must be taught early. Training educators to focus on skills, not just content, is necessary for a future-ready workforce.
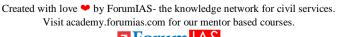
Conclusion

India's future depends on a workforce that is **adaptable, tech-savvy, and human-centric**. This isn't just about creating AI experts—it's about building **innovators, thinkers, and leaders** who can shape the future in a changing global economy.

Question for practice:

Discuss how technological change is reshaping employment and skill requirements in India.

India and China mark 75 years of complex ties

Source: The post India and China mark 75 years of complex ties has been created, based on the article "**India, China at 75 — a time for strategy, not sentiment**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 22nd April 2025

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

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Context: As **India and China mark 75 years of diplomatic ties,** their relationship stands at a critical juncture. Past visions of **Asian solidarity** have given way to **strategic rivalry**, **border tensions**, and **economic interdependence**—all shaped by shifting global power dynamics.
For detailed information on **India and China Strengthening Trust and Cooperation** <u>read this article here</u>
Geopolitical Rivalry and Border Tensions

1. **China as a Key Strategic Factor:** China is now the **central external force** shaping India's foreign policy—from defence planning to trade decisions. This "**China lens**" requires balancing **sovereignty, deterrence, and engagement**.

2. **Persistent Military Standoff:** The **1962 war** and the **2020 Galwan clash** deepened mistrust. The **Line of Actual Control** remains tense and heavily militarised. India has deployed **over 60,000 troops in Eastern Ladakh**, while both sides continue **infrastructure expansion**.

3. **South Asia as a Contest Arena:** China's growing role in India's neighbourhood—via **ports, loans, and connectivity projects**—challenges India's traditional leadership. India is responding with **aid, defence partnerships**, and crisis support, but it needs a **long-term, proactive strategy** beyond headlines.

Economic Interdependence and Strategic Coexistence

1. **Trade Paradox and Limits of Decoupling:** Despite political tensions, **China is one of India's top trading partners**, with a **$100 billion trade imbalance** in 2024–25. India has restricted apps and investments, yet depends on China for **key components** like pharmaceuticals and electronics. **Complete decoupling is not viable in the near future.**

2. **Competitive Coexistence as a Strategy:** India engages China on **multilateral platforms** like **BRICS** and **SCO**, while strengthening ties with **Quad members**. This strategy of **calibrated competition and selective cooperation** helps maintain **strategic autonomy** and reduce direct confrontation.

Shifting Narratives and Regional Influence

1. **Narratives as Tools of Strategy:** Recent remarks by **Bangladesh's interim leader in Beijing**—describing India's northeast as landlocked—though factually correct, **raised alarms** in Delhi. This underlines how **China shapes regional narratives** and why India must focus on **infrastructure, trust-building, and communication**.

2. **Water Security and New Frontiers of Mistrust:** China's planned **dam on the Yarlung Tsangpo** (Brahmaputra) near Arunachal Pradesh has triggered concerns over **water manipulation**. There is **no water-sharing treaty**, and **transparency remains low**, making water a new domain of **strategic tension**.

Diplomatic Openings and the U.S. Factor

1. **Tentative Rapprochement:** PM **Modi's podcast remarks** in 2025 on India-China synergy were **well-received in Beijing**. Progress includes **resumed LAC patrolling**, **talks on hydrological data**, and potential reopening of the **Kailash Mansarovar Yatra**. These are early signs of a **measured thaw**.

2. **Managing U.S.-China Tensions:** With **Donald Trump back in the White House**, **U.S.-China rivalry** has intensified. India may face pressure to side with Washington, especially in the **Indo-Pacific**. But **strategic autonomy** remains India's guiding principle, helping it avoid becoming a **proxy player** in global rivalries.

Question for practice:
Examine how India is balancing strategic rivalry and economic interdependence in its relationship with China.

Vice-President raises concerns about judiciary and India's constitutional balance

Source: The post Vice-President raises concerns about judiciary and India's constitutional balance has been created, based on the article "**Judiciary's place atop the pyramid**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 22nd April 2025
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2- Polity-Structure, organization and functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary.

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Context: Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar recently raised serious concerns about the functioning of the judiciary. He questioned its **transparency**, **accountability**, and the **limits of its constitutional powers**. These remarks have triggered a renewed debate on **judicial independence** and its role in a **democratic setup**.

Concerns Raised by the Vice-President

1. **Opaque Inquiry Process:** The Vice-President raised concern about the **lack of transparency** in the inquiry related to the recovery of **huge piles of cash** at a judge's residence. He pointed out that the procedure was not framed under **any law passed by Parliament**.

2. **Timelines for President and Governors:** He criticised the **Supreme Court's recent judgment** that directed the **President and Governors** to act within set timelines on **State legislations**. He objected to the court issuing **writs of Mandamus** to these **high constitutional offices**, viewing it as **judicial overreach**.

3. **Lack of Judicial Accountability:** He highlighted that the **judiciary is not accountable** to the public like the **legislature and executive**. He questioned the continued use of **Article 145(3)**, which mandates a **five-judge Bench** to test constitutional validity. This rule, framed in **1950**, may be outdated today given the **present strength of 34 judges**.

4. **Use of Article 142:** He expressed concern over the Supreme Court's use of **Article 142**, which allows the court to do **"complete justice"**. He felt its use sometimes **undermines representative democracy**.
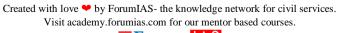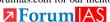
Critical Analysis of the Concerns

1. **Shared Concern About Transparency:** Public unease about the judiciary's **opaque internal inquiries** is widely shared. Experts recommend that the **Chief Justice of India** should frame a **clear and transparent** inquiry process to reinforce trust in the rule of law.

2. **Issues in Judicial Appointments:** The collegium system of appointing judges lacks transparency. A National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC), with the CJI holding a veto, could make appointments more inclusive and transparent without affecting judicial independence.

3. **Judicial Activism Has Helped Governance:** Use of Article 142 has led to landmark decisions. These include compensation for Bhopal gas tragedy victims(1989), workplace harassment guidelines(1997), coal block cancellations(2014), Permanent commission for women officers (2024), and Demolition-related directions to officials (2024)

4. **Supreme Court's Use of Timelines is Justified:** The judgment on timelines is based on earlier **Constitution Bench rulings**. Similar timelines were also mentioned in the **2016 Office Memorandum** by the **Home Ministry**. Hence, the court acted within its powers.

5. **No Urgent Need to Change Bench Size:** Given the **pending cases** and past practices, the current rule of a **five-judge Bench** for constitutional matters remains **reasonable and effective**.

Judicial Review and Constitutional Balance

1. **Judiciary's Role in Indian Democracy:** The executive is accountable to the legislature, but the judiciary independently upholds the Constitution. It is the final guardian of constitutional values.

2. **India's Hybrid Constitutional Model**: India combines the British concept of **parliamentary sovereignty** and the American idea of **judicial supremacy**. Judicial review is part of the **basic structure** of the Constitution.

3. **Need for Institutional Balance**: Each organ—**executive**, **legislature**, and **judiciary**—must **respect boundaries**. Cooperation, not confrontation, is vital for **preserving the spirit of the Constitution**.

Question for practice:

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Discuss the concerns raised by the Vice-President regarding the judiciary and critically analyse their implications for constitutional balance in India.

China restricts rare earth exports affecting India

Source: The post China restricts rare earth exports affecting India has been created, based on the article "**Why did China block exports of rare earth elements?**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 22nd April 2025

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

Context: The U.S.–China trade war has intensified after China imposed export controls on rare earth elements (REEs). These elements are vital for global industries, including electronics and defence. The move affects global supply chains and has prompted responses from countries like India.

For detailed information on **RARE EARTH MINERALS** read this article here

Understanding Rare Earth Elements

1. **What Are Rare Earths?**
REEs are 17 chemical elements found in the earth's crust. They are not rare in quantity but are hard to extract and purify. Countries like **China, India, Myanmar, Australia, and Japan** have natural reserves.

2. **Targeted Elements and Their Uses**
China's export restrictions target **seven REEs**:

• **Dysprosium** – used in hard disks and electric car motors.

• **Gadolinium** – used in nuclear reactor shielding and medical devices.

• **Lutetium** – found in PET scanners and petroleum refining.

• **Samarium** – powers magnets in personal electronics.

• **Scandium** – used in fighter aircraft alloys.

• **Terbium** – used in lighting systems.

• **Yttrium** – used in cancer treatment and superconductors.

China's Export Restrictions

1. **Scope and Effect:** China refines **almost all heavy REEs** used globally. The new export rules apply to all refiners exporting REEs outside China.
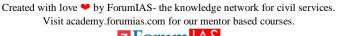Though not a total ban, the **permit process** may **delay global supplies** for several weeks.

2. **Global Dependence:** China's control over REE refining gives it **strategic leverage** over vital manufacturing sectors, including **defence and electronics**.

Impact on India

1. **Limited Immediate Impact:** India may not face immediate disruptions. Advanced manufacturing often happens in **China and Japan**, and Japan has built **stockpiles** to manage supply shocks.

2. **India's Current Capacity:** India holds around **6% of global REE deposits**. However, mining and refining activities are minimal due to environmental concerns. State-owned Indian Rare Earths Ltd extracts light REEs like monazite in Kerala. In 2023–24, **India imported only 2,270 tonnes of REEs.**

India's Strategic Response

1. **National Critical Mineral Mission (NCMM):** India has launched the **NCMM** to secure critical mineral supply chains. Key steps include:

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• **1,200 exploration projects**.

• Offering **exploratory licenses**.

• **Auctioning mineral blocks**.

• Boosting **domestic production** and **foreign sourcing**.

2. **Need for Diversification:** The government says that **China's restrictions**, the **Russia–Ukraine war**, and other issues prove the need to **diversify critical mineral sources**.

Question for practice:
Examine how China's rare earth export restrictions impact global supply chains and India's strategic response.

Aadhaar voter ID link threatens free and fair elections

Source: The post Aadhaar voter ID link threatens free and fair elections has been created, based on the article "**A move that endangers the right to vote**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 23rd April 2025
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2- Polity
Context: The Election Commission of India (ECI) is pushing for Aadhaar-voter ID linkage, claiming it will clean electoral rolls and prevent fraud. However, past experience shows this move leads to mass voter exclusions, privacy violations, and undermines the right to vote.

For detailed information on **Linking of Aadhaar with Voter IDs** read this article here
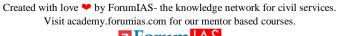
Flawed Justifications for Aadhaar-Voter ID Linkage

1. **Voluntary in Name Only:** Form 6B, which claims the process is voluntary, offers no real opt-out. Citizens must submit Aadhaar or declare they don't have one. This coerces participation. By September 2023, over 66 crore Aadhaar numbers were already linked.

2. **Questionable Data Practices:** Data from other departments and the National Population Register has been repurposed without consent. The DBT Seeding Data Viewer allows third parties to access sensitive identity data, raising serious privacy concerns.

3. **Rollback of Legal Commitment:** In *G. Niranjan v. ECI* (2023), the ECI assured the Supreme Court that Aadhaar linkage was not mandatory. But the latest proposal contradicts that assurance by forcing non-Aadhaar holders to justify themselves in person.

Barriers to Universal and Equal Suffrage

1. **Unfair Burdens on Marginalised Groups:** People without Aadhaar—such as the elderly, disabled, migrant workers, and those in remote areas—must appear physically before officers. This is neither reasonable nor practical. It diminishes dignity and democratic trust.

2. **No Clear Appeal Process:** If a person's justification for not linking Aadhaar is rejected, they have no easy way to appeal. This violates the Supreme Court's 1995 ruling in *Lal Babu Hussein*, which mandates fairness in voter roll deletions.

Aadhaar Is Not Proof of Citizenship

1. **Legal Inconsistencies:** The Aadhaar Act, 2016, says Aadhaar is based on residency, not citizenship. Even non-citizens living in India for 182 days can get Aadhaar. UIDAI and multiple High Courts confirm that Aadhaar does not prove Indian citizenship.

2. **Constitutional Restrictions on Aadhaar Use:** In *Justice K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India* (2018), the Supreme Court limited Aadhaar use to welfare schemes under Section 7 of the Act. Voter ID linkage falls outside this scope.

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Risk of Disenfranchisement and Electoral Damage

1. **Past Failures Are Well-Documented:** In 2015, ECI's Aadhaar seeding under the National Electoral Roll Purification and Authentication Programme led to 55 lakh wrongful deletions in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. Voters found out on polling day. The Supreme Court stayed the programme.

2. **Aadhaar Database Is Unreliable:** The CAG's 2022 report flagged serious flaws—4.75 lakh Aadhaar numbers were cancelled due to duplication and faulty biometrics. UIDAI lacks a process to verify whether Aadhaar holders actually meet the residency criteria.

Threats to Voter Privacy and Surveillance

1. **Risk of Political Profiling:** The Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023, gives wide exemptions to government bodies. Once Aadhaar is linked to voter IDs, parties can cross-reference databases to target voters or manipulate rolls.

2. **Undermining Institutional Independence:** ECI is a constitutional body, while UIDAI is a government-controlled agency. Sharing electoral data with UIDAI undermines electoral independence and violates the constitutional principle of free and fair elections.

Better Alternatives for Voter Verification

Traditional and Effective Methods
Instead of invasive data practices, the ECI should use proven systems:

• Door-to-door checks by booth-level officers

• Independent audits of electoral rolls

• Strong public grievance mechanisms

• Social audits to ensure transparency and prevent manipulation

Conclusion

The Aadhaar-voter ID linkage harms democracy. It leads to mass exclusions, violates privacy, and allows political misuse. Reliable, inclusive, and constitutionally sound alternatives already exist. The ECI must abandon this flawed scheme.

Question for practice:
Evaluate the impact of Aadhaar-voter ID linkage on electoral integrity, voter rights, and constitutional safeguards in India.

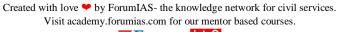## India explores Arctic opportunities balancing trade, climate and geopolitics
Source: The post India explores Arctic opportunities balancing trade, climate and geopolitics has been created, based on the article "**Exploring India's potential in the Arctic region**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 23rd April 2025
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2-International Relations — Important International institutions, agencies and fora- their structure, mandate.
Context: As global trade faces new challenges, melting Arctic ice is opening the Northern Sea Route (NSR), a shorter trade path between Europe and Asia. This development has triggered discussions about India's strategic, economic, and climate-related interests in the Arctic region.

For detailed information on **India's Polar Expeditions in Arctic and Antarctic** read this article here

Melting Ice and the Rise of the Northern Sea Route

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1. **New Trade Possibilities: Arctic sea-ice is shrinking by 12.2% per decade** (NASA). This is opening up the **Northern Sea Route (NSR)**, connecting the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. It is now **the shortest trade route between Europe and Asia**. This will **save time and reduce freight costs**.

2. **Strategic Importance for India:** India's interest in NSR fits its long-term aim of **developing mega ports and new sea routes**. This is not only for economic gain, but also for **geopolitical advantage**. The rising number of **Observer nations at the Arctic Council**, exceeding Arctic states, shows growing concern over existing trade routes.

India's Arctic Presence and Policy Execution

1. **Early Engagement and Scientific Roles:** India signed the **Svalbard Treaty in 1920**. It has a permanent Arctic research base, **Himadri**, and is the **only developing country besides China** with such a base. It also worked with national and international agencies to study **how Arctic ice loss may affect India's monsoons and agriculture**.

2. **Need For Policy Implementation:** India released its **Arctic Policy in 2022**, but it now needs **focused action**. The **2025–26 Budget allocated $3 billion** to the **Maritime Development Fund** to strengthen India's shipping sector. It also supports the development of **shipbuilding clusters**. India must build **ice-capable fleets** for Arctic navigation.

Climate Warnings and Responsible Engagement

1. **Environmental Risks:** Cargo on the NSR rose sharply—from **41,000 tonnes in 2010 to 37.9 million tonnes in 2024**. Meanwhile, **global temperatures breached the 1.5°C mark** in 2024, exceeding the Paris Agreement threshold. According to *Nature Climate Change*, even a **single year at this level could mark long-term damage**.

2. **The balance between growth and protection**: India must act cautiously. It must protect the **fragile Arctic ecosystem** while using trade benefits wisely. This is a **critical policy dilemma**—how to avoid accelerating climate disaster while staying economically competitive.

