

9 PM Current Affairs Monthly Compilation

For UPSC CSE mains examination



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Features :

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Most complete coverage of major
News Papers editorials

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Global power shifts are creating rising instability

Source: The post Global power shifts are creating rising instability has been created, based on the article “From a rules-based world to shambolic disorder” published in “The Hindu” on 1st May 2025

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

Context: Global instability is worsening due to rising geopolitical tensions, disruptive leadership, and declining institutional authority. This article examines how global power shifts, the U.S.'s internal divisions, and conflicts across Europe, West Asia, and Asia are reshaping the international order.

For detailed information on **Understanding Global Power Shifts and Emerging Influences** [read this article here](#)
Rise of Disruptive Leadership and Global Uncertainty

1. Strategic Shifts Amid Global Disruption: Before Trump's presidency, warning signs of global instability were visible. Despite new strategic tools, experts foresaw heightened disruption due to shifts in power, new technologies, and political conflict.

2. Influence of Disruptive Leaders: Leaders like Trump, Xi Jinping, Putin, and Zelenskyy are reshaping the global landscape. Their influence is seen as a break from past trends, with potential to overturn the current world order.

3. Democratic Disintegration in the U.S.: The U.S., once a symbol of democracy, is now deeply divided. This internal disruption is straining its global relations and weakening its leadership role.

U.S. Economic Policy and Global Trade Instability

1. Trumponomics and Economic Decline: Trump's tariff wars reflect a transactional mindset that is destabilizing global trade. Leading economists report a sharp fall in U.S. growth and a drop in GDP.

2. Damage to Education and Jobs: Foreign students contribute over \$40 billion to the U.S. economy and support 400,000 jobs. Trump's policies targeting them are harming key educational institutions like Harvard and Columbia.

3. Self-Inflicted Weakening: These actions are damaging U.S. soft power and weakening its long-term economic and intellectual capabilities.

West Asian Conflicts and European Dilemmas

1. Escalation in West Asia: Israel's offensive in Gaza and Syria, with no U.S. restraint, is seen as a regional pogrom. Its expansionist ambitions are reshaping borders and escalating tensions.

2. Collapse of Governance and New Threats: Syria is in crisis under new leadership. Türkiye faces political unrest, and Israel may strike Iran's nuclear facilities. Old conflicts like Ethiopia-Eritrea have reemerged.

3. Europe's Dilemma and NATO's Future: Europe is locked in conflict with Russia over Ukraine. Trump's criticism of Europe's defense raises doubts about NATO's stability and the EU's future role.

Resurgence of Terror and Regional Instability in Asia

1. IS Expansion into Africa and Afghanistan: Islamic State affiliates have launched attacks in Mozambique, Congo, and Afghanistan. This signals a dangerous revival of global terror threats.

2. Terrorism in South Asia: Afghanistan and Pakistan face internal unrest and growing terror threats. Groups like IS and al-Qaeda are expanding through new affiliates.

3. Spread of Violence in the Region: Terrorist attacks have spread to areas like Kashmir, where 26 tourists were killed. Bangladesh, Myanmar, and Nepal also face various forms of internal turmoil.

China's Expanding Influence in Asia

1. China's Calculated Moves: China is avoiding direct conflict over Taiwan and focusing on countering U.S. tariffs. It is also working to expand its economic influence.

2. Military Expansion and Regional Push: China is advancing peace efforts while asserting military power. It has moved into the South Pacific and boosted submarine activity in the Indian Ocean.

3. India-China Rivalry Remains Strong: Despite recent border adjustments, China-India rivalry continues. Several Asian nations are tilting towards China, widening its regional footprint.

Question for practice:

Examine how rising geopolitical tensions and disruptive leadership are reshaping global stability and power dynamics.

Bonded labour persists in India despite laws against exploitation

Source: The post Bonded labour persists in India despite laws against exploitation has been created, based on the article “India’s shame — the trap of bonded labour” published in “The Hindu” on 1st May 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2-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: On International Labour Day, India confronts a disturbing reality: bonded and forced labour continue to thrive despite decades-old abolition laws. The article highlights how systemic failures, weak enforcement, and social inequality allow exploitation of millions of workers.

Underlying Causes of Labour Exploitation

- 1. Economic Triggers:** Sudden hardships such as illness, job loss, or marriage expenses push poor families to seek quick loans. These advances often trap them in exploitative labour arrangements.
- 2. Social Disadvantage and Exclusion:** Caste-based discrimination, illiteracy, and lack of access to information increase vulnerability. Many workers do not understand their rights or legal protections.
- 3. Power Structures and Dependency:** In many areas, employers control both credit and job access. This monopoly converts basic financial help into long-term dependence and coercion.

Scale and Nature of the Problem

- 1. Ongoing Prevalence:** Despite legal abolition in 1975, bonded labour remains widespread. Government data estimates 1.84 crore people are still affected by it across the country.
- 2. Forms of Abuse:** These workers often face long working hours, withheld wages, physical violence, and confinement. Many lack contracts and freedom of movement.
- 3. Overlap with Forced Labour:** Even outside traditional bondage, crores of informal workers, especially migrants, endure similar exploitation, blurring the lines between informal work and forced labour.

Policy Commitments and Actual Progress

- 1. Official Vision and Targets:** In 2016, the Union Labour Ministry announced a plan to rescue and rehabilitate 1.84 crore bonded labourers by 2030, as part of a long-term national agenda.
- 2. Actual Rescues:** Between 2016 and 2021, only 12,760 bonded labourers were officially rescued and rehabilitated. This pace falls drastically short of the goal.
- 3. Unrealistic Expectations:** To meet the 2030 target, over 11 lakh rescues per year would now be required — a target that current systems are far from achieving.

The Larger Labour Crisis in India

- 1. Dominance of Informal Sector:** According to NSSO data, out of 47 crore workers, 39 crore are in the unorganised sector. These jobs often lack safety, fair wages, or legal protections.

2. ILO's Assessment: The ILO India Employment Report 2024 confirms that low-quality informal work dominates the labour market, leaving workers insecure and underpaid.

Legal and Structural Gaps

1. Weak Unionisation: Unorganised workers lack unions and collective bargaining power. This isolates them and reduces their ability to fight back against abuse.

2. Dilution of Rights: The 2019–20 Labour Codes weakened earlier protections, particularly the right to organise and strike, eroding decades of progress in labour rights.

Question for practice:

Discuss the reasons why bonded and forced labour continue to persist in India despite legal abolition.

India faces prolonged slowdown in private sector capital expenditure

Source: The post India faces prolonged slowdown in private sector capital expenditure has been created, based on the article “**We have a hazy forecast of a private capex slump**” published in “**Live Mint**” on 1st May 2025

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

Context: India's long wait for a surge in private-sector capital expenditure may continue. A new survey by the National Statistical Office signals a slowdown in investment intent for 2025–26, offering a clearer view of business sentiment and challenges.

For detailed information on **India aims for growth with increased capital expenditure** [read this article here](#)

Private Investment Trends and Sectoral Variation

1. Fluctuating Investment Patterns: Actual private capex rose from ₹4 trillion in 2021–22 to ₹5.7 trillion in 2022–23, then declined to ₹4.2 trillion in 2023–24. These shifts highlight the volatility in private investment.

2. Expected Decline in Capex Plans: For 2025–26, the survey projects intended capital expenditure at ₹4.9 trillion—about 25% lower than last year's plans. The fall reflects cautious planning after a strong 2024–25.

3. Sector-Wise Divergence: Not all sectors foresee a decline. Manufacturers intend to raise investments to ₹2.1 trillion, 40% higher than last year. The construction sector also shows rising intent, in contrast to the broader slowdown.

Survey Design and Methodology

1. Targeting Large Registered Companies: The survey focused on active firms registered with the Ministry of Corporate Affairs. Manufacturers needed a turnover of ₹400 crore, trading firms ₹300 crore, and others ₹100 crore.

2. Stratified and Balanced Sampling: Enterprises were grouped into 17 business strata. Small strata (100 firms or fewer) were fully included. In larger strata, selection considered fixed asset size and random sampling to balance representation.

3. Final Sample Selection: From 16,025 eligible firms, 5,380 were asked to respond. Large corporations were likely included due to fewer competitors in their fields.

Data Limitations and Interpretation Cautions

1. Low Response Rate and Bias Risk: Only 58.3% of selected firms responded, and just over 40% disclosed future capex plans. This introduces self-selection bias, as results reflect only those willing to share plans.

2. Indicative, Not Absolute: The statistics ministry called the findings “indicative.” They should be used to detect broad trends, not as definitive data.

Implications for Policy and Growth

1. **Signals of Business Uncertainty:** The finance ministry's March bulletin warned that uncertainty may cause businesses to delay capital formation. The survey aligns with this view.
2. **Value in Early Trend Detection:** Despite limitations, the survey helps track sentiment and offers early signals for policymakers to address investment-related challenges.

Question for practice:

Examine the key trends and implications of the National Statistical Office's survey on private-sector capital expenditure in India for 2025–26.

Private Member's Bills need urgent democratic revival

Source: The post Private Member's Bills need urgent democratic revival has been created, based on the article "Reviving a far-sighted but forgotten Bill mechanism" published in "The Hindu" on 2nd May 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2-Parliament and State legislatures—structure, functioning, conduct of business, powers & privileges and issues arising out of these.

Context: **Private Member's Bills (PMBs)** enable non-Minister MPs to introduce legislation in Parliament. While they offer a platform for individual expression and public interest ideas, procedural neglect and executive dominance have reduced their relevance. This calls for urgent reform to preserve the democratic spirit of legislative participation.

For detailed information on **Private Member's Bill** [read this article here](#)

Understanding the Role of PMBs

1. **An Avenue for Independent Legislation:** PMBs are introduced by MPs who are not part of the government. Unlike official bills, they reflect personal convictions, constituency demands, or emerging social concerns. They provide space for independent thought beyond party lines.
2. **Designated Parliamentary Slot:** Fridays in both Houses are reserved for PMBs. However, this time is increasingly overridden by government business or lost to adjournments, undermining the purpose of this provision.
3. **Declining Legislative Outcomes:** Only 14 PMBs have become law since Independence, and none have passed both Houses since 1970, showing how little attention they now receive in legislative functioning.

Trends and Performance in Recent Lok Sabhas

1. **Data from the 17th Lok Sabha:** Between 2019–2024, 729 PMBs were introduced in the Lok Sabha and 705 in the Rajya Sabha. Of these, only 2 in the Lok Sabha and 14 in the Rajya Sabha were taken up for discussion.
2. **Disruption in the 18th Lok Sabha:** In 2024, 64 PMBs were introduced during the inaugural and Budget Sessions of the 18th Lok Sabha, but none were discussed. Fridays were diverted for other debates or lost to disruptions.
3. **Minimal PMB Activity:** In the Rajya Sabha, 49 out of 82 listed PMBs were introduced on a single Friday, but only one was discussed briefly before the House was adjourned.