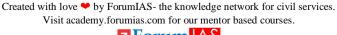### Geopolitical Partnerships and Regional Strategy

1. **Russia as a Natural Partner:** Russia has a long Arctic coastline and strong maritime capacity. During the **Modi–Putin summit**, both countries agreed to form a **working group on the NSR**. The **Chennai–Vladivostok Maritime Corridor** can serve as a gateway to **Russian Arctic ports like Pevek, Tiksi, and Sabetta**.

2. **Risks of Aligning Too Closely:** However, close cooperation with Russia could imply support for **China's Polar Silk Road**, part of its **Belt and Road Initiative**. This would let China bypass the **Malacca Strait** and gain greater control over Arctic routes.

3. **Balancing Global Powers:** On the other hand, aligning with the **U.S. might limit access** to Russian Arctic resources. The ideal but difficult approach is to **engage both blocs**. India should also partner with **Japan and South Korea**, who share concerns about **China–Russia dominance**. Together, they can push for a **more equitable Arctic Council**.
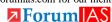
Looking Ahead

The **Arctic Circle India Forum on May 3–4, 2025**, in New Delhi offers a key opportunity. India can use it to **refine its Arctic policy**, build partnerships, host stakeholder talks, and perhaps **appoint a 'polar ambassador'** to represent its interests.

Question for practice:

Examine how India is balancing its economic, strategic, and environmental interests in the Arctic region amid the opening of the Northern Sea Route.

Legal Challenges of False Marriage Promises Under New Law

Source: The post Legal Challenges of False Marriage Promises Under New Law has been created, based on the article "**Section 69 of the BNS is redundant**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 23rd April 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2-Parliament (Law and Justice)

Context: The legal treatment of sexual relationships based on a false promise of marriage has sparked debate. Critics argue the law sometimes undermines women's consent and is misused. Despite expectations of reform, the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023 introduced a new Section 69 addressing this issue separately from the definition of rape.

For detailed information on **On the crime of 'false promise to marry'** read this article here

Judicial Limits on False Promise Cases

1. Intent to Marry Must Be Absent from the Start: The **Supreme Court** has clarified that not all unfulfilled marriage promises amount to rape. In *Anurag Soni v. The State of Chhattisgarh (2019)*, the Court ruled that **rape is only established if the man had no intention to marry right from the beginning**. If circumstances changed later, it does not constitute rape.

2. **Consent Must Be Directly Tied to Deceit:** Courts have stated that when a woman continues a long-term relationship, the **physical intimacy must be clearly caused by the false promise**. In *Rajnish Singh @ Soni v. State of U.P. (2025)*, a 15-year relationship was found **consensual and not induced by deception**, especially as the woman often portrayed herself as the man's wife.

3. **Married Woman's Consent Not Based on Misconception:** In *Abhishek Arjariya v. The State of Madhya Pradesh (2025)*, the High Court ruled that if a woman is **already married**, then her consent on the basis of a false promise of marriage does **not fall under "misconception of fact"**. The FIR was quashed accordingly.

Understanding Section 69 of the BNS

1. **New Standalone Offence Introduced: Section 69 punishes sexual intercourse by deceit**, including false promises of marriage, identity suppression, or false job offers. The punishment may extend to **10 years in prison and a fine**. This offence **did not exist in the Indian Penal Code (IPC)**.

2. **Consent and Rape Definitions Remain Unchanged:** Despite introducing Section 69, the **BNS retains the previous definitions**. Section 63 defines rape, while Section 28 explains that **consent obtained through "misconception of fact"**—which includes false promises—**vitiates valid consent**.
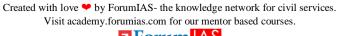
Overlap and Legal Concerns

1. **Redundancy of Section 69:** Since false promise of marriage is already covered under **"rape" via misconception of fact**, **Section 69 becomes redundant**. It introduces **a lesser punishment for the same act**, leading to legal confusion.

2. **Violation of Article 14 Likely:** Section 69 lacks a **non-obstante clause** or exception under Section 63. This creates **legal overlap**, which could violate **Article 14 of the Constitution** (equality before law).

Need for Procedural Caution

1. **Preliminary Inquiry Advised:** As courts increasingly quash such FIRs, it is advised that **police conduct preliminary inquiries**. This would **prevent hardship**, reduce misuse, and save **judicial resources**.

Question for practice:

Examine the judicial and legal challenges associated with Section 69 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 in cases of false promise of marriage.

Terror attack in Pahalgam targets peace and tourism

Source: The post Terror attack in Pahalgam targets peace and tourism has been created, based on the article "**Responding to the terror attack in Pahalgam**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 24th April 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3-Security challenges and their management in border areas – linkages of organised crime with terrorism.

Context: The terrorist attack in Pahalgam, Jammu and Kashmir, was not a random act. It was a deliberate strike aimed at creating fear and disrupting peace. It came just as tourism returned to the Valley and U.S. Vice-President J.D. Vance visited India.

Symbolism and Timing of the Attack

1. **A Peaceful Space Turned Violent:** The attack took place in Baisaran, a tourist meadow called 'mini Switzerland'. It is a site known for picnics and school trips. The violence in such a serene setting shocked the public.

2. **Tourism as a Strategic Target:** The aim was not only to kill but to damage the idea of Kashmir as a safe tourist space. Attacking tourists was a symbolic move to break the sense of normalcy.

3. **Political Messaging Through Terror:** The timing and location were calculated. It sent a message — to instill fear, challenge state control, and bring Pakistan back into India's foreign policy focus.

Security Gaps and Intelligence Lapse

1. **Failure in a Sensitive Area:** Pahalgam is a major route to the Amarnath shrine. The area should have been well-guarded, but the response shows reduced vigilance and poor coordination.

2. **Technology Not Deployed:** Despite investments in drones and surveillance tools, these systems were not in use. This was a serious lapse in a high-risk zone.

3. **Impact Beyond the Attack:** Though not as large as Kargil, the failure may leave a deep social impact. It raises concerns about India's preparedness against such threats.

Pakistan's Role in Terror Operations

1. **The Use of Proxy Groups:** The Resistance Front, linked to Lashkar-e-Taiba, claimed responsibility. It follows Pakistan's known tactic of using proxies with ISI support to maintain deniability.

2. **A Strategy Without Cost:** Such attacks continue because Pakistan rarely faces serious consequences. Global scrutiny has not changed this behaviour.

3. **Shift in Military Doctrine:** General Asim Munir, the current Army Chief and former ISI head, is reviving the policy of 'managed escalation'. His rhetoric mixes religious grievance with strategic goals.

India's Strategic and Diplomatic Response

1. **Strategy Over Emotion:** India must move from emotional condemnation to planned deterrence. Outrage alone is ineffective in changing enemy behaviour.

2. **Escalatory Credibility Matters:** India must signal it can impose real costs — through diplomacy, trade, or covert action. These are accepted tools in global statecraft.

3. **Pushing for Global Action:** India should pressure allies, especially the U.S., to act before attacks occur. Sympathy after violence is not enough.

Rebuilding Deterrence and Internal Unity

1. **Sabotaging the Normalcy Narrative:** Kashmir's growing tourism is a sign of hope. The attack aims to cut it off and isolate the region again.

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2. **Local Population as Victims:** Kashmiris are not partners in terror. They are its first victims. The youth want jobs and peace, not conflict.

3. **Internal Strategy for Inclusion:** India must invest in education, employment, and political engagement. Repression must not replace integration.

The Need for Clarity and Consequences

1. **Breaking the Cycle of Ambiguity:** Terror thrives in uncertain response. India must send a clear message: every attack has a cost.

2. **Credible Deterrence, Not Escalation Alone:** This moment demands clarity and credible consequences. That is the only language Pakistan's strategy responds to.

Question for practice:

Examine how the Pahalgam attack reflects a strategic shift in the objectives and methods of cross-border terrorism against India.

India aims to secure critical minerals for future growth

Source: The post India aims to secure critical minerals for future growth has been created, based on the article "**Critical minerals:India must step up its strategies**" published in "**Businessline**" on 24th April 2025
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3-Infrastructures
Context: India's goal to lead in clean energy and digital technology depends on securing access to critical minerals like lithium, cobalt, and nickel. Rising global demand and fragile supply chains have triggered a need for India to reshape its mineral strategy and industrial policy.
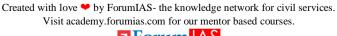For detailed information on **India launches mission to secure critical minerals** read this article here
Global Scramble for Critical Minerals

1. **Rising Demand and Import Dependency:** As nations shift to clean energy, demand for critical minerals has surged. India faces high vulnerability as it relies 100% on imports for lithium, cobalt, and nickel—essential for batteries and electronics.

2. **Untapped Domestic Reserves:** India holds significant reserves of cobalt ore (44.9 million tonnes), copper (163.9 million tonnes), graphite (211.6 million tonnes), and nickel (189 million tonnes). However, these remain underutilised due to weak domestic refining capacity.

The Geopolitical Landscape

1. **China's Strategic Dominance:** China controls the processing and export of rare earths like samarium, gadolinium, and dysprosium—key to defence and green technologies. Its recent export restrictions highlight supply chain risks amid U.S.-China tensions.

2. **Global Diversification Moves:** The U.S. is set to increase tariffs on Chinese lithium-ion batteries from 7.5% to 25% by January 2026. This is pushing countries to seek alternatives to Chinese supplies, giving India a potential opening.

3. **The European Union's Strategic Push:** The EU has launched a €12 billion Global Gateway package to strengthen ties with Central Asia. The goal is to create alternate mineral, energy, digital, and transport routes.

4. **International Competitors Emerge:** Ukraine is offering its mineral reserves to attract U.S. investment. Pakistan is also being considered for strategic mining partnerships. Even the UK is reviewing its mineral policies to fix supply risks.

India's Diplomatic and Strategic Efforts

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1. **Bilateral Engagements and Partnerships:** India is building ties with resource-rich countries like Chile, which has the world's largest lithium reserves. State firms like Coal India are exploring investments in lithium and copper assets abroad.

2. **Multilateral Collaborations:** India has signed MoUs with Australia, Argentina, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. It also works with the U.S. under the Critical Minerals Dialogue to co-invest in mining and refining infrastructure.

Challenges in Domestic Capabilities

1. **Refining and Processing Gaps:** Despite having reserves, India lacks the facilities to refine battery-grade cobalt. Copper and graphite also face import dependence due to low domestic processing capacity.

2. **Policy Interventions:** India's ₹16,300 crore National Critical Mineral Mission aims to boost exploration and global acquisition. Changes in mining laws and removal of customs duties are intended to ease processes and attract investment.

Long-Term Strategies for Mineral Security

1. **Enhance Exploration and Green Mining:** India must expand geological surveys, support private investment, and ensure environmental safeguards to reduce import dependence.

2. **Incentivize the Full Value Chain:** PLI schemes should extend across exploration, refining, and manufacturing to build a robust supply chain.

3. **Boost Global Technology Partnerships:** Ties with Japan, Belgium, and South Korea can improve domestic refining through joint ventures and tech sharing.

4. **Strengthen Diplomatic Supply Chains:** India should broaden bilateral agreements and leverage platforms like QUAD and the Minerals Security Partnership for secure sourcing.

5. **Build a Circular Economy:** Investing in recycling and stockpiling critical minerals will cut reliance on imports and shield India from global shocks.

Conclusion

India's clean energy and tech future depends on securing stable, diverse, and sustainable mineral access. A strategic approach across diplomacy, industry, and innovation is essential.
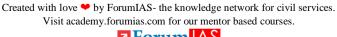
Question for practice:

Discuss how India is reshaping its critical mineral strategy to support clean energy and digital technology goals.
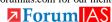
Global growth slows due to policy tensions, says IMF

Source: The post Global growth slows due to policy tensions, says IMF has been created, based on the article "**IMF outlook: The good, the bad and the unsaid**" published in "**Live Mint**" on 24th April 2025
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- Economy-growth, development and employment.

Context: The IMF's April 2025 World Economic Outlook presents mixed signals. While fears of a global recession are unfounded, global growth is slowing due to rising trade tensions and policy uncertainties. This slowdown is self-inflicted and not due to any natural or pandemic-like disruption.

Global Economic Outlook

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1. **Slower Growth but No Recession:** The global economy is slowing but not shrinking. Growth is projected at **2.8% in 2025**, down **0.5 points** from the January forecast. For 2026, growth is expected to be **3%**, **0.3 points lower** than earlier estimates. This slowdown doesn't meet the recession definition of two straight quarters of negative growth.

2. **Trade Growth Declines More Sharply:** Trade, though initially resilient, is weakening. Global trade growth is expected to fall to **1.7% in 2025**, a **major downward revision**. Businesses had rerouted flows effectively, but the IMF warns this may no longer be enough.

Diverging Country Impacts

1. **India Holds Steady:** India's economy is forecast to grow at **6.2%**, only **0.3 points** lower than January's prediction. This remains close to the **RBI's estimate of 6.5%**, showing relative strength amid global uncertainty.

2. **Sharp Cut for the United States:** The US faces the largest downgrade. Growth is now projected at **1.8%**, nearly **one full point** below earlier estimates. This includes a **0.4-point hit from new tariffs**. Demand was already weakening before the tariff announcements, and rising policy uncertainty added to the decline.

Trade Policy and Global Risks

1. **Tariffs Fuel the Downturn:** The US has raised its effective tariff rate to levels above those seen in the Great Depression. Retaliatory tariffs from major economies are raising global trade barriers and hurting confidence.

2. **Uncertain Future for Global System:** The IMF warns of a reset in the global economic order shaped over 80 years. Growth now hinges on how nations tackle tensions and embrace reform.

Key Takeaway

This slowdown is **not caused by external shocks**, but by **policy choices**, mainly from the US. The IMF hints that the turmoil is **man-made**, and that the consequences—especially for the US—may soon become visible.

Question for practice:

Examine how policy choices, especially by the United States, have contributed to the global economic slowdown as highlighted in the IMF's April 2025 World Economic Outlook.
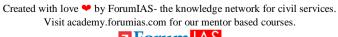
Kurdish Struggle Gains Relevance Amid Geopolitical Shifts

Source: The post Kurdish Struggle Gains Relevance Amid Geopolitical Shifts has been created, based on the article "**Amidst regional ferment, Kurds 'quest for statehood**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 25th April 2025
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2- International Relations
Context: West Asia is undergoing significant geopolitical shifts. Amidst these changes, the century-old Kurdish struggle for statehood has gained fresh relevance. The weakening of key regional powers and evolving international alliances have created new possibilities — and new uncertainties — for the Kurdish people.

Kurdish Identity and Historical Struggle

1. **A Stateless Majority:** The Kurds are the world's largest ethnic group without a nation-state, numbering between 35 to 45 million. They mainly reside in Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria, with significant diaspora in Europe. Despite internal sub-divisions, a shared history, language, and geography form their collective identity.

2. **Distinct Ethnic and Religious Roots:** Kurds are ethnically distinct from Turks, Arabs, and Persians. While mostly Sunni Muslims, they also share links with Yezidis, Alevi, and Zoroastrians. Their ancestry ties back to the Old Mediterranean and Caucasian stock.

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3. **Legacy of Betrayals and Suppression:** The 1920 Treaty of Sevres promised Kurdish autonomy, but Turkey reversed it. Since then, Kurds have been repressed. For example, in 1994, a Kurdish MP was jailed for 15 years just for speaking Kurdish in Parliament.

National Repression and Resistance Movements

1. **Turkey's Long Conflict with the PKK:** Ankara's repression led to the creation of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in 1978. The armed conflict has claimed around 37,000 lives. Recent developments include a PKK ceasefire and Turkey's $20 billion development plan for Kurdish regions. However, political integration is still pending.

2. **Syria's Civil War and the Rise of SDF:** Syria's conflict enabled the formation of the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), backed by the U.S. The SDF now controls nearly 40% of Syria and signed a deal for integration into Syria's political structure. However, Turkey opposes the SDF, linking it to the PKK.

3. **Iraqi Kurdistan's Fragile Autonomy:** Iraq's Kurdish region gained autonomy in 1992 and constitutional recognition post-2003. A 2017 independence referendum received 92% support but was rejected by Iraq's Supreme Court. Ongoing disputes over oil exports and Turkish and Iranian military actions threaten its stability.

Iranian Kurds and Subtle Repression

1. **Cultural Links with Persians:** Iranian Kurds share ethnic and historical links with Persians. While the regime has not used extreme violence, it firmly opposes Kurdish separatism. Kurdish loyalty has often been questioned during wars, fueling Persianisation and marginalisation.

2. **Geopolitical Faultlines and Future Risks:** Iranian Kurds live along volatile borders. With Iran weakened and facing external military threats, its Kurdish population — the largest minority — may see an opportunity to seek autonomy or secession.

Current Prospects and Persistent Challenges

1. **Proto-States but No Unified Vision:** Kurdish autonomous regions in Iraq and Syria signal progress, but Kurds lack a unifying ideology like Zionism or a coordinated transnational movement. This fragmentation limits their ability to pursue a shared statehood vision.

2. **The Role of Global and Regional Powers:** Any Kurdish state would depend heavily on Western support. But as seen with Israel, such externally created states may face strong regional opposition. Whether Kurdistan can root itself securely remains uncertain.

3. **An Unsettled Future:** The fate of Kurds remains precarious. Their age-old wisdom captures it well: "Kurds have no friends except the mountains." Amid shifting alliances and weakened regimes, their dream persists — but so do the obstacles.

Question for practice:

Examine the historical and geopolitical factors that have shaped the Kurdish struggle for statehood in West Asia.

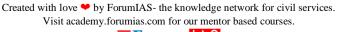## Global trade is shifting away from the WTO framework

Source: The post Global trade is shifting away from the WTO framework has been created, based on the article "**Is the World Trade Organization still relevant?**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 25th April 2025
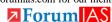**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper2-Bilateral, Regional and Global Groupings and Agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.
Context: The global trading system faces a critical moment as multilateral institutions struggle to remain effective. Tariff-based trade policies, shifting alliances, and structural limitations have raised doubts about the relevance of the World Trade Organization (WTO).
For detailed information on Major issues with the WTO: A requiem for the WTO read this article here
Decline in Core Functions of the WTO

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1. **Structural Flaws and Mismatched Goals:** The Doha Round had overambitious and unrealistic targets. The entry of China was poorly integrated, and existing rules failed to address its trade behaviour. Countries grew frustrated as tariff negotiations failed to reduce disparities. The lack of progress weakened trust in the system.

2. **Collapse of Negotiation, Monitoring, and Dispute Resolution:** The WTO no longer performs its key roles. Negotiations broke down after the Doha Round. Only one multilateral agreement on fisheries was reached, and it remains unfinished. The appellate body, the highest trade court, became inactive due to blocked appointments. Trade monitoring is ineffective as many members withhold data on their trade actions.

Inability to Prevent Economic Crisis

1. **Consensus-Based Reform Blocked by Members:** Reforms are stalled because decision-making requires consensus. Attempts to shift to voting were blocked by key members. Proposals like arbitration for dispute resolution lack broad support. No legal way exists to force members to reveal their trade measures, undermining the monitoring system.

2. **Lack of Global Crisis Response Mechanism:** The WTO cannot stop an economic crisis caused by tariffs. It is not a space where countries can come together, speak frankly, and find solutions in emergencies.

Breakdown of MFN Principle

1. **FTAs Undermining WTO Rules:** The Most-Favoured-Nation (MFN) principle, the foundation of the WTO, is being bypassed. Countries increasingly use Free Trade Agreements (FTAs), which face minimal review. These agreements weaken the multilateral framework.

2. **Tariff Imbalance and Shift to Bilateralism:** One major country reduced its tariffs significantly over multiple rounds, expecting others to follow. When that didn't happen, it turned to bilateral deals. Tariffs under sections 232 and 301 were introduced and maintained. The shift away from MFN became bipartisan and long-lasting.

Agricultural Disputes and India's Opposition

1. **Failure to Resolve Key Agricultural Issues:** Talks on fisheries, subsidies, and food stockpiling remain deadlocked. Some developing countries do not share India's concerns, making consensus harder. These issues have become too complex for bilateral deals.

2. **Domestic Constraints on Subsidy Negotiations:** India opposes many proposals on agriculture due to political and food security concerns. While large economies provide high subsidies, India remains limited to 10%. The WTO did not accommodate such disparities.
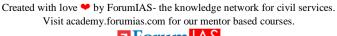
WTO's Weakness in Handling China's Impact

1. **Overcapacity and Market Disruption:** The WTO could not predict the scale of overcapacity. One country's ability to produce more than half the global steel and cement disrupted markets without breaking any rules.

2. **Inadequate Rules for Modern Trade:** Current rules do not cover many trade-distorting actions. This loophole has damaged the credibility and effectiveness of the multilateral trading system.

Question for practice:

Discuss how structural limitations and geopolitical shifts have contributed to the decline of the World Trade Organization.

India and Pakistan face challenges over Indus water sharing

Source: The post India and Pakistan face challenges over Indus water sharing has been created, based on the article "**Shadow over Indus Water Treaty**" published in "**Businessline**" on 25th April 2025
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2-International Relations – Bilateral groupings and agreements

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Context: Water-sharing in the Indus basin is crucial for both India and Pakistan. However, recent political tensions, climate challenges, and violent incidents, including the Pahalgam terror attack, have pushed the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) into a critical phase.

For detailed information on **Indus Water Treaty- Concerns and Way Forward** read this article here

Historical Background of the Treaty

1. **Partition and the Water Dispute:** After 1947, control over the Indus River system became a serious issue. The basin includes six rivers—Indus, Jhelum, Chenab, Ravi, Beas, and Sutlej—flowing across both countries.

2. **Agreement and Allocation:** India and Pakistan signed the IWT in 1960, brokered by the World Bank. Pakistan received 80% of the total waters (about 135 BCM) from the western rivers. India got 20% (about 33 BCM) from the eastern rivers.

3. **Institutional Mechanism:** A Permanent Indus Commission (PIC) was created to enable regular dialogue and resolve disputes. The World Bank retained a role in arbitration.

Importance of the Indus River System

1. **Pakistan's Heavy Dependence:** About 220 million people and nearly 90% of Pakistan's agriculture depend on the Indus system. The Indus Basin Irrigation System, the world's largest, supports over 16 million hectares of farmland.

2. **India's Regional Importance:** India uses the Indus waters to support 120 million people across Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, and Rajasthan—for agriculture, urban supply, and industry.
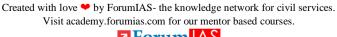
Rising Tensions and Recent Developments

1. **Growing Indian Assertiveness:** India's position hardened after attacks in Uri (2016), Pulwama (2019), and Pahalgam (2023), and after scrapping Jammu & Kashmir's special status in 2019.

2. **India Invokes Treaty Clause:** In 2023, India invoked Article XII of the IWT for the first time, signaling its intent to seek modifications.

3. **India's Case for Change:** India argues the treaty is outdated. It does not consider today's realities like population pressure, altered river flows, or climate change. Delays caused by Pakistan's objections to Indian hydropower projects have added to frustration.

Impact on Pakistan

1. **Agricultural and Economic Vulnerability:** Any reduction in water flows could harm major crops such as wheat and rice, affecting food security and livelihoods for millions.

2. **Energy Security at Risk:** Hydropower from the Indus system fuels major plants like Tarbela and Mangla. Upstream water changes could worsen power shortages.

3. **Environmental and Social Effects:** Lower water levels may cause desertification in Sindh and Punjab, increase soil salinity, degrade ecosystems, and displace rural populations.

4. **Diminished Diplomatic Space:** India's rising global clout may make it harder for Pakistan to gain international backing or win disputes in arbitration forums.

Impact on India

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1. Strategic and Economic Gains: Modifying the treaty could allow India to expand irrigation and hydropower in northern states, supporting border-area development.

2. Risk to Global Image: Unilateral actions may harm India's reputation as a responsible actor and weaken its position in other transboundary water treaties.

3. Environmental Trade-offs: Uncoordinated infrastructure projects could damage fragile river ecosystems in the Himalayas and deltas.

Broader Repercussions

1. Legal and Security Dangers: Breaking the treaty may lead to legal disputes and militarised approaches to water management in a nuclear region.

2. Climate Urgency and the Need for Cooperation: Glacial melt, erratic monsoons, and droughts highlight the importance of coordinated governance. Without IWT, joint responses will be difficult.

3. High Human Stakes: Over 340 million people directly depend on the Indus. The cost of failure could be catastrophic for both nations.

Question for practice:

Evaluate the implications of recent political tensions and climate challenges on the future of the Indus Waters Treaty between India and Pakistan.

Building Food Literacy for a Healthier Future

Source: The post Building Food Literacy for a Healthier Future has been created, based on the article "**Teaching children to eat well must begin in school**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 26th April 2025
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- Agriculture – food security
Context: The **Nutrition for Growth Summit** and **UNGA's extension** of the **Decade of Action on Nutrition to 2030** aim to strengthen global efforts to end malnutrition. The focus now expands beyond food access, highlighting the links between **nutrition, education, equity**, and **sustainability**.
For detailed information on **World Food Day 2024 emphasizes the right to safe and nutritious food for all** read this article here

Expanding the Understanding of Nutrition
1. **Moving Beyond Early Childhood Focus:** Efforts previously centred on the **first 1,000 days of life**. New evidence shows **adolescence** is also a crucial window for reversing early deficits and promoting **lifelong health.**

2. **Shifting From Feeding to Teaching:** Good nutrition is no longer only about providing food. It requires **educating children** about **what, how**, and **why to eat**for long-term well-being.

3. **Schools as Starting Points for Change:** A **side event at the Paris Summit** emphasized that **food education must begin early** in schools. It should move beyond **counting calories** and help build awareness about **health and the planet**.

Challenges in Children's Food Environment
1. **Complexity of Modern Food Choices:** Today's children live in a world of **easy food access**, **heavy marketing**, and **peer pressure**. Without proper knowledge, making **healthy choices** is increasingly difficult.

2. **Poor Eating Habits and their Impacts:** Many children **skip breakfast, eat few fruits and vegetables, and consume too much processed food**. These habits contribute to **malnutrition, obesity, chronic diseases, and mental health issues**.

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3. **Decline in Dietary Diversity: Minimum Dietary Diversity**, now a **global SDG 2 indicator**, shows that many children — even in India's cities and villages — **fail to eat a varied diet**. This harms their health and reflects **deeper issues** in food systems.

Gaps in Food and Nutrition Education

1. **Outdated or Absent Curricula:** Most schools lack a **structured, updated food education curriculum. Teachers are poorly trained**, and **learning resources are insufficient** to teach healthy eating effectively..

2. **The Need for a Comprehensive Approach:** Food education must start from **preschool** and continue through **middle school**. It should teach the importance of **diverse diets**, explain **how the human body works**, and show how **food systems impact the environment**.

3. **Promoting Biodiverse Diets:** Curricula should promote consuming **local, seasonal, and culturally familiar foods. Biodiverse diets** improve nutrition, support **local farmers, protect the environment**, and **preserve traditional food knowledge.**

Building a Food-Literate Generation

1. **Integrating Nutrition into Daily School Life:** Teaching children to eat well must **move beyond isolated events**. Schools should have **weekly lessons**, **healthier canteens**, **kitchen gardens**, **simple cooking sessions**, and **student-led campaigns**.

2. **Examples of Change and Opportunities in India:** Globally, students are learning by **growing food, cooking meals**, and **reading food labels.** In India, the **NEP** and **School Health and Wellness Programme** offer frameworks, but **clearer structure** and **trained teachers** are urgently needed.

3. **Empowering Children as Influencers:** Once educated, children can influence **families**, **schools**, and **communities** to adopt **healthier**, more **sustainable** food practices.

Conclusion

Food literacy must become a core part of education. Teaching children to eat well is essential for their personal health, cultural awareness, environmental responsibility, and future readiness.

Question for practice:

Discuss how building food literacy among children can contribute to better health, education, and sustainability.

Meta lawsuit shows clash between AI and copyright protection

Source: The post Meta lawsuit shows clash between AI and copyright protection has been created, based on the article "**The New Metakleptocracy**" published in "**The Economic Times** " on 26th April 2025
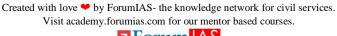**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper**3**– Science and technology-Awareness in the fields of IT, Computers, robotics, nanotechnology, issues relating to intellectual property rights
Context: Meta faces a lawsuit for allegedly using millions of pirated books to train its LLAMA algorithms without permission. The case raises major questions about copyright protection, intellectual ownership, and the future value of creative work.
For detailed information on **Lawsuit filed by The New York Times against OpenAI and Microsoft: Copyright VS Ai** read this article here
The Lawsuit Against Meta

1. **Unauthorized Use of Copyrighted Material:** Meta is accused of using millions of books and copyrighted works without consent to save costs. Internal communications reveal that the company accepted the use but claimed it was protected under "fair use."

2. **Public Disclosure of Internal Exchanges:** Released documents show Meta preferred pirated modern fiction because it was easy to parse for LLM training, undermining its claim of using material for access and preservation.

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3. **Meta's Defense Strategy:** Meta argues that its use was transformative and thus qualifies as fair use. It also claims that any individual book's impact on its large language model (LLM) is statistically insignificant, less than 0.06%.

Historical Evolution of Intellectual Property

1. **Early Open Access Traditions:** Ancient India treated the Vedas as shruti (heard) and apauruseya (not of man), valuing continuation over authorship. Similarly, ancient Greek epics like *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* were part of a broader oral tradition.

2. **Shift Towards Ownership:** As intellectual work gained monetary value, authorship and ownership became important to establish authenticity and protect economic rights.

3. **Modern Importance of Copyright Protection:** Today, success often depends on ideas and innovation, making the defense of intellectual property more critical than ever before.

Meta's Motive and Approach

1. **Claim of Transformation and Innovation:** Meta claims LLAMA's development depends on the use of copyrighted works to create transformative, open-source AI tools.

2. **Reality of Commercial Exploitation:** Internal discussions reveal that Meta aims to commodify copyrighted works, not to enhance access, but to ease LLM training.

3. **Potential for Derivative and Inauthentic Outputs:** Meta's method could lead to unlicensed sequels, derivative fiction, and new works mimicking original styles, making authentic creative output redundant.

Wider Implications and Warnings

1. **Emerging Techno-Hierarchy:** Companies like Meta and OpenAI seek to create dominant knowledge systems by exploiting stolen creativity, sidelining true authors.

2. **Historical Parallels to Knowledge Monopolies:** The decline from open learning to a knowledge monopoly in ancient India mirrors today's tech giants 'drive to capture wealth and power through intellectual theft.

3. **Hope for Judicial Intervention:** The article expresses hope that the courts will uphold intellectual rights and prevent history from repeating itself.

Question for practice:

Examine how the Meta lawsuit highlights the tension between innovation and intellectual property rights.

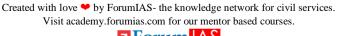## Trump's policies trigger lasting stagflation risk for global economy

Source: The post Trump's policies trigger lasting stagflation risk for global economy has been created, based on the article "**Stagflation for the ages**" published in "**Financial Express**" on 26th April 2025
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2- International Relations
Context: The article warns of a deeper and lasting stagflation threat facing the global economy. This risk has been triggered by Donald Trump's aggressive protectionist policies and political attacks on the U.S. Federal Reserve. Unlike temporary COVID-era disruptions, today's supply-chain breakdowns and policy instability could cause severe inflation, recession, and global trade collapse.
For detailed information on **Impact of Donald Trump's economic policies on U.S. growth and inflation** read this article here
Nature of Stagflation: Then and Now

1. **Temporary Supply Chain Disruptions During COVID-19:** After the pandemic, stagflation appeared when supply chains were strained by shifting consumption patterns. A surge in commodity prices, semiconductor shortages, and shipping bottlenecks accounted for about 60% of U.S. inflation during 2021–22.

2. **Pandemic-Era Inflation Gradually Faded:** Supply-chain stresses eased after about two years, helping inflation pressures to subside as global trade normalized.

3. **Emergence of a More Permanent Crisis:** Today's stagflation threat stems from structural changes in supply chains, unlike the temporary pandemic disruptions.

Impact of U.S. Protectionism on Global Trade

1. **Decoupling from China and Other Trade Partners:** The U.S. is retreating from China-centric and even North American supply chains, reversing efficiencies that previously reduced U.S. inflation by about 0.5 percentage points annually.

2. **Enduring Distrust in Trade Relations:** Distrust of U.S. trade behavior will persist beyond Trump's term, making the damage long-lasting and difficult to repair.