PMBs as Catalysts for Policy Discourse

1. **Triggering National Debate:** Supriya Sule's 'Right to Disconnect' Bill (2019) sparked discussion on digital burnout and mental health. Though it did not advance, it highlighted important labour issues.
2. **Influencing Legislation:** Tiruchi Siva's 2014 Bill on transgender rights passed the Rajya Sabha and influenced the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, later passed by the government.
3. **Empowering Ruling Party MPs:** Even Treasury Bench MPs, like Gopal Chinayya Shetty of BJP, used PMBs to propose legislation for free healthcare for senior citizens, showing PMBs can reflect grassroots feedback.

Reforms to Revive the PMB Mechanism

- 1. Impact of Anti-Defection Law:** The 52nd Amendment introduced the Tenth Schedule, enforcing party loyalty. This restricts MPs—especially from the ruling party—from expressing independent views or proposing alternative policy ideas.
- 2. Protecting PMB Time:** Fridays must be safeguarded through changes to parliamentary rules, allowing uninterrupted time for PMBs, except during national emergencies.
- 3. Screening and Prioritization:** A dedicated committee could review PMBs for quality and relevance, recommending priority Bills for discussion based on bipartisan or public importance.
- 4. Extended Working Hours:** Instead of sacrificing PMB time, Parliament could extend its working hours. A modest increase would allow core business to proceed without undermining PMB slots.
- 5. Adopting International Best Practices:** India could adapt the UK's Ten-Minute Rule, letting MPs briefly present PMBs. This would help more ideas reach the floor without needing lengthy debates.

Reinforcing the Democratic Value of PMBs

- 1. Voter Expectations and Representation:** Though MPs contest under party symbols, voters also consider their personal merit. PMBs allow MPs to voice local concerns and fulfill constituency expectations.
- 2. Official Recognition:** Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar called PMBs “forward-looking” and a “gold mine,” affirming their potential to enrich India's legislative landscape.
- 3. Need for Sincere Engagement:** Reviving PMBs requires political will and procedural reform. Their restoration is essential for deepening parliamentary democracy and fostering genuine representation.

Question for practice:

Examine how Private Member's Bills contribute to India's parliamentary democracy and what reforms are needed to enhance their effectiveness.

Natural hydrogen can transform India's clean energy future

Source: The post Natural hydrogen can transform India's clean energy future has been created, based on the article “Is natural hydrogen the fuel of the future?” and “Is natural hydrogen the fuel of the future?” published in “The Hindu” on 1st May and 2nd May 2025 respectively.

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- Infrastructures- Energy

Context: Hydrogen is emerging as a clean energy source to combat global warming and decarbonise the global economy. While conventional and green hydrogen face cost and environmental limitations, **naturally occurring hydrogen** offers a promising alternative. With signs of **abundant reserves in India**, its potential could reshape the global and national energy landscape.

For detailed information on **Green Hydrogen Mission** [read this article here](#)

Understanding Natural Hydrogen and Its Discovery

- 1. Conventional vs Natural Hydrogen:** Hydrogen is mainly produced from natural gas using **energy-intensive and polluting methods**. Green hydrogen, produced with renewable electricity, is cleaner but still **costly** and resource-heavy. Natural hydrogen, if sustainably harvested, may offer a **cleaner and cheaper** alternative.
- 2. Sources and Geological Origins:** Natural hydrogen is formed through **serpentinisation, radiolysis** of water by radioactive rocks, and from **organic matter at depth**. It exists in various geological settings, including **ultramafic rocks**, tectonic regions, and active hydrothermal zones.
- 3. Historical Breakthrough in Mali:** In 1987, a **hydrogen flame** erupted from a well in Mali during a failed water drilling attempt. In 2012, it was confirmed to be **98% pure hydrogen**. Earlier, natural hydrogen was considered a **geological rarity** due to its reactivity and small molecular size.

4. **Expanding Scientific Attention:** Now, scientists identify favourable zones for natural hydrogen worldwide, such as **the Pyrenees, Alps, and Himalayas**. The discovery of **helium with hydrogen** and **hydrogen in coal mines** suggests new geological insights and growing interest in its energy potential.

Global and Indian Hydrogen Reserves

1. **Worldwide Exploration Trends:** Though **total global reserves remain uncertain**, ongoing research reveals significant promise. Natural hydrogen seeps have been identified in **Australia, the U.S., Spain, France, and others**. The **USGS model (2022)** estimates these reserves could meet global demand for thousands of years.

2. **Major Discoveries and Estimates:** In **France's Lorraine and Moselle regions**, 92 million tonnes of hydrogen were found in 2023–25. Valued at **\$92 billion**, this is **half the current global hydrogen output**. USGS estimates suggest **tens of trillions of tonnes** globally. Even if 2% is usable, it could meet global demand for **200 years**.

3. **India's Geological Advantage:** India holds **untapped natural hydrogen potential**, especially in areas with **ophiolite complexes, greenstone belts, cratonic basins, and hot springs**. A preliminary academic estimate suggests **3,475 million tonnes** may exist, potentially removing the need for manufactured hydrogen.

4. **Strategic Significance for India:** India's hydrogen demand is set to grow from **6 Mt/year in 2020** to **over 50 Mt/year by 2070**. Natural hydrogen could support India's **net-zero goal by 2070** and improve **energy security** and **strategic autonomy**.

Industrial Response and Market Dynamics

1. **Rapid Industry Growth:** The number of companies exploring natural hydrogen rose from **10 in 2020** to **40 in 2023**. They operate in **Australia, U.S., Europe, and Asia**, signaling global momentum.

2. **Low-Cost Advantage:** Producers estimate extraction costs at **\$1/kg or less**, cheaper than green hydrogen or fossil-fuel hydrogen. This cost advantage is a major driver of investor interest.

3. **Major Investments:** U.S. firm **Koloma** secured **\$245 million** in funding from **Amazon and Gates-backed ventures**. Other startups like **Mantle 8** and **Snowfox Discovery** are also attracting support. Even **BP and Rio Tinto** are investing in this space.

4. **Institutional Support:** The **American Association of Petroleum Geologists** formed a dedicated committee. **USGS** has launched its first initiative to identify key hydrogen zones in the U.S.

Barriers and Technical Challenges

1. **Exploration Complexity:** Unlike oil and gas, **standard techniques** for detecting natural hydrogen are lacking. Accurate **quantification and location** of underground reserves is a key obstacle.

2. **Technical Constraints:** Hydrogen's **small molecular size** and **high diffusivity** make extraction and containment difficult. Efficient drilling and production systems are still being developed.

3. **Material and Safety Risks:** Hydrogen can degrade materials. Solutions include **metal coatings, cement additives, and rubber fillers** that resist hydrogen damage. Safety protocols are critical due to hydrogen's reactivity.

India's Roadmap for Natural Hydrogen

1. **Need for Strategic Surveys:** India can replicate its **SRRA solar model** through a **public-private partnership** for mapping hydrogen zones. This will help policymakers and investors act quickly.

2. **New Techniques and Use of Existing Infrastructure:** Inspired by U.S. ARPA-E projects, India can test methods like **drilling water into rocks** or **injecting CO₂ into iron-rich rocks** to extract hydrogen while sequestering carbon. The **Oil and Gas industry**, with the **Directorate General of Hydrocarbons**, can analyze existing **rock samples and wells**. Modified **natural gas pipelines** could also transport hydrogen.

3. **Ensuring Commercial Viability:** Though cheaper to extract, actual viability depends on **accessible, concentrated reserves** and **cost-efficient infrastructure**. Exploration grants, extraction R&D, and **regulatory clarity** are vital to attract investment.

Question for practice:

Examine the potential of natural hydrogen in addressing India's future energy needs and its role in achieving the country's net-zero targets.

Trump's Return Threatens US Dollar Global Dominance

Source: The post Trump's Return Threatens US Dollar Global Dominance has been created, based on the article "**King Dollar's shaky crown**" published in "**Businessline**" on 1st May and 2nd May 2025 respectively.

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2- International Relations

Context: Donald Trump's return to power in **January 2025** has disrupted global financial stability and raised doubts about the **future of the US dollar**. Two recent books — *King Dollar* by Paul Blustein and *Our Dollar, Your Problem* by Kenneth Rogoff — provide important insights into the dollar's role and its emerging challenges.

The Dollar's Global Primacy

1. **Key Global Currency Functions:** The **US dollar** remains the top **reserve currency**, **investment vehicle**, and **trade invoicing medium**. It supports global trade due to its **liquidity and reliability**.

2. **Market Presence and Network Effects:** According to the **Bank for International Settlements (BIS)**, daily **foreign exchange turnover** reached **\$7.5 trillion** in **April 2022**, with the **dollar involved in 88%** of trades. In **1989**, the figure was just **\$500 billion**. This vast usage reinforces the dollar's dominance through **powerful network effects**.

3. **Limited Global Competition:** Despite efforts like China's **e-CNY**, the **renminbi** lacks the **exchange-rate flexibility** and **financial reforms** needed to challenge the dollar. **Rogoff** stresses that without these changes, the renminbi will not become a viable alternative.

Trump's Disruptive Economic Approach

1. **Departure from Postwar Strategy:** Unlike past US leaders who used **multilateralism** to maintain order, **Trump's grievance-led unilateralism** represents a major shift. His policies go beyond what even **Blustein and Rogoff** had anticipated in **December 2024**.

2. **Erosion of Domestic and Global Trust:** Trump has **withdrawn from international agreements**, **cut foreign aid**, and followed a **transactional foreign policy**. Domestically, he has **pressured the Fed**, **weakened the federal workforce**, and **attacked legal and academic institutions**.

3. **Escalating Trade Conflicts:** Trump's "**Liberation Day**" tariffs caused a **drop in the dollar** and a **spike in Treasury yields**, indicating **investor flight from US bonds**. A brief **tariff delay** calmed markets, but further **attacks on Fed Chair Powell** triggered renewed declines.

A Shifting Global Financial Order

1. **Capital Market Fragmentation:** Falling **global trust** in US leadership could lead to **currency fragmentation**. Economic models suggest that **multiple currencies** could share global dominance.

2. **Strategic Misjudgment of Dollar's Role:** Trump's adviser **Stephen Miran** claims the dollar has harmed **US manufacturing** and **worker competitiveness**. However, **Blustein** counters that the "**exorbitant cost**" argument ignores the **dollar's geopolitical benefits**.

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3. **Possible Turning Point:** April's events may signal the **start of dollar decline**. While no clear successor exists, continued instability may weaken the **global trade and financial order**.

Risks to Dollar Dominance

1. **Institutional and Fiscal Instability:** Congressional Republicans, supported by Trump, are expanding deficits by **bypassing reconciliation** and depending on **volatile tariff revenues**. This signals **deepening institutional decay**.

2. **Breakdown of Regulatory Cooperation:** US reluctance to cooperate with the **Basel Committee** and **Financial Stability Board** risks undermining cross-border regulatory coordination and critical tools like **dollar swap lines**.

3. **Technology and Currency Innovation Gaps:** Trump's **CBDC ban** and **crypto deregulation stance** isolate the US from **global payment innovation**, threatening future **efficiency and interoperability**.

Question for practice:

Evaluate how Donald Trump's return to power in 2025 has affected the global dominance of the US dollar.