3. **Complexities in Reshoring Production:** Claims of a U.S. manufacturing rebirth are misleading. Reshoring requires years of planning and construction, which policy uncertainty now threatens.

4. **Struggles to Rebuild Global Supply Chains:** Other countries face prolonged efforts to establish new trade networks, risking higher costs and inefficiencies across global production systems.

Politicisation of Central Banking

1. **Trump's Pressure on the Federal Reserve:** Trump criticized the Fed's decision to hold rates steady and threatened to remove Chair Jerome Powell, undermining monetary policy independence.

2. **Echoes of 1970s Stagflation:** The situation resembles the late 1970s, when a weak Fed and a weak dollar worsened America's first stagflation episode.

3. **Broader Attacks on Independent Agencies:** Trump's dismissal of leaders from regulatory bodies signals a trend that could extend to the Federal Reserve, further destabilizing economic governance.

Rising Recession Risks

1. **Uncertainty Paralyzing Business and Consumers:** Widespread policy unpredictability is freezing business investment and consumer spending, heightening the risk of recession.

2. **Global Retaliation Against U.S. Tariffs:** New U.S. tariffs provoke retaliation, risking sharp declines in the global trade cycle essential for economic stability.

3. **Historical Warning from Past Trade Wars:** With U.S. tariffs higher than in 1930, the risks of a trade collapse similar to the Smoot-Hawley era are growing.

4. **Stagflation or Worse:** Given the scale of disruptions, the world could face not just stagflation but even deeper global trade and economic breakdowns.
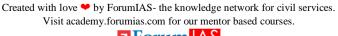
Conclusion

The world faces a serious threat of lasting stagflation and recession. Disruptions in supply chains, rising protectionism, and political attacks on institutions could severely damage global trade, raise costs, and slow economic recovery for years.
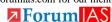
Question for practice:
Examine how current U.S. protectionist policies and political instability are creating a deeper threat of stagflation and global economic disruption.

Rodrik's trilemma explains Western democracy's rising crisis and populism

Source: The post Rodrik's trilemma explains Western democracy's rising crisis and populism has been created, based on the article "**The 'political trilemma 'and the crisis in the West**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 28th April 2025

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UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper1-political philosophies like communism, capitalism, socialism etc.— their forms and effect on the society.

Context: Western democracies are facing a deepening crisis. Rising populism, mistrust in institutions, and increasing polarisation have made countries more insular. Economist Dani Rodrik's "political trilemma" explains this, showing that nations cannot sustain globalisation, sovereignty, and popular democracy simultaneously.

Understanding Rodrik's Political Trilemma

1. **Core Idea of the Trilemma:** Rodrik argued that countries can achieve only two out of three: globalisation, national sovereignty, and popular democracy. Despite globalisation rhetoric, real international integration remains limited due to national barriers and transaction costs.

2. **Theory Becoming Reality:** The trilemma is no longer theoretical. Today, the West is struggling with the contradictions Rodrik foresaw, leading to political and economic disruptions.

Different Paths Taken to Navigate the Trilemma

1. **Democracy and Globalisation at the Cost of Sovereignty:** The European Union (EU) is an example of sacrificing sovereignty for democracy and globalisation. EU nations surrendered control over key policies like trade, migration, and monetary policy. Though the EU created a single market of 450 million people and 15% of global trade, resentment grew among those who felt left out economically or culturally.

2. **Globalisation and Sovereignty with Limited Mass Politics:** Some countries pursue sovereignty and globalisation while restricting mass political influence. They empower independent central banks and regulatory bodies to make economic decisions, insulating them from public pressure. International financial institutions like the IMF have pushed for such models, sometimes causing backlash. In Kenya, the IMF faced severe criticism for enforcing harsh fiscal measures at the cost of public welfare.

3. **Democracy and Sovereignty with Limited Globalisation:** Other countries, like India and China, preserved democracy and sovereignty while restricting globalisation. They used protectionism, foreign investment controls, and domestic industrial policies to grow. China and East Asian nations allowed foreign investment selectively while curbing political dissent and foreign media influence. Though this approach delivered high economic growth, it often came at the cost of individual freedoms.

The Western Crisis and its Consequences

1. **Attempt to Balance All Three:** Western democracies tried to balance democracy, sovereignty, and globalisation. However, sustaining all three proved impossible, leading to growing social and political tensions.

2. **Economic Discontent and Populist Backlash:** While globalisation raised living standards, it also caused job losses and insecurity. Workers in industrial towns and small businesses felt abandoned. Populist leaders like Donald Trump, Geert Wilders, and Viktor Orbán channelled these grievances.

3. **Nationalism and the Erosion of Trust:** This discontent fuelled nationalist movements like Brexit and strengthened far-right parties. Citizens blamed governments for accepting unfavourable regulations, leading to backlash against democracy and globalisation.

4. **Rising Protectionism and Isolationism:** Populist responses included protectionism, immigration controls, and withdrawal from global initiatives like climate change efforts, signalling a retreat from global cooperation.

Way Forward

1. **The Stark Choices Ahead:** Rodrik's trilemma remains critical: countries must make difficult choices between globalisation, sovereignty, and democracy.

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2. **The Need for Broader Economic Gains:** To avoid further unrest, economic benefits must be more widely shared. Narrow gains deepen disillusionment.

3. **Strengthening Democratic Institutions:** A stronger, more inclusive democracy is essential for stability. Reckless populism or dismantling governance will only worsen the crisis.

Question for practice:

Examine how Dani Rodrik's political trilemma explains the crisis in Western democracies.

India needs skilled arbitrators for global leadership

Source: The post India needs skilled arbitrators for global leadership has been created, based on the article "**The real Indian arbitrator needs**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 28th April 2025
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3– Effects of Liberalization on the Economy and **GS Paper-2**- Statutory, Regulatory and various Quasi-judicial Bodies.
Context: India's rapid economic growth has led to increased domestic and cross-border commerce, making disputes more frequent. With court systems overburdened and slow, arbitration has emerged as a preferred alternative. However, concerns remain whether India's arbitration framework, especially the role of arbitrators, is ready for global leadership.
For detailed information on **The globalization of the Indian legal industry** read this article here
The Central Role of Arbitrators in Indian Arbitration

1. **Human Capital Defines Arbitration Success:** The success of arbitration depends on its human capital. Arbitrators, even more than arbitration lawyers, shape the efficiency and credibility of the process.

2. **Arbitrators as Controllers of Proceedings:** Arbitrators set procedures, finalise timelines, settle disputes, and impose penalties. Their conduct determines the speed, fairness, and legitimacy of the proceedings.

3. **Awards as the Face of Indian Arbitration:** Arbitrators 'awards can be challenged in courts. Their quality directly influences the reputation of Indian arbitration at national and international levels.

The Unique Demands of Arbitration Skills

1. **Need for Skills Beyond Judicial Experience:** Judicial experience alone is insufficient. Arbitrators must manage disputes flexibly, blending procedural certainty with innovation, unlike rigid court processes.

2. **Importance of Soft Skills and Cultural Sensitivity:** International arbitration demands collaboration with diverse tribunal members. Arbitrators must develop negotiation, persuasion, and cross-cultural communication skills, which require special training.

3. **Different Nature of Award Writing:** Arbitral awards need careful analysis of complex documents, testimonies, and financial data. Writing such awards demands a different skillset from traditional judicial judgments.

Persistent Gaps in Developing Elite Indian Arbitrators

1. **Neglected Focus on Arbitrator Development:** While efforts to strengthen arbitration lawyers are common, little attention is paid to developing skilled arbitrators. This weakens the arbitration ecosystem.

2. **Limited Global Presence of Indian Arbitrators:** Justice D.Y. Chandrachud recently noted the absence of Indian arbitrators in international disputes without Indian elements. This shows India's weak integration into global arbitration networks.

3. **Dependence on Retired Judges:** Indian appointments favour retired judges, assuming judicial training ensures arbitration quality. However, recent Ministry of Finance guidelines revealed delays, high costs, and poorly reasoned awards mimicking court processes.

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Pathways for Strengthening Indian Arbitration

1. **Diversification of Arbitrator Pool:** The arbitrator pool must expand beyond advocates and judges. Specialists from fields like finance, engineering, and international trade should be included for richer decision-making.

2. **Mandatory Training and Accreditation:** All arbitrators must undergo formal training through certification, workshops, and professional memberships. Such measures would raise arbitration standards and shift perceptions away from litigation bias.

Conclusion

India must focus on building a diverse and highly skilled pool of arbitrators. Only then can it realise its aspiration of becoming a global arbitration hub and gain lasting credibility in international dispute resolution.

Question for practice:

Discuss how the quality and development of arbitrators impact India's ambition to become a global arbitration hub.

UN conference offers hope for ocean protection

Source: The post UN conference offers hope for ocean protection has been created, based on the article "**Third UN Ocean Conference: Opportunity to build consensus**" published in "**Indian Express**" on 28th April 2025
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.
Context: India's vast coastline makes the ocean crucial for its economy, environment, and daily life. As threats to ocean health grow, the third United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC3) offers a vital chance to promote global action for conservation and sustainable use.
Importance of the Ocean for Humanity and India

1. **The Ocean as a Shared Resource:** The ocean feeds and protects people worldwide. It enables trade, sustainable energy, and scientific discovery. India's Vision 2030 recognises the blue economy as a key growth pillar.

2. **Serious Threats to Ocean Health:** The ocean faces plastic pollution, overfishing, acidification, rising sea levels, and ecosystem destruction. Every year, over eight million tons of plastic end up in the ocean. More than one-third of fish stocks are overexploited.

3. **Need for Immediate Multilateral Action:** Without strong collective efforts, the damage to the ocean will intensify, endangering food security, economies, and the environment.

UNOC3: A Critical Opportunity

1. **Global Collaboration for Ocean Protection:** Around 100 heads of states, researchers, economic leaders, activists, and citizens will gather to drive collective commitments for protecting the ocean.

2. **Learning from Climate Efforts:** UNOC3, hosted by France and Costa Rica, aims to create the "Nice Ocean Agreements," offering a binding framework like the Paris Agreement, aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals.

3. **Action-Oriented Discussions:** The conference will focus on operational outcomes in governance, financing, and knowledge, instead of vague declarations.

Strengthening Ocean Governance

1. **Urgency of Legal Frameworks:** More than 60% of the ocean lies beyond national jurisdiction and remains unregulated. This leads to pollution, illegal fishing, and the exploitation of endangered species.

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2. **Ending the High Seas Legal Gap:** Without surveillance and common rules, the high seas suffer unchecked damage. Ratifying the BBNJ Agreement by 60 countries is essential to bring it into force.

3. **Significance of the BBNJ Agreement:** The Agreement under the UN Convention will establish rules for the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity beyond national boundaries.

Financing and Sustainable Blue Economy

1. **Need for Increased Investments:** Ocean protection requires greater public and private financing. New commitments in shipping, tourism, trade, and investments will be announced at Nice.

2. **Regenerating Marine Resources:** A healthy blue economy depends on allowing marine ecosystems to renew themselves naturally.

3. **Balancing Growth and Conservation:** Economic use of the ocean must be matched by strong conservation strategies to secure future benefits.

Enhancing Ocean Knowledge and Public Awareness

1. **Closing Knowledge Gaps:** Despite mapping the Moon and Mars, Earth's ocean depths remain largely unexplored. Scientific research, innovation, and education must be prioritised.

2. **Public Awareness Campaigns:** France will organise "We are the Ocean" festivals in Delhi, Chennai, Puducherry, and Goa to engage citizens through exhibitions, films, workshops, and discussions.

3. **India's Role at UNOC3:** "Blue Talks" in Delhi will bring Indian researchers and institutions together to present India's recommendations for the conference.

Conclusion

The ocean is a universal bond and a shared responsibility. UNOC3 can mark a turning point for ocean conservation, securing a healthier future for the planet and future generations.

Question for practice:

Examine how the third United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC3) aims to address the growing threats to ocean health.

Deputy Speaker vacancy weakens India's parliamentary balance

Source: The post Deputy Speaker vacancy weakens India's parliamentary balance has been created, based on the article "**The post of Deputy Speaker is not symbolic or optional**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 29th April 2025
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2- Appointment to various Constitutional posts, powers, functions and responsibilities of various Constitutional Bodies.
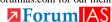**Context**: The Deputy Speaker's office in the Lok Sabha is a constitutional necessity under Article 93 of the Indian Constitution. However, the persistent vacancy of this position in recent years has raised serious concerns about constitutional adherence and parliamentary integrity.
For detailed information on **The missing Deputy Speaker: What is the post, and what does the Constitution say** read this article here
Constitutional Basis and Historical Evolution

1. **Mandate under the Constitution:** Article 93 requires the Lok Sabha to elect a Speaker and Deputy Speaker "as soon as may be," indicating urgency, not discretion. Article 94 ensures the Deputy Speaker remains in office until resignation, removal, or ceasing to be a Member of Parliament.

2. **Origins During British Rule:** The position dates back to the colonial era as the Deputy President of the Central Legislative Assembly. Sachidanand Sinha first held the post in 1921, embedding it as a key parliamentary fixture.

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3. **Role in Post-Independence India:** After Independence, the Constituent Assembly retained the Deputy Speaker's office even before the full adoption of the Constitution. M.A. Ayyangar, the first elected Deputy Speaker, demonstrated the role's importance during the crisis following Speaker G.V. Mavalankar's death.

Functional Importance of the Deputy Speaker

1. **Supporting the Speaker's Duties:** Given the Speaker cannot preside over all sessions, the Deputy Speaker ensures the House's continuous functioning without procedural disruption.

2. **Handling Important Responsibilities:** The Deputy Speaker chairs critical sessions, oversees committees, and manages sensitive debates requiring neutrality, mirroring the Speaker's expected impartiality.

3. **Strengthening Bipartisanship:** Traditionally, the post has been offered to the Opposition to foster trust and cooperation, supporting the non-partisan ethos of the Speaker's role.

The Emerging Constitutional Vacuum

1. **Prolonged Vacancy in Recent Lok Sabhas:** The 17th Lok Sabha (2019–2024) saw the Deputy Speaker's seat vacant for the entire term. The 18th Lok Sabha has yet to appoint one, an unprecedented constitutional anomaly.

2. **Undermining Institutional Safeguards:** This vacancy centralizes power with the Speaker and ruling party, eliminating a critical counterbalance. In emergencies, the absence could create leadership confusion in the House.

3. **Erosion of Parliamentary Conventions:** Failing to offer the post to the Opposition disregards established conventions that promote inclusivity and consensus-driven politics.

Need for Urgent Reforms

1. **Closing Constitutional Ambiguities:** Setting a mandatory deadline, such as within 60 days of the Lok Sabha's first sitting, could ensure timely appointment and compliance with constitutional intent.

2. **Proposing Statutory Mechanisms:** A legal provision could empower the President to initiate the election process within a specific timeframe on the advice of the Prime Minister or Speaker.

3. **Reaffirming Democratic Commitment:** Electing a Deputy Speaker is crucial to uphold the Constitution and demonstrate the Parliament's commitment to rule-based governance.

Question for practice:

Examine how the prolonged vacancy of the Deputy Speaker's office affects constitutional governance and parliamentary functioning in India.
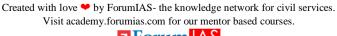
Indian cities face climate and urban challenges

Source: The post Indian cities face climate and urban challenges has been created, based on the article "**India's urban future is at a crossroads**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 29th April 2025
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper1- Society-urbanisation, their problems and their remedies
Content: As India's summer worsens, cities are battling water shortages, rising electricity demand, and soaring temperatures. These recurring struggles raise urgent concerns about whether Indian cities are equipped to handle climate extremes, rapid urbanisation, and meet Sustainable Development Goal-11 (SDG-11) targets.

For detailed information on **Urbanization in India- Significance & Challenges** underline read this article here
Challenges of Urbanisation and Climate Impact

1. **Urban Growth and Its Consequences:** Urbanisation fuels economic growth but also increases pollution, congestion, and environmental harm, affecting the poor the most.

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2. **Lack of Long-Term Climate Planning:** The 2025 Sustainable Futures Collective report shows that Indian cities lack serious long-term strategies to tackle climate change and urban heat island effects.

3. **Commitment to SDG-11:** Despite India's pledge to build inclusive and resilient cities by 2030, real-world challenges highlight the slow and uneven progress.