India must reshape strategy in changing world

Source: The post India must reshape strategy in changing world has been created, based on the article “A profound shift in the global order” published in “The Hindu” on 3rd May 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2-International Relations

Context: Global power structures are undergoing a major shift, similar to historic turning points like Vasco da Gama's arrival in India. Multilateral institutions are weakening, and Asia is regaining its influence. The article explores how India must respond strategically to shape its global role in this evolving order.

For detailed information on **India could help shape a whole new global consensus** [read this article here](#)

Collapse of the Post-Colonial Global Order

1. **End of Multilateral Institutions:** The 75-year-old system of multilateralism—built on rule-based globalisation—is eroding. Institutions like the WTO and UN are now seen as irrelevant by those who once backed them. The **U.S. has exited key agreements**, signalling loss of confidence in global norms.

2. **Shifting Donor-Recipient Dynamics:** The old world divided between “donors” and “recipients” has become outdated. **China has overtaken the U.S. in aid, trade, and manufacturing**, disrupting the earlier balance of power. BRICS is gaining momentum, with more countries seeking entry.

3. **Bilateralism Replacing Multilateralism:** U.S.-led bilateral deals now **override national interests**, using tariffs and trade imbalances to reshape domestic laws. **Least Developed Countries have lost trade privileges**, weakening the fairness of the system.

Rise of an Asian-Centric World

1. **Asia's Reclaimed Dominance:** Asia is set to reclaim **two-thirds of global wealth and power**, its historical norm before colonialism. Since 2020, **India, China, the EU, and the U.S. have driven 75% of global growth**, with the U.S. and China nearly equal in trade, tech, and military reach.

2. **India's Diplomatic Responsibility:** India must now manage ties with both powers. It must **counter U.S. trade pressure**, especially on agriculture and energy, and **expand rapprochement with China**. Diplomats should frame **new principles for global governance** in an equal world.

3. **Asian Market Opportunity:** ASEAN's turmoil offers a chance to form an Asian common market through bilateral ties. India should promote a new trade architecture involving ASEAN and the African Union, whose consumer potential is growing faster than the West's.

Innovation and Trade: The Missed Link

1. **Tactical, Not Strategic Foreign Policy:** India historically focused on global peace and balancing great powers rather than pursuing economic innovation. Its best diplomats were sent to the United Nations to negotiate resolutions, while trade and technology diplomacy were largely ignored. The Non-Aligned Movement gained international goodwill but contributed little to national wealth creation

2. **Neglect of Technology Partnerships:** India ignored how other powers fostered **tech through academia-industry linkages**. Trade and innovation were seen as separate, unlike in the West and China.

3. **Need for Political Consensus on Technology:** India must form a **national consensus on skill-building and employment**, with collaboration across political lines. This will help rebuild its technological base and strengthen value-chain integration with Asia and Africa.

Seizing the Technological Frontier

1. **India's Digital Strengths:** India has the potential to lead in **open-source software** and **digital cooperation**. Despite past setbacks, its **digital stack and data strengths** can help regain tech leadership.

2. **Technology Race with China:** While **Huawei now makes 7nm chips**, India lags. China has closed its hardware gap. India, once ahead in software, **must catch up**.

3. **AI as the New Wealth Driver:** **AI is now the foundation of influence and prosperity**. India must set **grand technological missions**, leveraging its talent and digital platforms to build world-class language models.

Learning from China's Model

1. **Consensus Over Imported Models:** China's rise is rooted in **indigenous consensus**, not Western frameworks. India must **build its own path**, not copy others.

2. **Affordable Energy as Economic Driver:** Lowering the **price of electricity** is a strong incentive for restructuring. **Patents, not just GDP**, should measure progress. Prosperity also helps mitigate climate change.

Question for practice:

Examine how India can strategically respond to the collapse of multilateral institutions and the rise of an Asian-centric global order.

India must strengthen parliamentary oversight for accountable governance

Source: The post India must strengthen parliamentary oversight for accountable governance has been created, based on the article "**Strengthening parliamentary oversight in India**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 3rd May 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2-Polity- Parliament and State Legislatures – structure, functioning, conduct of business, powers & privileges and issues arising out of these.

Context: India has a long tradition of parliamentary democracy, but concerns are rising over the weakening of legislative oversight. Frequent disruptions, limited committee influence, and absence of post-legislative review have triggered renewed debate. The article calls for strengthening Parliament's role in ensuring accountability, transparency, and effective governance as envisioned by the Constitution.

For detailed information on **Decline of Indian Parliament** [read this article here](#)

Foundational Vision for Parliamentary Accountability

1. **Ambedkar's Defence of the Parliamentary System:** Dr. B.R. Ambedkar advocated for parliamentary democracy, stressing that it enables daily accountability through debates and questions, and periodic accountability via elections. He believed this system offered more responsibility even if less stability.

2. **Efficiency Must Not Undermine Accountability:** Governance must be efficient but also transparent. A strong Parliament is essential not just for making laws but for overseeing their implementation and holding the executive accountable.

Oversight Mechanisms: Potential and Pitfalls

- 1. Formal and Conventional Tools of Scrutiny:** Parliament uses Question Hour, Zero Hour, and Standing Committees to scrutinise the executive. These tools empower MPs to raise questions, seek data, and move motions like no-confidence if necessary.
- 2. Frequent Disruptions Weaken Effectiveness:** Question Hour is often disrupted by protests. In the 17th Lok Sabha, it functioned for only 60% of its scheduled time; in Rajya Sabha, just 52%. Even when it runs, MPs rarely coordinate questions for deeper scrutiny.
- 3. Committees Lack Influence and Continuity:** Standing Committees prepare detailed reports, but their findings are rarely discussed in Parliament. Consultations are limited in scope, and rotating membership hinders the development of expertise and institutional memory.

Demonstrated Impact of Parliamentary Committees

- 1. Policy Reforms Based on Committee Inputs:** The Railways Committee recommended waiving dividend payments, which was implemented in 2016. The Transport Committee influenced key amendments to the Motor Vehicles Bill in 2017.
- 2. Improved Project Management and Energy Planning:** The Committee on Public Undertakings advised starting highway projects only after 80% land and clearances were secured. The Estimates Committee suggested boosting uranium mining to reduce imports.
- 3. PAC's Role in Exposing Irregularities:** The PAC flagged major issues in the 2010 Commonwealth Games, including delays and corruption. Over eight years, it made 180 annual recommendations, with 80% accepted by the government.

Leveraging Technology for Stronger Scrutiny

- 1. Use of AI and Data Analytics:** MPs lack support staff to process complex data. Tools like Artificial Intelligence and analytics can help identify trends, spot anomalies, and frame better questions.
- 2. Modernising Parliamentary Capacity:** Technology can reduce dependence on manual document analysis, enhancing the quality of questions and debates.

Reforms to Strengthen Legislative Oversight

- 1. Institutionalise Post-Legislative Scrutiny:** India lacks a system to assess law implementation. Subcommittees under Standing Committees or a dedicated body can be created. The UK requires department reviews 3–5 years post-enactment, which are reviewed by Parliament.
- 2. Enhance Committee Visibility and Response:** Key reports should be translated, visually explained, and debated in Parliament with mandatory ministerial replies. This will strengthen accountability and public engagement.
- 3. Oversight as Democratic Fulfilment:** As K.R. Narayanan noted in 1993, committees are meant to support, not weaken, the executive. Strengthening oversight honours the public trust and upholds democratic governance.

Question for practice:

Evaluate the effectiveness of India's parliamentary oversight mechanisms and suggest how they can be strengthened to ensure greater executive accountability

Saudi Arabia uses oil policy for diplomacy

Source: The post Saudi Arabia uses oil policy for diplomacy has been created, based on the article “Understanding the unlikely Saudi push for lower oil prices” published in “Business Standard” on 3rd May 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2- International Relations

Context: Saudi Arabia, the leader of Opec, is now pushing oil prices down, despite cartels usually seeking higher prices. This move appears aimed at disciplining Opec+ members violating output targets. But broader strategic objectives may explain Riyadh's shift ahead of the May 5 Opec+ meeting.

Unruly Producers and the Need for Discipline

1. **Cheating by Member States:** Kazakhstan, Iraq, and the UAE are breaching their production quotas. *Riyadh hopes that falling prices will pressure them into compliance.*
2. **Historical Pattern of Enforcement:** Saudi Arabia used this tactic before — *in 1985–86, 1998, and 2020* — to punish Opec rule-breakers. This strategy is not new.

A Clear Shift from Saudi First Policy

1. **Low Prices as a Strategic Signal:** Riyadh has made no effort to raise prices verbally or otherwise. *It appears comfortable with Brent crude staying below \$70*, a shift from its earlier \$100-per-barrel target.
2. **Production Flexibility Over High Prices:** To sustain high prices in 2023, *Saudi output fell to its lowest since 2011*. Continuing that policy would restrict production increases in 2025 and 2026.

US Relations and Oil Diplomacy

1. **Complex Dynamic with US Shale:** Riyadh previously waged a price war against US shale producers in 2014–16. But *renewed action would face domestic political resistance in the US.*
2. **Wider Diplomatic Calculations:** Saudi–US talks cover defence, arms, Iran, and nuclear energy. *Oil policy likely factors into these discussions*, especially with Trump visiting Riyadh in May.

Geopolitical Factors Beyond the US

1. **Anticipating End of Sanctions:** Saudi Arabia benefited from US sanctions on Iran and Venezuela. *If sanctions ease, Riyadh wants higher output beforehand* to influence future Opec+ negotiations.
2. **Strained Ties with Russia:** The long Saudi–Russia oil partnership now seems transactional. *With Putin courting Trump, Riyadh may be hedging against a future split.*

Conclusion:

Though punishing cheaters is a reason, *Saudi Arabia's policy reflects deeper aims*—market flexibility, geopolitical positioning, and diplomatic leverage. Kazakhstan is likely a side effect, not the core target.

Question for practice:

Discuss how Saudi Arabia's current oil pricing strategy reflects broader geopolitical and diplomatic objectives beyond disciplining Opec+ members.

India needs a stronger strategy for Arctic

Source: The post India needs a stronger strategy for Arctic has been created, based on the article “**India must rethink its Arctic outlook**” published in “**The Hindu**” on 5th May 2025

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

Context: The Arctic, long viewed as a peaceful zone for science and conservation, is now turning into a stage for military and geopolitical rivalry. Climate change and strategic ambitions of major powers have accelerated this shift. Non-Arctic countries like India must now adapt to these evolving dynamics.

For detailed information on **India's potential in Arctic region** [read this article here](#)

Geopolitics Redraw the Arctic Map

1. **From Margins to the Main Stage:** The Arctic is no longer marginal to global politics. Climate change has unlocked maritime routes and resource access. The Northern Sea Route (NSR), once seasonally open, is now a viable shipping lane with rising traffic that may alter global trade patterns.

2. **Competing Ambitions of Great Powers:** Russia is growing more assertive, China is expanding its Arctic footprint, and the U.S. is renewing interest in Greenland. These moves signal the Arctic's entry into great power rivalry.

3. **The Strategic Value of Greenland:** Donald Trump's 2019 proposal to buy Greenland reflected the Arctic's growing strategic value. It indicated a recognition that the region is now central to global power dynamics.