Deeper Insights and Urban Disparities

1. **Inclusivity and Safety Gaps:** Disparities in inclusivity show unequal access to opportunities. Differences in safety rankings highlight the need for stronger law enforcement in some cities.

2. **Sustainability and Resilience Shortfalls:** Environmental planning and disaster preparedness vary widely. The Annual Survey of Indian City Systems 2023 found that only 16 cities had a 'city sustainability plan 'and 17 had 'city resilience strategies.'
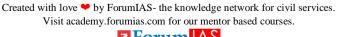
Shortcomings in Current Urban Indices

1. **Limited Scope of Domestic Indices:** NITI Aayog's SDG Urban Index tracks only a few SDG-11 indicators like sanitation, housing, waste treatment, and road deaths. The Ease of Living Index also misses a full SDG-11 evaluation.

2. **Gaps in Global Indices:** International rankings like Mercer's and the Resilient Cities Index overlook Indian ground realities and urban complexities.

3. **Impact on Policymaking:** The absence of a specific SDG-11 index leaves a gap, making it difficult for policymakers to identify which cities are truly inclusive, safe, and sustainable.

A New Framework for Measuring Urban Sustainability

1. **Creation of Four Distinct Indices:** Researchers created four indices for safety, inclusivity, resilience, and sustainability, ranking 10 major Indian cities on specific indicators.

2. **Methodology and Data Sources:** They used nine safety, 19 inclusivity, and 15 resilience and sustainability indicators. Data came from sources like Census 2011, NCRB, IMD, RBI, and others. The Shannon Entropy Weighting technique offered an objective method to assign indicator weights.

3. Key Findings Across Cities

• **Ahmedabad** ranked first in inclusivity; **Jaipur** ranked lowest.

• **Bengaluru** emerged as the safest city; **Kolkata** was the least safe.

• **Surat** led in sustainability; **Kolkata** performed the worst.

• **Chennai** topped climate resilience; **Jaipur** ranked the lowest.

The Road Ahead for Indian Cities

1. **Need for Better Tracking Mechanisms:** Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) must set up frameworks to track SDG-11 at the local level, following successful district models.

2. **Leveraging Smart City Infrastructure:** Integrated Command and Control Centres under the Smart Cities Mission must be used for real-time urban data collection and planning.

3. **Addressing Urban Poverty:** India still depends on outdated Census 2011 data. A periodic Urban Poor Quality of Living Survey is essential for accurate planning.

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4. **Importance of Localised Solutions:** Each city needs data-driven, city-specific policies to deal with its unique problems and build a more equitable urban future.

Question for practice:

Discuss the key challenges and solutions for making Indian cities more resilient, inclusive, safe, and sustainable in the face of climate change and rapid urbanisation.

Singapore court ruling highlights flaws in Indian arbitration practices

Source: The post Singapore court ruling highlights flaws in Indian arbitration practices has been created, based on the article "**Reining in 'judicial plagiarism 'in arbitration**" published in "**Businessline** " on 29th April 2025
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2-Statutory, regulatory and various quasi-judicial bodies
Context: The Supreme Court of Singapore annulled an arbitration award authored by three former Chief Justices of India, including Dipak Mishra. The award was found to have copied large portions from previous awards. This exposed concerns about judicial plagiarism and the heavy dependence on retired judges in Indian arbitration.
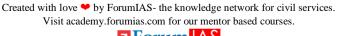
Judicial Plagiarism and Its Impact

1. **Normalization of Copy-Pasting in Law:** Copy-pasting is common among lawyers and judges to maintain consistency. However, mindless copying without attribution harms the independence of judgments and affects the credibility of the legal process.

2. **Ethical Concerns Around Self-Plagiarism:** Self-copying by judges, though less serious than stealing others ' work, still raises ethical questions. In arbitration, where decisions do not create precedent, recycling text purely for convenience is harmful and unjustified.

3. **Serious Cases of Judicial Plagiarism:** Three major types of plagiarism weaken judicial integrity. These include copying core ideas without attribution, lifting material from academic works, and secretly using lawyers 'pleadings as judgments. Each damages the impartiality expected in adjudication.

The Arbitration Paradox

1. **Growing Judicial Influence in Arbitration:** Although arbitration is meant to offer an alternative to court litigation, the appointment of judges as arbitrators brings court-like practices into the system. Judges 'legal expertise often overshadows the need for arbitration-specific skills.

2. **Indian Courts' Preference for Former Judges:** In India, courts and parties, especially government bodies, often prefer retired judges as arbitrators. This trend strengthens judicial habits in arbitration, sometimes at the cost of procedural flexibility and innovation.

3. **Impact on Procedural Integrity:** Recycling earlier awards, even in similar disputes, undermines fairness. As stressed by the Singapore court in DJP v DJO, procedural shortcuts violate the rules of natural justice and damage the credibility of arbitration.

Reforms in Arbitral Appointments

1. **Efforts to Modernize Arbitration Practices:** The Indian judiciary and Parliament are working to modernize arbitration law. They aim to align Indian practices with international standards by correcting past errors and promoting a professional arbitration culture.

2. **Need for a Wider Pool of Arbitrators:** Former Chief Justice DY Chandrachud emphasized that reliance on retired judges must be discouraged. India needs a broader base of trained arbitrators to build a strong and independent arbitration ecosystem.

3. **Building Strong Arbitration Institutions:** To make India a global hub for arbitration, there must be a focus on creating world-class institutions. Training arbitrators in award writing and combining expertise with experience are essential steps forward.

Lessons from the Singapore Judgment

1. **Maintaining International Arbitration Standards:** The Singapore court clarified that its annulment was not a personal criticism of the arbitrators. It was necessary to protect the integrity and expectations of international arbitration.

2. **Wake-Up Call for Indian Arbitration:** The judgment serves as a warning for Indian business entities and government agencies. It highlights the urgent need to rethink practices and build professionalism, ensuring the solemnity of arbitration is preserved.

Question for practice:

Evaluate how the Singapore court's annulment of an arbitration award exposed challenges in Indian arbitration practices.

India struggles to manage its growing plastic pollution problem

Source: The post India struggles to manage its growing plastic pollution problem has been created, based on the article "**A powerful judicial remedy for waste management**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 30th April 2025
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3-Environment and Bio-diversity Conservation
Context: India has emerged as the world's largest plastic polluter, emitting 9.3 million tonnes annually. A recent study **published in *Nature*** highlights **serious flaws in India's plastic waste data and management systems**. The issue demands urgent reforms, better data collection, and judicially enforced environmental accountability.
For detailed information on **Plastic ban failure – Managing plastic waste needs a multi-pronged strategy** read this article here
India's Alarming Plastic Waste Footprint
1. **Massive Contribution to Global Emissions:** India emits **9.3 million tonnes of plastic waste** each year—about **one-fifth of global plastic emissions**. This includes unmanaged debris and emissions from open plastic burning.

2. **Underestimated Waste Generation Rates:** While **official figures report 0.12 kg per capita per day**, the *Nature* study estimates **actual generation at 0.54 kg**, showing serious underestimation.

3. **Flaws in Official Reporting:** Despite **claims of 95% collection coverage**, **rural areas, open burning, and informal recycling are not included**. This leads to overestimated collection and underestimated generation.

Data and Infrastructure Deficits

1. **Opaque Methodologies in Data Collection:** Pollution Control Boards rely on municipal data, but reports lack transparency about data-gathering methods. Methodologies should be made public and audited by third parties.

2. **Poor Rural and Informal Coverage:** Large areas under panchayati raj and informal recycling are left out. Dump sites outnumber **sanitary landfills 10:1**, reflecting inadequate waste containment.

3. **Data Deficit in the Himalayan Region:** A recent article highlighted missing waste data in the Himalayan States, making it hard to assess capacity and implement targeted solutions in these ecologically sensitive zones.

Role of Local Bodies and Technology

1. **Decentralised Responsibility for Waste:** By law, local governments—urban and rural—are central to waste management. Each must be linked with recovery facilities, EPR kiosks, recyclers, and landfills.

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2. **Leveraging Technology for Oversight:** India should use its tech capabilities to geotag waste infrastructure, track operations, and improve both accountability and efficiency in waste management.

3. **Implementing EPR through Kiosks:** PIBOs (producers, importers, brand owners) must set up kiosks nationwide. These should suit local geography, waste volumes, and accessibility to collect and segregate waste.

Supreme Court's Environmental Vigilance

1. **Verdict on Vellore Tanneries:** The Supreme Court directed restoration of pollution-hit areas in Vellore. A committee will monitor compliance within four months under continuing mandamus.

2. **Need for Active Judicial Oversight:** The Court noted that schemes often remain on paper. Justice requires strict enforcement and time-bound compliance, especially in environmental matters.

Legal Enforcement of Polluter Pays Principle

1. **Clear Liability of Polluters:** Polluters are absolutely liable for both compensating victims and restoring environmental damage. Liability extends to active and negligent contributors.

2. **Compensation Challenges and State Responsibility:** Calculating fair compensation is complex. The Court applied the '**Government Pay Principle**', requiring the state to pay victims first and recover costs from polluters.

3. **Continuing Mandamus as a Solution:** This judicial tool ensures compliance over time. Its broader use can improve accountability in waste management and environmental protection nationwide.

For detailed information on **Global negotiations for a treaty to end plastic pollution** read this article here

Question for practice:

Examine the key challenges in India's plastic waste management system and the role of judicial oversight in addressing them.

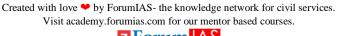## Expanding Tree Plantations is Key to India's Climate Action and Trade Competitiveness

Source: The post Expanding Tree Plantations is Key to India's Climate Action and Trade Competitiveness has been created, based on the article "**Expanding tree cover is crucial**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 30th April 2025
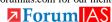**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper3-environment-conservation
Context: India faces rising climate risks and trade pressures due to its carbon-heavy economy. To meet environmental goals and support rural livelihoods, the country must urgently expand tree plantation and carbon sequestration efforts.
For detailed information on **UN World Restoration Flagships** read this article here
Urgency of Expanding Tree Cover

1. **India's Shortfall in Forest Targets: India's forest and tree cover is 25.17%, far below the 33%** target of the 1988 National Forest Policy. Deforestation, rapid urbanisation, and industrial growth have degraded natural ecosystems.

2. **Environmental Role of Tree Plantations: Tree plantations act as carbon sinks**. They also improve soil health, recharge groundwater, reduce erosion, and help withstand extreme weather.

Government-Led Afforestation Initiatives

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1. **Key Policy Measures: The National Agroforestry Policy (2014)** and the **Trees Outside Forests program** promote tree planting on private lands. These aim to reduce pressure on natural forests, restore degraded land, and boost rural incomes.

2. **Impact of the Green India Mission: The Green India Mission**, under the climate action plan, helped increase forest cover by 0.56% from 2017 to 2021. It focuses on reviving degraded forests and managing them sustainably.

Socio-Economic Benefits of Afforestation

1. **Job Creation and Rural Support:** Afforestation creates jobs in nurseries, forest care, and agroforestry. It is vital for rural employment.

2. **Agroforestry's Promise:** Agroforestry improves soil and raises income. ICAR found it boosts farm earnings by 20–30% through timber, fruits, and medicinal plants.

3. **Community Engagement and Support:** Governments and NGOs offer financial aid, training, and market access. This builds ownership and long-term participation.

Private Sector Participation in Tree Planting

1. **Corporate Social Responsibility Drives:** Industries like cement, automobile, and energy are investing in afforestation to offset emissions. Many use these plantations in their carbon credit strategies.

2. **Aligning with Global Trade Pressures:** The EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism from 2026 will tax carbon-heavy imports. With India-EU trade at €124 billion in 2023, Indian exporters must reduce emissions to stay competitive.

3. **Carbon Credit Benefits:** Large-scale plantations help companies earn credits under frameworks like the Verified Carbon Standard. This is cheaper than buying international carbon credits.

Sustainability as a Competitive Strategy

1. **Shift from Compliance to Strategy:** Sustainability now offers a market edge. Firms are building green supply chains, using sustainable raw materials, and adopting energy-efficient practices.

2. **Market Incentives for ESG Compliance:** With global capital favouring ESG principles, Indian industries must adapt to attract investment and retain market access.

Policy Challenges and Recommendations

1. **High Carbon Credit Costs:** In 2023, EU carbon credits cost €83 per tonne. For Indian businesses, tree planting is a cheaper alternative.

2. **Need for a National Carbon Policy:** India must build a transparent registry, set rules under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement, and offer financial incentives to attract private investment.
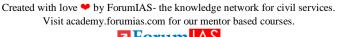
Question for practice:

Discuss how expanding tree plantation can help India address both climate goals and trade challenges.

India must redefine poverty amid rising incomes and challenges

Source: The post India must redefine poverty amid rising incomes and challenges has been created, based on the article "**Let's redefine our poverty line to reflect India's economic stature**" published in "**Live Mint**" on 30th April 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- Indian Economy and issues relating to Planning, Mobilization of Resources, Growth, Development and Employment.

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Context: India is set to become an upper middle-income country by 2030—a key milestone in its long battle against mass poverty. This progress, while promising, brings fresh challenges. The biggest among them is the need to redefine poverty in a nation undergoing significant economic and social transformation.

For detailed **information Revisiting the Poverty Line** read this article here

India's Imminent Economic Milestone

1. **Crossing into a New Income Category:** India is currently classified as a lower middle-income country. By 2030, its per capita income is expected to reach $4,468, marginally above the World Bank's threshold of $4,516 for upper middle-income status.

2. **IMF Forecast Highlights:** The IMF projects India's GDP will rise to $6.77 trillion by 2030. Per capita income will increase from $2,878 in 2025 to $4,468 in 2030. In PPP terms, it will grow from $10,396 to $13,638.

3. **Classification Criteria Can Shift:** These thresholds are revised periodically. Despite estimation uncertainties, India is clearly nearing a higher economic bracket.

India's Outdated Poverty Data

1. **Stale National Estimates:** India has not updated its official poverty line since 2012. The 2017–18 consumption survey was not released, and the 2023–24 survey has not been used to define a new poverty line.

2. **How Poverty Is Measured:** Poverty lines are based on household consumption surveys. These reflect costs of basic food and essential non-food items. They must be revised with changing prices, needs, and living standards.

3. **Need for Timely Revision:** India's current poverty benchmarks are outdated and do not reflect its economic transformation. A recalibrated poverty line is urgently needed.

Re-examining Poverty Metrics

1. **Flawed Measurement Standards:** Many estimates use deprivation norms better suited to poor countries. This fails to represent the reality of an economy nearing upper middle-income status.

2. **Global Poverty Benchmarks:** India has nearly eliminated poverty by the $2.15/day global line. But this can lead to premature optimism.

3. **Higher International Thresholds:** The World Bank recommends $3.65/day for lower middle-income and $6.85/day for upper middle-income countries. These offer more realistic poverty benchmarks.

Policy Implications

1. **Shifting the Optics:** Only 2.3% live below $2.15/day, but 28.1% fall below $3.65/day. A higher poverty line will show more poor but reveal the true picture.

2. **Reorienting Welfare Programmes:** Updated poverty data will help redesign government schemes aligned with present economic realities.
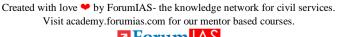
Question for practice:

Examine why India needs to redefine its poverty line as it approaches upper middle-income status.

Kurdish Struggle Gains Relevance Amid Geopolitical Shifts

Source: The post Kurdish Struggle Gains Relevance Amid Geopolitical Shifts has been created, based on the article "**Amidst regional ferment, Kurds 'quest for statehood**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 25th April 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2- International Relations

Context: West Asia is undergoing significant geopolitical shifts. Amidst these changes, the century-old Kurdish struggle for statehood has gained fresh relevance. The weakening of key regional powers and evolving international alliances have created new possibilities — and new uncertainties — for the Kurdish people.

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Kurdish Identity and Historical Struggle

1. **A Stateless Majority:** The Kurds are the world's largest ethnic group without a nation-state, numbering between 35 to 45 million. They mainly reside in Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria, with significant diaspora in Europe. Despite internal sub-divisions, a shared history, language, and geography form their collective identity.

2. **Distinct Ethnic and Religious Roots:** Kurds are ethnically distinct from Turks, Arabs, and Persians. While mostly Sunni Muslims, they also share links with Yezidis, Alevi, and Zoroastrians. Their ancestry ties back to the Old Mediterranean and Caucasian stock.

3. **Legacy of Betrayals and Suppression:** The 1920 Treaty of Sevres promised Kurdish autonomy, but Turkey reversed it. Since then, Kurds have been repressed. For example, in 1994, a Kurdish MP was jailed for 15 years just for speaking Kurdish in Parliament.

National Repression and Resistance Movements

1. **Turkey's Long Conflict with the PKK:** Ankara's repression led to the creation of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in 1978. The armed conflict has claimed around 37,000 lives. Recent developments include a PKK ceasefire and Turkey's $20 billion development plan for Kurdish regions. However, political integration is still pending.

2. **Syria's Civil War and the Rise of SDF:** Syria's conflict enabled the formation of the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), backed by the U.S. The SDF now controls nearly 40% of Syria and signed a deal for integration into Syria's political structure. However, Turkey opposes the SDF, linking it to the PKK.

3. **Iraqi Kurdistan's Fragile Autonomy:** Iraq's Kurdish region gained autonomy in 1992 and constitutional recognition post-2003. A 2017 independence referendum received 92% support but was rejected by Iraq's Supreme Court. Ongoing disputes over oil exports and Turkish and Iranian military actions threaten its stability.
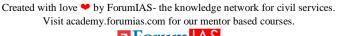
Iranian Kurds and Subtle Repression

1. **Cultural Links with Persians:** Iranian Kurds share ethnic and historical links with Persians. While the regime has not used extreme violence, it firmly opposes Kurdish separatism. Kurdish loyalty has often been questioned during wars, fueling Persianisation and marginalisation.

2. **Geopolitical Faultlines and Future Risks:** Iranian Kurds live along volatile borders. With Iran weakened and facing external military threats, its Kurdish population — the largest minority — may see an opportunity to seek autonomy or secession.
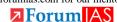
Current Prospects and Persistent Challenges

1. **Proto-States but No Unified Vision:** Kurdish autonomous regions in Iraq and Syria signal progress, but Kurds lack a unifying ideology like Zionism or a coordinated transnational movement. This fragmentation limits their ability to pursue a shared statehood vision.

2. **The Role of Global and Regional Powers:** Any Kurdish state would depend heavily on Western support. But as seen with Israel, such externally created states may face strong regional opposition. Whether Kurdistan can root itself securely remains uncertain.

3. **An Unsettled Future:** The fate of Kurds remains precarious. Their age-old wisdom captures it well: "Kurds have no friends except the mountains." Amid shifting alliances and weakened regimes, their dream persists — but so do the obstacles.

Question for practice:

Examine the historical and geopolitical factors that have shaped the Kurdish struggle for statehood in West Asia.

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Global trade is shifting away from the WTO framework

Source: The post Global trade is shifting away from the WTO framework has been created, based on the article "**Is the World Trade Organization still relevant?**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 25th April 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2-Bilateral, Regional and Global Groupings and Agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

Context: The global trading system faces a critical moment as multilateral institutions struggle to remain effective. Tariff-based trade policies, shifting alliances, and structural limitations have raised doubts about the relevance of the World Trade Organization (WTO).

For detailed information on Major issues with the WTO: A requiem for the WTO read this article here

Decline in Core Functions of the WTO

1. **Structural Flaws and Mismatched Goals:** The Doha Round had overambitious and unrealistic targets. The entry of China was poorly integrated, and existing rules failed to address its trade behaviour. Countries grew frustrated as tariff negotiations failed to reduce disparities. The lack of progress weakened trust in the system.

2. **Collapse of Negotiation, Monitoring, and Dispute Resolution:** The WTO no longer performs its key roles. Negotiations broke down after the Doha Round. Only one multilateral agreement on fisheries was reached, and it remains unfinished. The appellate body, the highest trade court, became inactive due to blocked appointments. Trade monitoring is ineffective as many members withhold data on their trade actions.

Inability to Prevent Economic Crisis

1. **Consensus-Based Reform Blocked by Members:** Reforms are stalled because decision-making requires consensus. Attempts to shift to voting were blocked by key members. Proposals like arbitration for dispute resolution lack broad support. No legal way exists to force members to reveal their trade measures, undermining the monitoring system.

2. **Lack of Global Crisis Response Mechanism:** The WTO cannot stop an economic crisis caused by tariffs. It is not a space where countries can come together, speak frankly, and find solutions in emergencies.

Breakdown of MFN Principle

1. **FTAs Undermining WTO Rules:** The Most-Favoured-Nation (MFN) principle, the foundation of the WTO, is being bypassed. Countries increasingly use Free Trade Agreements (FTAs), which face minimal review. These agreements weaken the multilateral framework.

2. **Tariff Imbalance and Shift to Bilateralism:** One major country reduced its tariffs significantly over multiple rounds, expecting others to follow. When that didn't happen, it turned to bilateral deals. Tariffs under sections 232 and 301 were introduced and maintained. The shift away from MFN became bipartisan and long-lasting.

Agricultural Disputes and India's Opposition

1. **Failure to Resolve Key Agricultural Issues:** Talks on fisheries, subsidies, and food stockpiling remain deadlocked. Some developing countries do not share India's concerns, making consensus harder. These issues have become too complex for bilateral deals.

2. **Domestic Constraints on Subsidy Negotiations:** India opposes many proposals on agriculture due to political and food security concerns. While large economies provide high subsidies, India remains limited to 10%. The WTO did not accommodate such disparities.

WTO's Weakness in Handling China's Impact

1. **Overcapacity and Market Disruption:** The WTO could not predict the scale of overcapacity. One country's ability to produce more than half the global steel and cement disrupted markets without breaking any rules.

2. **Inadequate Rules for Modern Trade:** Current rules do not cover many trade-distorting actions. This loophole has damaged the credibility and effectiveness of the multilateral trading system.

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Question for practice:

Discuss how structural limitations and geopolitical shifts have contributed to the decline of the World Trade Organization.

India and Pakistan face challenges over Indus water sharing

Source: The post India and Pakistan face challenges over Indus water sharing has been created, based on the article "**Shadow over Indus Water Treaty**" published in "**Businessline**" on 25th April 2025
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2-International Relations – Bilateral groupings and agreements
Context: Water-sharing in the Indus basin is crucial for both India and Pakistan. However, recent political tensions, climate challenges, and violent incidents, including the Pahalgam terror attack, have pushed the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) into a critical phase.
For detailed information on **Indus Water Treaty- Concerns and Way Forward** <u>read this article here</u>
Historical Background of the Treaty

1. **Partition and the Water Dispute:** After 1947, control over the Indus River system became a serious issue. The basin includes six rivers—Indus, Jhelum, Chenab, Ravi, Beas, and Sutlej—flowing across both countries.

2. **Agreement and Allocation:** India and Pakistan signed the IWT in 1960, brokered by the World Bank. Pakistan received 80% of the total waters (about 135 BCM) from the western rivers. India got 20% (about 33 BCM) from the eastern rivers.

3. **Institutional Mechanism:** A Permanent Indus Commission (PIC) was created to enable regular dialogue and resolve disputes. The World Bank retained a role in arbitration.

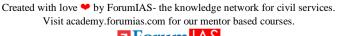**Importance of the Indus River System**

1. **Pakistan's Heavy Dependence:** About 220 million people and nearly 90% of Pakistan's agriculture depend on the Indus system. The Indus Basin Irrigation System, the world's largest, supports over 16 million hectares of farmland.

2. **India's Regional Importance:** India uses the Indus waters to support 120 million people across Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, and Rajasthan—for agriculture, urban supply, and industry.

Rising Tensions and Recent Developments

1. **Growing Indian Assertiveness:** India's position hardened after attacks in Uri (2016), Pulwama (2019), and Pahalgam (2023), and after scrapping Jammu & Kashmir's special status in 2019.

2. **India Invokes Treaty Clause:** In 2023, India invoked Article XII of the IWT for the first time, signaling its intent to seek modifications.

3. **India's Case for Change:** India argues the treaty is outdated. It does not consider today's realities like population pressure, altered river flows, or climate change. Delays caused by Pakistan's objections to Indian hydropower projects have added to frustration.

Impact on Pakistan

1. **Agricultural and Economic Vulnerability:** Any reduction in water flows could harm major crops such as wheat and rice, affecting food security and livelihoods for millions.

2. **Energy Security at Risk:** Hydropower from the Indus system fuels major plants like Tarbela and Mangla. Upstream water changes could worsen power shortages.

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3. **Environmental and Social Effects:** Lower water levels may cause desertification in Sindh and Punjab, increase soil salinity, degrade ecosystems, and displace rural populations.

4. **Diminished Diplomatic Space:** India's rising global clout may make it harder for Pakistan to gain international backing or win disputes in arbitration forums.

Impact on India

1. **Strategic and Economic Gains:** Modifying the treaty could allow India to expand irrigation and hydropower in northern states, supporting border-area development.

2. **Risk to Global Image:** Unilateral actions may harm India's reputation as a responsible actor and weaken its position in other transboundary water treaties.

3. **Environmental Trade-offs:** Uncoordinated infrastructure projects could damage fragile river ecosystems in the Himalayas and deltas.

Broader Repercussions

1. **Legal and Security Dangers:** Breaking the treaty may lead to legal disputes and militarised approaches to water management in a nuclear region.

2. **Climate Urgency and the Need for Cooperation:** Glacial melt, erratic monsoons, and droughts highlight the importance of coordinated governance. Without IWT, joint responses will be difficult.

3. **High Human Stakes:** Over 340 million people directly depend on the Indus. The cost of failure could be catastrophic for both nations.

Question for practice:

Evaluate the implications of recent political tensions and climate challenges on the future of the Indus Waters Treaty between India and Pakistan.

Building Food Literacy for a Healthier Future

Source: The post Building Food Literacy for a Healthier Future has been created, based on the article "**Teaching children to eat well must begin in school**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 26th April 2025

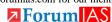**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper3- Agriculture – food security

Context: The **Nutrition for Growth Summit** and **UNGA's extension** of the **Decade of Action on Nutrition to 2030** aim to strengthen global efforts to end malnutrition. The focus now expands beyond food access, highlighting the links between **nutrition, education, equity**, and **sustainability**.

For detailed information on **World Food Day 2024 emphasizes the right to safe and nutritious food for all** read this article here

Expanding the Understanding of Nutrition

1. **Moving Beyond Early Childhood Focus:** Efforts previously centred on the **first 1,000 days of life**. New evidence shows **adolescence** is also a crucial window for reversing early deficits and promoting **lifelong health.**

2. **Shifting From Feeding to Teaching:** Good nutrition is no longer only about providing food. It requires **educating children** about **what, how**, and **why to eat** for long-term well-being.

3. **Schools as Starting Points for Change:** A **side event at the Paris Summit** emphasized that **food education must begin early** in schools. It should move beyond **counting calories** and help build awareness about **health and the planet**.

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Challenges in Children's Food Environment

1. **Complexity of Modern Food Choices:** Today's children live in a world of **easy food access**, **heavy marketing**, and **peer pressure**. Without proper knowledge, making **healthy choices** is increasingly difficult.

2. **Poor Eating Habits and their Impacts:** Many children **skip breakfast, eat few fruits and vegetables, and consume too much processed food**. These habits contribute to **malnutrition, obesity, chronic diseases, and mental health issues**.

3. **Decline in Dietary Diversity: Minimum Dietary Diversity**, now a **global SDG 2 indicator**, shows that many children — even in India's cities and villages — **fail to eat a varied diet**. This harms their health and reflects **deeper issues** in food systems.

Gaps in Food and Nutrition Education

1. **Outdated or Absent Curricula:** Most schools lack a **structured, updated food education curriculum. Teachers are poorly trained**, and **learning resources are insufficient** to teach healthy eating effectively..

2. **The Need for a Comprehensive Approach:** Food education must start from **preschool** and continue through **middle school**. It should teach the importance of **diverse diets**, explain **how the human body works**, and show how **food systems impact the environment**.

3. **Promoting Biodiverse Diets:** Curricula should promote consuming **local, seasonal, and culturally familiar foods. Biodiverse diets** improve nutrition, support **local farmers, protect the environment**, and **preserve traditional food knowledge.**

Building a Food-Literate Generation

1. **Integrating Nutrition into Daily School Life:** Teaching children to eat well must **move beyond isolated events**. Schools should have **weekly lessons**, **healthier canteens**, **kitchen gardens**, **simple cooking sessions**, and **student-led campaigns**.

2. **Examples of Change and Opportunities in India:** Globally, students are learning by **growing food, cooking meals**, and **reading food labels.** In India, the **NEP** and **School Health and Wellness Programme** offer frameworks, but **clearer structure** and **trained teachers** are urgently needed.

3. **Empowering Children as Influencers:** Once educated, children can influence **families**, **schools**, and **communities** to adopt **healthier**, more **sustainable** food practices.

Conclusion

Food literacy must become a core part of education. Teaching children to eat well is essential for their personal health, cultural awareness, environmental responsibility, and future readiness.

Question for practice:

Discuss how building food literacy among children can contribute to better health, education, and sustainability.

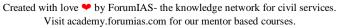## Meta lawsuit shows clash between AI and copyright protection

Source: The post Meta lawsuit shows clash between AI and copyright protection has been created, based on the article "**The New Metakleptocracy**" published in "**The Economic Times**" on 26th April 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper**3**– Science and technology-Awareness in the fields of IT, Computers, robotics, nanotechnology, issues relating to intellectual property rights

Context: Meta faces a lawsuit for allegedly using millions of pirated books to train its LLAMA algorithms without permission. The case raises major questions about copyright protection, intellectual ownership, and the future value of creative work.

For detailed information on **Lawsuit filed by The New York Times against OpenAI and Microsoft: Copyright VS Ai** read this article here

The Lawsuit Against Meta

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1. **Unauthorized Use of Copyrighted Material:** Meta is accused of using millions of books and copyrighted works without consent to save costs. Internal communications reveal that the company accepted the use but claimed it was protected under "fair use."

2. **Public Disclosure of Internal Exchanges:** Released documents show Meta preferred pirated modern fiction because it was easy to parse for LLM training, undermining its claim of using material for access and preservation.

3. **Meta's Defense Strategy:** Meta argues that its use was transformative and thus qualifies as fair use. It also claims that any individual book's impact on its large language model (LLM) is statistically insignificant, less than 0.06%.

Historical Evolution of Intellectual Property

1. **Early Open Access Traditions:** Ancient India treated the Vedas as shruti (heard) and apauruseya (not of man), valuing continuation over authorship. Similarly, ancient Greek epics like *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* were part of a broader oral tradition.

2. **Shift Towards Ownership:** As intellectual work gained monetary value, authorship and ownership became important to establish authenticity and protect economic rights.

3. **Modern Importance of Copyright Protection:** Today, success often depends on ideas and innovation, making the defense of intellectual property more critical than ever before.

Meta's Motive and Approach

1. **Claim of Transformation and Innovation:** Meta claims LLAMA's development depends on the use of copyrighted works to create transformative, open-source AI tools.

2. **Reality of Commercial Exploitation:** Internal discussions reveal that Meta aims to commodify copyrighted works, not to enhance access, but to ease LLM training.

3. **Potential for Derivative and Inauthentic Outputs:** Meta's method could lead to unlicensed sequels, derivative fiction, and new works mimicking original styles, making authentic creative output redundant.

Wider Implications and Warnings

1. **Emerging Techno-Hierarchy:** Companies like Meta and OpenAI seek to create dominant knowledge systems by exploiting stolen creativity, sidelining true authors.

2. **Historical Parallels to Knowledge Monopolies:** The decline from open learning to a knowledge monopoly in ancient India mirrors today's tech giants 'drive to capture wealth and power through intellectual theft.

3. **Hope for Judicial Intervention:** The article expresses hope that the courts will uphold intellectual rights and prevent history from repeating itself.
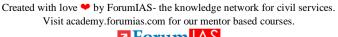
Question for practice:

Examine how the Meta lawsuit highlights the tension between innovation and intellectual property rights.

Trump's policies trigger lasting stagflation risk for global economy

Source: The post Trump's policies trigger lasting stagflation risk for global economy has been created, based on the article "**Stagflation for the ages**" published in "**Financial Express**" on 26th April 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2- International Relations

Context: The article warns of a deeper and lasting stagflation threat facing the global economy. This risk has been triggered by Donald Trump's aggressive protectionist policies and political attacks on the U.S. Federal Reserve. Unlike temporary COVID-era disruptions, today's supply-chain breakdowns and policy instability could cause severe inflation, recession, and global trade collapse.