Militarisation of the High North

1. **Rising Military Presence:** Arctic states are reviving military bases, deploying submarines, and making visible shows of force. Control over the region is now a high-stakes issue.

2. **Old Patterns, New Intensity:** Militarisation isn't new, but it's now more aggressive and visible. Strategic positioning is becoming more frequent and deliberate.

3. **Strategic Implications for Non-Arctic States:** The militarisation also affects countries like India. Despite being impacted, India remains mostly disengaged from these unfolding strategic changes.

Strategic Stakes for India

1. **Impact on Maritime Trade Routes:** As the NSR becomes viable, trade may shift northward, affecting India's Indian Ocean sea-lane relevance and its SAGAR and IPOI visions.

2. **Arctic-Indo-Pacific Linkages:** China's Arctic and Indian Ocean presence and its coordination with Russia blur boundaries between the regions, challenging India's maritime focus.

3. **Perception Challenges in the Arctic:** Nordic unease over India's Russia ties adds pressure. India must demonstrate that strategic autonomy can still foster cooperative outcomes.

India's Arctic Engagement: Present and Gaps

1. **A Climate-Driven Arctic Policy:** India's 2022 Arctic Policy focuses on science, sustainability, and climate parallels with the Himalayan "Third Pole." It links Arctic changes to South Asia's water and weather systems.

2. **Ignoring Strategic Realities:** However, the policy underestimates the Arctic's strategic transformation. India's non-political approach now appears outdated.

3. **Inadequate Strategic Presence:** India maintains a research station in Svalbard and holds observer status in the Arctic Council. These roles were created for a more cooperative era, which is now breaking down.

Towards a More Purposeful Arctic Strategy

1. **Institutional Strengthening:** India should establish dedicated Arctic units in its ministries, hold regular inter-agency discussions, and involve think tanks.

2. **Partnerships with Like-Minded States:** India can collaborate on dual-use areas like polar logistics, maritime monitoring, and satellite data to build credibility.

3. **Claiming a Governance Role:** India must engage emerging Arctic forums on infrastructure, shipping, and digital standards, while respecting local communities and avoiding extractive approaches.

Conclusion

India's climate-led Arctic stance has value, but it no longer meets current strategic demands. A passive posture risks exclusion from a new Arctic order defined by power.

Question for practice:

Evaluate how India's current Arctic policy falls short in addressing the region's emerging strategic and geopolitical challenges.

China's rare earth dominance threatens US security

Source: The post China's rare earth dominance threatens US security has been created, based on the article "Rare earth minerals as China's 'trump card'" published in "The Hindu" on 5th May 2025

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

Context: The US-China tariff war may favour China due to its dominance over rare earth minerals. While the US imposed tariffs to pressure China, the real vulnerability lies in China's potential to restrict rare earth exports, which are critical for US defense and technology industries.

For details information on **RARE EARTH MINERALS** [read this article here](#)

China's Dominance in Rare Earths

- 1. Near Monopoly Over Processing:** China produces 61% of the world's rare earths but processes over 92% due to its low-cost advantage and large-scale operations. Processing is energy-intensive and expensive, and the US lacks significant domestic refining capabilities.
- 2. Heavy Dependence of the US:** Between 2020 and 2023, 70% of US rare earth imports came from China. Even though the US mines rare earths (e.g., Mountain Pass, California), it relies on China for processing.
- 3. Strategic Use of Export Controls:** In 2023, China restricted exports of seven heavy rare earth elements including samarium, gadolinium, terbium, dysprosium, lutetium, scandium, and yttrium. These materials are vital for electronics, defense, and clean energy technologies.

Potential Fallout for the US

- 1. Impact on Critical Sectors:** Rare earths are essential for permanent magnets used in electric vehicles, wind turbines, LED lights, semiconductors, and military equipment like fighter jets and missiles. A Chinese export ban would severely disrupt US production and supply chains.
- 2. Lack of Alternatives:** The US has limited options to shift its sourcing in the short term, making it highly vulnerable to disruptions in rare earth supply.
- 3. Limited WTO Recourse:** Though WTO rules generally discourage export restrictions, China's move may violate these norms. However, the US is also violating WTO's Most Favoured Nation (MFN) principle via reciprocal tariffs, weakening its ability to challenge China legally.

Historical Precedents of Export Restrictions

- 1. China-Japan Dispute (2010):** China halted rare earth exports to Japan after a maritime dispute, affecting Japan's auto industry. Japan released the detained Chinese captain under pressure.
- 2. Indonesia's Nickel Ban (2020):** Indonesia banned nickel ore exports to attract investments in domestic processing, successfully enhancing its role in the EV supply chain despite EU complaints.
- 3. Other Examples (2022):** Russia restricted wheat and fertilizer exports to counter Western sanctions. The US imposed semiconductor export controls to slow China's tech growth.

Strategic and Economic Impact on China

1. **Minimal Domestic Disruption:** Rare earth exports to the US form a small part of China's trade portfolio. Thus, banning them won't create major surpluses or hurt domestic industries.
2. **Redirection to Other Markets:** China can redirect exports to other countries to offset US losses, further neutralizing the impact of US-imposed tariffs.

Conclusion

If the trade war continues, **US tech and defense sectors will suffer more** from rare earth shortages than from tariffs. China's control over processing and its strategic use of export bans give it a strong advantage. The US faces a critical vulnerability with few short-term remedies.

Question for practice:

Examine how China's dominance in rare earth processing creates a strategic advantage in the US-China tariff war.