For detailed information on **Impact of Donald Trump's economic policies on U.S. growth and inflation** read this article here

Nature of Stagflation: Then and Now

1. **Temporary Supply Chain Disruptions During COVID-19:** After the pandemic, stagflation appeared when supply chains were strained by shifting consumption patterns. A surge in commodity prices, semiconductor shortages, and shipping bottlenecks accounted for about 60% of U.S. inflation during 2021–22.

2. **Pandemic-Era Inflation Gradually Faded:** Supply-chain stresses eased after about two years, helping inflation pressures to subside as global trade normalized.

3. **Emergence of a More Permanent Crisis:** Today's stagflation threat stems from structural changes in supply chains, unlike the temporary pandemic disruptions.

Impact of U.S. Protectionism on Global Trade

1. **Decoupling from China and Other Trade Partners:** The U.S. is retreating from China-centric and even North American supply chains, reversing efficiencies that previously reduced U.S. inflation by about 0.5 percentage points annually.

2. **Enduring Distrust in Trade Relations:** Distrust of U.S. trade behavior will persist beyond Trump's term, making the damage long-lasting and difficult to repair.

3. **Complexities in Reshoring Production:** Claims of a U.S. manufacturing rebirth are misleading. Reshoring requires years of planning and construction, which policy uncertainty now threatens.

4. **Struggles to Rebuild Global Supply Chains:** Other countries face prolonged efforts to establish new trade networks, risking higher costs and inefficiencies across global production systems.

Politicisation of Central Banking

1. **Trump's Pressure on the Federal Reserve:** Trump criticized the Fed's decision to hold rates steady and threatened to remove Chair Jerome Powell, undermining monetary policy independence.

2. **Echoes of 1970s Stagflation:** The situation resembles the late 1970s, when a weak Fed and a weak dollar worsened America's first stagflation episode.

3. **Broader Attacks on Independent Agencies:** Trump's dismissal of leaders from regulatory bodies signals a trend that could extend to the Federal Reserve, further destabilizing economic governance.

Rising Recession Risks

1. **Uncertainty Paralyzing Business and Consumers:** Widespread policy unpredictability is freezing business investment and consumer spending, heightening the risk of recession.

2. **Global Retaliation Against U.S. Tariffs:** New U.S. tariffs provoke retaliation, risking sharp declines in the global trade cycle essential for economic stability.

3. **Historical Warning from Past Trade Wars:** With U.S. tariffs higher than in 1930, the risks of a trade collapse similar to the Smoot-Hawley era are growing.

4. **Stagflation or Worse:** Given the scale of disruptions, the world could face not just stagflation but even deeper global trade and economic breakdowns.

Conclusion

The world faces a serious threat of lasting stagflation and recession. Disruptions in supply chains, rising protectionism, and political attacks on institutions could severely damage global trade, raise costs, and slow economic recovery for years.

Question for practice:
Examine how current U.S. protectionist policies and political instability are creating a deeper threat of stagflation and global economic disruption.

Rodrik's trilemma explains Western democracy's rising crisis and populism

Source: The post Rodrik's trilemma explains Western democracy's rising crisis and populism has been created, based on the article "**The 'political trilemma 'and the crisis in the West**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 28th April 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper1-political philosophies like communism, capitalism, socialism etc.— their forms and effect on the society.

Context: Western democracies are facing a deepening crisis. Rising populism, mistrust in institutions, and increasing polarisation have made countries more insular. Economist Dani Rodrik's "political trilemma" explains this, showing that nations cannot sustain globalisation, sovereignty, and popular democracy simultaneously.

Understanding Rodrik's Political Trilemma

1. **Core Idea of the Trilemma:** Rodrik argued that countries can achieve only two out of three: globalisation, national sovereignty, and popular democracy. Despite globalisation rhetoric, real international integration remains limited due to national barriers and transaction costs.

2. **Theory Becoming Reality:** The trilemma is no longer theoretical. Today, the West is struggling with the contradictions Rodrik foresaw, leading to political and economic disruptions.

Different Paths Taken to Navigate the Trilemma

1. **Democracy and Globalisation at the Cost of Sovereignty:** The European Union (EU) is an example of sacrificing sovereignty for democracy and globalisation. EU nations surrendered control over key policies like trade, migration, and monetary policy. Though the EU created a single market of 450 million people and 15% of global trade, resentment grew among those who felt left out economically or culturally.

2. **Globalisation and Sovereignty with Limited Mass Politics:** Some countries pursue sovereignty and globalisation while restricting mass political influence. They empower independent central banks and regulatory bodies to make economic decisions, insulating them from public pressure. International financial institutions like the IMF have pushed for such models, sometimes causing backlash. In Kenya, the IMF faced severe criticism for enforcing harsh fiscal measures at the cost of public welfare.

3. **Democracy and Sovereignty with Limited Globalisation:** Other countries, like India and China, preserved democracy and sovereignty while restricting globalisation. They used protectionism, foreign investment controls, and domestic industrial policies to grow. China and East Asian nations allowed foreign investment selectively while curbing political dissent and foreign media influence. Though this approach delivered high economic growth, it often came at the cost of individual freedoms.

The Western Crisis and its Consequences

1. **Attempt to Balance All Three:** Western democracies tried to balance democracy, sovereignty, and globalisation. However, sustaining all three proved impossible, leading to growing social and political tensions.

2. **Economic Discontent and Populist Backlash:** While globalisation raised living standards, it also caused job losses and insecurity. Workers in industrial towns and small businesses felt abandoned. Populist leaders like Donald Trump, Geert Wilders, and Viktor Orbán channelled these grievances.

3. **Nationalism and the Erosion of Trust:** This discontent fuelled nationalist movements like Brexit and strengthened far-right parties. Citizens blamed governments for accepting unfavourable regulations, leading to backlash against democracy and globalisation.

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4. **Rising Protectionism and Isolationism:** Populist responses included protectionism, immigration controls, and withdrawal from global initiatives like climate change efforts, signalling a retreat from global cooperation.

Way Forward

1. **The Stark Choices Ahead:** Rodrik's trilemma remains critical: countries must make difficult choices between globalisation, sovereignty, and democracy.

2. **The Need for Broader Economic Gains:** To avoid further unrest, economic benefits must be more widely shared. Narrow gains deepen disillusionment.

3. **Strengthening Democratic Institutions:** A stronger, more inclusive democracy is essential for stability. Reckless populism or dismantling governance will only worsen the crisis.

Question for practice:

Examine how Dani Rodrik's political trilemma explains the crisis in Western democracies.

India needs skilled arbitrators for global leadership

Source: The post India needs skilled arbitrators for global leadership has been created, based on the article "**The real Indian arbitrator needs**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 28th April 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3– Effects of Liberalization on the Economy and **GS Paper-2**- Statutory, Regulatory and various Quasi-judicial Bodies.

Context: India's rapid economic growth has led to increased domestic and cross-border commerce, making disputes more frequent. With court systems overburdened and slow, arbitration has emerged as a preferred alternative. However, concerns remain whether India's arbitration framework, especially the role of arbitrators, is ready for global leadership.

For detailed information on **The globalization of the Indian legal industry** read this article here

The Central Role of Arbitrators in Indian Arbitration

1. **Human Capital Defines Arbitration Success:** The success of arbitration depends on its human capital. Arbitrators, even more than arbitration lawyers, shape the efficiency and credibility of the process.

2. **Arbitrators as Controllers of Proceedings:** Arbitrators set procedures, finalise timelines, settle disputes, and impose penalties. Their conduct determines the speed, fairness, and legitimacy of the proceedings.

3. **Awards as the Face of Indian Arbitration:** Arbitrators 'awards can be challenged in courts. Their quality directly influences the reputation of Indian arbitration at national and international levels.

The Unique Demands of Arbitration Skills

1. **Need for Skills Beyond Judicial Experience:** Judicial experience alone is insufficient. Arbitrators must manage disputes flexibly, blending procedural certainty with innovation, unlike rigid court processes.

2. **Importance of Soft Skills and Cultural Sensitivity:** International arbitration demands collaboration with diverse tribunal members. Arbitrators must develop negotiation, persuasion, and cross-cultural communication skills, which require special training.

3. **Different Nature of Award Writing:** Arbitral awards need careful analysis of complex documents, testimonies, and financial data. Writing such awards demands a different skillset from traditional judicial judgments.

Persistent Gaps in Developing Elite Indian Arbitrators

1. **Neglected Focus on Arbitrator Development:** While efforts to strengthen arbitration lawyers are common, little attention is paid to developing skilled arbitrators. This weakens the arbitration ecosystem.

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2. **Limited Global Presence of Indian Arbitrators:** Justice D.Y. Chandrachud recently noted the absence of Indian arbitrators in international disputes without Indian elements. This shows India's weak integration into global arbitration networks.

3. **Dependence on Retired Judges:** Indian appointments favour retired judges, assuming judicial training ensures arbitration quality. However, recent Ministry of Finance guidelines revealed delays, high costs, and poorly reasoned awards mimicking court processes.

Pathways for Strengthening Indian Arbitration

1. **Diversification of Arbitrator Pool:** The arbitrator pool must expand beyond advocates and judges. Specialists from fields like finance, engineering, and international trade should be included for richer decision-making.

2. **Mandatory Training and Accreditation:** All arbitrators must undergo formal training through certification, workshops, and professional memberships. Such measures would raise arbitration standards and shift perceptions away from litigation bias.

Conclusion

India must focus on building a diverse and highly skilled pool of arbitrators. Only then can it realise its aspiration of becoming a global arbitration hub and gain lasting credibility in international dispute resolution.

Question for practice:

Discuss how the quality and development of arbitrators impact India's ambition to become a global arbitration hub.

UN conference offers hope for ocean protection

Source: The post UN conference offers hope for ocean protection has been created, based on the article "**Third UN Ocean Conference: Opportunity to build consensus**" published in "**Indian Express**" on 28th April 2025
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.
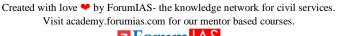**Context**: India's vast coastline makes the ocean crucial for its economy, environment, and daily life. As threats to ocean health grow, the third United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC3) offers a vital chance to promote global action for conservation and sustainable use.
Importance of the Ocean for Humanity and India

1. **The Ocean as a Shared Resource:** The ocean feeds and protects people worldwide. It enables trade, sustainable energy, and scientific discovery. India's Vision 2030 recognises the blue economy as a key growth pillar.

2. **Serious Threats to Ocean Health:** The ocean faces plastic pollution, overfishing, acidification, rising sea levels, and ecosystem destruction. Every year, over eight million tons of plastic end up in the ocean. More than one-third of fish stocks are overexploited.

3. **Need for Immediate Multilateral Action:** Without strong collective efforts, the damage to the ocean will intensify, endangering food security, economies, and the environment.

UNOC3: A Critical Opportunity

1. **Global Collaboration for Ocean Protection:** Around 100 heads of states, researchers, economic leaders, activists, and citizens will gather to drive collective commitments for protecting the ocean.

2. **Learning from Climate Efforts:** UNOC3, hosted by France and Costa Rica, aims to create the "Nice Ocean Agreements," offering a binding framework like the Paris Agreement, aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals.

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3. **Action-Oriented Discussions:** The conference will focus on operational outcomes in governance, financing, and knowledge, instead of vague declarations.

Strengthening Ocean Governance

1. **Urgency of Legal Frameworks:** More than 60% of the ocean lies beyond national jurisdiction and remains unregulated. This leads to pollution, illegal fishing, and the exploitation of endangered species.

2. **Ending the High Seas Legal Gap:** Without surveillance and common rules, the high seas suffer unchecked damage. Ratifying the BBNJ Agreement by 60 countries is essential to bring it into force.

3. **Significance of the BBNJ Agreement:** The Agreement under the UN Convention will establish rules for the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity beyond national boundaries.

Financing and Sustainable Blue Economy

1. **Need for Increased Investments:** Ocean protection requires greater public and private financing. New commitments in shipping, tourism, trade, and investments will be announced at Nice.

2. **Regenerating Marine Resources:** A healthy blue economy depends on allowing marine ecosystems to renew themselves naturally.

3. **Balancing Growth and Conservation:** Economic use of the ocean must be matched by strong conservation strategies to secure future benefits.

Enhancing Ocean Knowledge and Public Awareness

1. **Closing Knowledge Gaps:** Despite mapping the Moon and Mars, Earth's ocean depths remain largely unexplored. Scientific research, innovation, and education must be prioritised.

2. **Public Awareness Campaigns:** France will organise "We are the Ocean" festivals in Delhi, Chennai, Puducherry, and Goa to engage citizens through exhibitions, films, workshops, and discussions.

3. **India's Role at UNOC3:** "Blue Talks" in Delhi will bring Indian researchers and institutions together to present India's recommendations for the conference.

Conclusion

The ocean is a universal bond and a shared responsibility. UNOC3 can mark a turning point for ocean conservation, securing a healthier future for the planet and future generations.

Question for practice:

Examine how the third United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC3) aims to address the growing threats to ocean health.
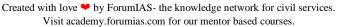
Deputy Speaker vacancy weakens India's parliamentary balance

Source: The post Deputy Speaker vacancy weakens India's parliamentary balance has been created, based on the article "**The post of Deputy Speaker is not symbolic or optional**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 29th April 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2- Appointment to various Constitutional posts, powers, functions and responsibilities of various Constitutional Bodies.

Context: The Deputy Speaker's office in the Lok Sabha is a constitutional necessity under Article 93 of the Indian Constitution. However, the persistent vacancy of this position in recent years has raised serious concerns about constitutional adherence and parliamentary integrity.

For detailed information on **The missing Deputy Speaker: What is the post, and what does the Constitution say** read this article here

Constitutional Basis and Historical Evolution

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1. **Mandate under the Constitution:** Article 93 requires the Lok Sabha to elect a Speaker and Deputy Speaker "as soon as may be," indicating urgency, not discretion. Article 94 ensures the Deputy Speaker remains in office until resignation, removal, or ceasing to be a Member of Parliament.

2. **Origins During British Rule:** The position dates back to the colonial era as the Deputy President of the Central Legislative Assembly. Sachidanand Sinha first held the post in 1921, embedding it as a key parliamentary fixture.

3. **Role in Post-Independence India:** After Independence, the Constituent Assembly retained the Deputy Speaker's office even before the full adoption of the Constitution. M.A. Ayyangar, the first elected Deputy Speaker, demonstrated the role's importance during the crisis following Speaker G.V. Mavalankar's death.

Functional Importance of the Deputy Speaker

1. **Supporting the Speaker's Duties:** Given the Speaker cannot preside over all sessions, the Deputy Speaker ensures the House's continuous functioning without procedural disruption.

2. **Handling Important Responsibilities:** The Deputy Speaker chairs critical sessions, oversees committees, and manages sensitive debates requiring neutrality, mirroring the Speaker's expected impartiality.

3. **Strengthening Bipartisanship:** Traditionally, the post has been offered to the Opposition to foster trust and cooperation, supporting the non-partisan ethos of the Speaker's role.

The Emerging Constitutional Vacuum

1. **Prolonged Vacancy in Recent Lok Sabhas:** The 17th Lok Sabha (2019–2024) saw the Deputy Speaker's seat vacant for the entire term. The 18th Lok Sabha has yet to appoint one, an unprecedented constitutional anomaly.

2. **Undermining Institutional Safeguards:** This vacancy centralizes power with the Speaker and ruling party, eliminating a critical counterbalance. In emergencies, the absence could create leadership confusion in the House.

3. **Erosion of Parliamentary Conventions:** Failing to offer the post to the Opposition disregards established conventions that promote inclusivity and consensus-driven politics.
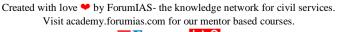
Need for Urgent Reforms

1. **Closing Constitutional Ambiguities:** Setting a mandatory deadline, such as within 60 days of the Lok Sabha's first sitting, could ensure timely appointment and compliance with constitutional intent.

2. **Proposing Statutory Mechanisms:** A legal provision could empower the President to initiate the election process within a specific timeframe on the advice of the Prime Minister or Speaker.

3. **Reaffirming Democratic Commitment:** Electing a Deputy Speaker is crucial to uphold the Constitution and demonstrate the Parliament's commitment to rule-based governance.

Question for practice:

Examine how the prolonged vacancy of the Deputy Speaker's office affects constitutional governance and parliamentary functioning in India.

Indian cities face climate and urban challenges

Source: The post Indian cities face climate and urban challenges has been created, based on the article "**India's urban future is at a crossroads**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 29th April 2025
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper1- Society-urbanisation, their problems and their remedies

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Content: As India's summer worsens, cities are battling water shortages, rising electricity demand, and soaring temperatures. These recurring struggles raise urgent concerns about whether Indian cities are equipped to handle climate extremes, rapid urbanisation, and meet Sustainable Development Goal-11 (SDG-11) targets.

For detailed information on **Urbanization in India- Significance & Challenges** read this article here
Challenges of Urbanisation and Climate Impact

1. **Urban Growth and Its Consequences:** Urbanisation fuels economic growth but also increases pollution, congestion, and environmental harm, affecting the poor the most.

2. **Lack of Long-Term Climate Planning:** The 2025 Sustainable Futures Collective report shows that Indian cities lack serious long-term strategies to tackle climate change and urban heat island effects.

3. **Commitment to SDG-11:** Despite India's pledge to build inclusive and resilient cities by 2030, real-world challenges highlight the slow and uneven progress.

Deeper Insights and Urban Disparities

1. **Inclusivity and Safety Gaps:** Disparities in inclusivity show unequal access to opportunities. Differences in safety rankings highlight the need for stronger law enforcement in some cities.

2. **Sustainability and Resilience Shortfalls:** Environmental planning and disaster preparedness vary widely. The Annual Survey of Indian City Systems 2023 found that only 16 cities had a 'city sustainability plan' and 17 had 'city resilience strategies.'

Shortcomings in Current Urban Indices

1. **Limited Scope of Domestic Indices:** NITI Aayog's SDG Urban Index tracks only a few SDG-11 indicators like sanitation, housing, waste treatment, and road deaths. The Ease of Living Index also misses a full SDG-11 evaluation.

2. **Gaps in Global Indices:** International rankings like Mercer's and the Resilient Cities Index overlook Indian ground realities and urban complexities.

3. **Impact on Policymaking:** The absence of a specific SDG-11 index leaves a gap, making it difficult for policymakers to identify which cities are truly inclusive, safe, and sustainable.
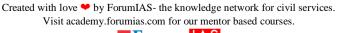
A New Framework for Measuring Urban Sustainability

1. **Creation of Four Distinct Indices:** Researchers created four indices for safety, inclusivity, resilience, and sustainability, ranking 10 major Indian cities on specific indicators.

2. **Methodology and Data Sources:** They used nine safety, 19 inclusivity, and 15 resilience and sustainability indicators. Data came from sources like Census 2011, NCRB, IMD, RBI, and others. The Shannon Entropy Weighting technique offered an objective method to assign indicator weights.

3. Key Findings Across Cities

• **Ahmedabad** ranked first in inclusivity; **Jaipur** ranked lowest.

• **Bengaluru** emerged as the safest city; **Kolkata** was the least safe.

• **Surat** led in sustainability; **Kolkata** performed the worst.

• **Chennai** topped climate resilience; **Jaipur** ranked the lowest.

The Road Ahead for Indian Cities

1. **Need for Better Tracking Mechanisms:** Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) must set up frameworks to track SDG-11 at the local level, following successful district models.

2. **Leveraging Smart City Infrastructure:** Integrated Command and Control Centres under the Smart Cities Mission must be used for real-time urban data collection and planning.

3. **Addressing Urban Poverty:** India still depends on outdated Census 2011 data. A periodic Urban Poor Quality of Living Survey is essential for accurate planning.

4. **Importance of Localised Solutions:** Each city needs data-driven, city-specific policies to deal with its unique problems and build a more equitable urban future.

Question for practice:

Discuss the key challenges and solutions for making Indian cities more resilient, inclusive, safe, and sustainable in the face of climate change and rapid urbanisation.

Singapore court ruling highlights flaws in Indian arbitration practices

Source: The post Singapore court ruling highlights flaws in Indian arbitration practices has been created, based on the article "**Reining in 'judicial plagiarism 'in arbitration**" published in "**Businessline** " on 29th April 2025

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

Context: The Supreme Court of Singapore annulled an arbitration award authored by three former Chief Justices of India, including Dipak Mishra. The award was found to have copied large portions from previous awards. This exposed concerns about judicial plagiarism and the heavy dependence on retired judges in Indian arbitration.
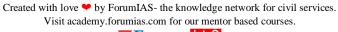
Judicial Plagiarism and Its Impact

1. **Normalization of Copy-Pasting in Law:** Copy-pasting is common among lawyers and judges to maintain consistency. However, mindless copying without attribution harms the independence of judgments and affects the credibility of the legal process.

2. **Ethical Concerns Around Self-Plagiarism:** Self-copying by judges, though less serious than stealing others ' work, still raises ethical questions. In arbitration, where decisions do not create precedent, recycling text purely for convenience is harmful and unjustified.

3. **Serious Cases of Judicial Plagiarism:** Three major types of plagiarism weaken judicial integrity. These include copying core ideas without attribution, lifting material from academic works, and secretly using lawyers 'pleadings as judgments. Each damages the impartiality expected in adjudication.

The Arbitration Paradox

1. **Growing Judicial Influence in Arbitration:** Although arbitration is meant to offer an alternative to court litigation, the appointment of judges as arbitrators brings court-like practices into the system. Judges 'legal expertise often overshadows the need for arbitration-specific skills.

2. **Indian Courts' Preference for Former Judges:** In India, courts and parties, especially government bodies, often prefer retired judges as arbitrators. This trend strengthens judicial habits in arbitration, sometimes at the cost of procedural flexibility and innovation.

3. **Impact on Procedural Integrity:** Recycling earlier awards, even in similar disputes, undermines fairness. As stressed by the Singapore court in DJP v DJO, procedural shortcuts violate the rules of natural justice and damage the credibility of arbitration.

Reforms in Arbitral Appointments

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1. **Efforts to Modernize Arbitration Practices:** The Indian judiciary and Parliament are working to modernize arbitration law. They aim to align Indian practices with international standards by correcting past errors and promoting a professional arbitration culture.

2. **Need for a Wider Pool of Arbitrators:** Former Chief Justice DY Chandrachud emphasized that reliance on retired judges must be discouraged. India needs a broader base of trained arbitrators to build a strong and independent arbitration ecosystem.

3. **Building Strong Arbitration Institutions:** To make India a global hub for arbitration, there must be a focus on creating world-class institutions. Training arbitrators in award writing and combining expertise with experience are essential steps forward.

Lessons from the Singapore Judgment

1. **Maintaining International Arbitration Standards:** The Singapore court clarified that its annulment was not a personal criticism of the arbitrators. It was necessary to protect the integrity and expectations of international arbitration.

2. **Wake-Up Call for Indian Arbitration:** The judgment serves as a warning for Indian business entities and government agencies. It highlights the urgent need to rethink practices and build professionalism, ensuring the solemnity of arbitration is preserved.

Question for practice:

Evaluate how the Singapore court's annulment of an arbitration award exposed challenges in Indian arbitration practices.

India struggles to manage its growing plastic pollution problem

Source: The post India struggles to manage its growing plastic pollution problem has been created, based on the article "**A powerful judicial remedy for waste management**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 30th April 2025
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3-Environment and Bio-diversity Conservation
Context: India has emerged as the world's largest plastic polluter, emitting 9.3 million tonnes annually. A recent study **published in *Nature*** highlights **serious flaws in India's plastic waste data and management systems**. The issue demands urgent reforms, better data collection, and judicially enforced environmental accountability.
For detailed information on **Plastic ban failure – Managing plastic waste needs a multi-pronged strategy** read this article here
India's Alarming Plastic Waste Footprint
1. **Massive Contribution to Global Emissions:** India emits **9.3 million tonnes of plastic waste** each year—about **one-fifth of global plastic emissions**. This includes unmanaged debris and emissions from open plastic burning.

2. **Underestimated Waste Generation Rates:** While **official figures report 0.12 kg per capita per day**, the *Nature* study estimates **actual generation at 0.54 kg**, showing serious underestimation.

3. **Flaws in Official Reporting:** Despite **claims of 95% collection coverage**, **rural areas, open burning, and informal recycling are not included**. This leads to overestimated collection and underestimated generation.

Data and Infrastructure Deficits

1. **Opaque Methodologies in Data Collection:** Pollution Control Boards rely on municipal data, but reports lack transparency about data-gathering methods. Methodologies should be made public and audited by third parties.

2. **Poor Rural and Informal Coverage:** Large areas under panchayati raj and informal recycling are left out. Dump sites outnumber **sanitary landfills 10:1**, reflecting inadequate waste containment.

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3. **Data Deficit in the Himalayan Region:** A recent article highlighted missing waste data in the Himalayan States, making it hard to assess capacity and implement targeted solutions in these ecologically sensitive zones.

Role of Local Bodies and Technology

1. **Decentralised Responsibility for Waste:** By law, local governments—urban and rural—are central to waste management. Each must be linked with recovery facilities, EPR kiosks, recyclers, and landfills.

2. **Leveraging Technology for Oversight:** India should use its tech capabilities to geotag waste infrastructure, track operations, and improve both accountability and efficiency in waste management.

3. **Implementing EPR through Kiosks:** PIBOs (producers, importers, brand owners) must set up kiosks nationwide. These should suit local geography, waste volumes, and accessibility to collect and segregate waste.

Supreme Court's Environmental Vigilance

1. **Verdict on Vellore Tanneries:** The Supreme Court directed restoration of pollution-hit areas in Vellore. A committee will monitor compliance within four months under continuing mandamus.

2. **Need for Active Judicial Oversight:** The Court noted that schemes often remain on paper. Justice requires strict enforcement and time-bound compliance, especially in environmental matters.

Legal Enforcement of Polluter Pays Principle

1. **Clear Liability of Polluters:** Polluters are absolutely liable for both compensating victims and restoring environmental damage. Liability extends to active and negligent contributors.

2. **Compensation Challenges and State Responsibility:** Calculating fair compensation is complex. The Court applied the '**Government Pay Principle**', requiring the state to pay victims first and recover costs from polluters.

3. **Continuing Mandamus as a Solution:** This judicial tool ensures compliance over time. Its broader use can improve accountability in waste management and environmental protection nationwide.

For detailed information on **Global negotiations for a treaty to end plastic pollution** read this article here

Question for practice:

Examine the key challenges in India's plastic waste management system and the role of judicial oversight in addressing them.
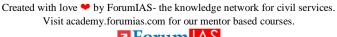
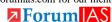## Expanding Tree Plantations is Key to India's Climate Action and Trade Competitiveness

Source: The post Expanding Tree Plantations is Key to India's Climate Action and Trade Competitiveness has been created, based on the article "**Expanding tree cover is crucial**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 30th April 2025
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3-environment-conservation
Context: India faces rising climate risks and trade pressures due to its carbon-heavy economy. To meet environmental goals and support rural livelihoods, the country must urgently expand tree plantation and carbon sequestration efforts.
For detailed information on **UN World Restoration Flagships** read this article here
Urgency of Expanding Tree Cover

1. **India's Shortfall in Forest Targets: India's forest and tree cover is 25.17%, far below the 33%** target of the 1988 National Forest Policy. Deforestation, rapid urbanisation, and industrial growth have degraded natural ecosystems.

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2. **Environmental Role of Tree Plantations: Tree plantations act as carbon sinks**. They also improve soil health, recharge groundwater, reduce erosion, and help withstand extreme weather.

Government-Led Afforestation Initiatives

1. **Key Policy Measures: The National Agroforestry Policy (2014)** and the **Trees Outside Forests program** promote tree planting on private lands. These aim to reduce pressure on natural forests, restore degraded land, and boost rural incomes.

2. **Impact of the Green India Mission: The Green India Mission**, under the climate action plan, helped increase forest cover by 0.56% from 2017 to 2021. It focuses on reviving degraded forests and managing them sustainably.

Socio-Economic Benefits of Afforestation

1. **Job Creation and Rural Support:** Afforestation creates jobs in nurseries, forest care, and agroforestry. It is vital for rural employment.

2. **Agroforestry's Promise:** Agroforestry improves soil and raises income. ICAR found it boosts farm earnings by 20–30% through timber, fruits, and medicinal plants.

3. **Community Engagement and Support:** Governments and NGOs offer financial aid, training, and market access. This builds ownership and long-term participation.

Private Sector Participation in Tree Planting

1. **Corporate Social Responsibility Drives:** Industries like cement, automobile, and energy are investing in afforestation to offset emissions. Many use these plantations in their carbon credit strategies.

2. **Aligning with Global Trade Pressures:** The EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism from 2026 will tax carbon-heavy imports. With India-EU trade at €124 billion in 2023, Indian exporters must reduce emissions to stay competitive.

3. **Carbon Credit Benefits:** Large-scale plantations help companies earn credits under frameworks like the Verified Carbon Standard. This is cheaper than buying international carbon credits.
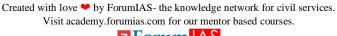
Sustainability as a Competitive Strategy

1. **Shift from Compliance to Strategy:** Sustainability now offers a market edge. Firms are building green supply chains, using sustainable raw materials, and adopting energy-efficient practices.

2. **Market Incentives for ESG Compliance:** With global capital favouring ESG principles, Indian industries must adapt to attract investment and retain market access.

Policy Challenges and Recommendations

1. **High Carbon Credit Costs:** In 2023, EU carbon credits cost €83 per tonne. For Indian businesses, tree planting is a cheaper alternative.

2. **Need for a National Carbon Policy:** India must build a transparent registry, set rules under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement, and offer financial incentives to attract private investment.

Question for practice:

Discuss how expanding tree plantation can help India address both climate goals and trade challenges.

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India must redefine poverty amid rising incomes and challenges

Source: The post India must redefine poverty amid rising incomes and challenges has been created, based on the article "**Let's redefine our poverty line to reflect India's economic stature**" published in "**Live Mint**" on 30th April 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- Indian Economy and issues relating to Planning, Mobilization of Resources, Growth, Development and Employment.

Context: India is set to become an upper middle-income country by 2030—a key milestone in its long battle against mass poverty. This progress, while promising, brings fresh challenges. The biggest among them is the need to redefine poverty in a nation undergoing significant economic and social transformation.

For detailed **information Revisiting the Poverty Line** read this article here

India's Imminent Economic Milestone

1. **Crossing into a New Income Category:** India is currently classified as a lower middle-income country. By 2030, its per capita income is expected to reach $4,468, marginally above the World Bank's threshold of $4,516 for upper middle-income status.

2. **IMF Forecast Highlights:** The IMF projects India's GDP will rise to $6.77 trillion by 2030. Per capita income will increase from $2,878 in 2025 to $4,468 in 2030. In PPP terms, it will grow from $10,396 to $13,638.

3. **Classification Criteria Can Shift:** These thresholds are revised periodically. Despite estimation uncertainties, India is clearly nearing a higher economic bracket.

India's Outdated Poverty Data

1. **Stale National Estimates:** India has not updated its official poverty line since 2012. The 2017–18 consumption survey was not released, and the 2023–24 survey has not been used to define a new poverty line.

2. **How Poverty Is Measured:** Poverty lines are based on household consumption surveys. These reflect costs of basic food and essential non-food items. They must be revised with changing prices, needs, and living standards.

3. **Need for Timely Revision:** India's current poverty benchmarks are outdated and do not reflect its economic transformation. A recalibrated poverty line is urgently needed.

Re-examining Poverty Metrics

1. **Flawed Measurement Standards:** Many estimates use deprivation norms better suited to poor countries. This fails to represent the reality of an economy nearing upper middle-income status.

2. **Global Poverty Benchmarks:** India has nearly eliminated poverty by the $2.15/day global line. But this can lead to premature optimism.

3. **Higher International Thresholds:** The World Bank recommends $3.65/day for lower middle-income and $6.85/day for upper middle-income countries. These offer more realistic poverty benchmarks.

Policy Implications

1. **Shifting the Optics:** Only 2.3% live below $2.15/day, but 28.1% fall below $3.65/day. A higher poverty line will show more poor but reveal the true picture.

2. **Reorienting Welfare Programmes:** Updated poverty data will help redesign government schemes aligned with present economic realities.

Question for practice:

Examine why India needs to redefine its poverty line as it approaches upper middle-income status.