Declining foreign aid threatens India's NGOs and democratic health

Source: The post Declining foreign aid threatens India's NGOs and democratic health has been created, based on the article "**Demise of foreign aid in India**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 5th May 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2-Governance- the role of NGOs, SHGs, various groups and associations, donors, charities, institutional and other stakeholders.

Context: India's relationship with foreign aid has long been inconsistent—sometimes welcoming, at other times cautious. With **official aid declining globally**—especially after **U.S. cuts under Donald Trump**—India faces a new challenge. The impact is sharpest on **NGOs**, threatening development work and civil society's role.

From Aid Recipient to Global Aspirant

1. **Early Dependence on International Aid:** After Independence, India actively sought foreign aid. Between **1955 and 1965**, most support came from **Western countries** and went to the **government**, seen as the key driver of change.
2. **Declining Relevance of Official Aid:** From the **1970s**, aid declined steadily. By the **1990s**, it had become **insignificant** due to **India's rapid economic growth** and **rising global standing**.
3. **Shift in Focus to Investment and Cooperation:** India now seeks **FDI** and global partnerships in **trade, technology, and climate action**. The fall in **official aid** is less worrying than the **decline in private foreign aid** to NGOs.

Mounting Pressures on the NGO Sector

1. **Critical Role of NGOs:** NGOs **fill governance gaps** and **hold authorities accountable**. They are more exposed to shrinking aid than government agencies.
2. **Changing Funding Landscape:** NGOs initially relied on **public donations**, but from the **1960s**, they became dependent on **government grants and foreign aid**. **CSR funds** only became notable after **2013**.
3. **Significant Decline in Aid:** From **2017-18 to 2021-22**, NGOs received **₹88,882 million**. But **accurate FCRA figures are unavailable**, and **estimates show a steep decline**.

Government Control and Regulation of Aid

1. **Tightening of FCRA Rules:** The **FCRA (1976)** set tough terms for receiving foreign funds. Amendments in **2010, 2011, 2020, 2023, and 2024** made rules **increasingly stringent**, causing many NGOs to **lose registrations**.
2. **Growing Official Distrust:** Even before the **1975 Emergency**, the phrase "**foreign hand**" was used to discredit dissent. Allegations included **religious conversions** and **anti-government protests**. Major donors like the **Soros Foundation** were discouraged.

3. **Restrictive but Permissive Stance:** While NGOs are technically allowed to accept aid, **stringent conditions and mistrust** have made the space increasingly restrictive.

Consequences of Aid Withdrawal

1. **Erosion of Innovation and Oversight:** Foreign aid provided **flexibility**, encouraged **experimentation**, and opened doors to **global ideas**. It allowed NGOs to act as **watchdogs** against excesses of state and market.

2. **Risks to Development and Governance:** Cuts in aid may cause **job losses**, **halted projects**, and **slower social progress**. More importantly, it reduces **independent scrutiny** of public policy.

3. **A Strategic Miscalculation:** While **self-reliance** is admirable, undermining foreign-funded NGOs may **hurt India's long-term development and democratic health**.

Question for practice:

Discuss how the decline in foreign aid, especially to NGOs, affects India's development and democratic governance.

How Small Modular Reactors Reduce Environmental Cost of AI

Source: The post How Small Modular Reactors Reduce Environmental Cost of AI has been created, based on the article "**Redrawing the not-so-pretty energy footprint of AI**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 6th May 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2-Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc.

Context: Generative AI tools like ChatGPT provide rapid access to creative content. However, they consume vast energy from data centres powered mostly by fossil fuels. Their increasing use strains global power supplies. This article examines the environmental cost of AI and investigates whether Small Modular Reactors (SMRs) can offer a sustainable energy alternative.

For detailed information on **Small Modular Reactors (SMRs): Potential and Challenges** [read this article here](#)
The Energy Footprint of AI

1. **Rising Electricity Consumption:** Every AI use requires energy from data centres. Most are powered by fossil fuels. **By 2030, data centres may consume 10% of global electricity**. While India currently meets AI energy needs, growing demand calls for future planning.

2. **High Carbon Emissions from Training:** Training AI models like ChatGPT or Midjourney produces **CO₂ emissions equal to five cars running over their lifetimes**. Even after deployment, these tools need continuous power, worsening the environmental impact.

3. **Need for Transparency:** AI companies must **disclose energy usage, sources, and reduction measures**. Like data privacy rules, such transparency can identify major consumption points and guide efforts to build sustainable AI infrastructure.

Small Modular Reactors as an Energy Solution

1. **Stable, Zero-Carbon Power Supply:** SMRs offer **24×7 zero-carbon electricity**. Unlike large nuclear plants, they are compact and scalable. Unlike solar or wind, they can function regardless of weather and be located near data centres.

2. **Faster and Safer Deployment:** SMRs are **quicker and cheaper to construct** due to their modular design. They feature **passive safety systems** that cool the core naturally and reduce accident risks. This improves public acceptance.

3. **Decentralised and Reliable Energy:** SMRs can be placed **close to high-demand areas**, reducing transmission losses. Their flexibility suits both urban and remote locations, **supporting grid resilience** and decentralised energy production.

Challenges to SMR Adoption

- 1. Policy and Public Perception:** Governments must develop **regulations for safety, waste management, and public trust**. Without a strong framework, scaling SMRs will remain difficult.
- 2. High Initial Costs:** SMRs require large upfront investments. However, in India, **costs could fall from ₹10.3 to ₹5 per kWh**, lower than the average cost, once functional.
- 3. Integration with Renewables:** SMRs must align with **existing solar and wind strategies**. Careful planning is needed to avoid duplication and optimise resources.

Way forward

- 1. Collaborative Support for Innovation:** A public-private partnership model can combine government oversight with private innovation. This joint effort can accelerate the deployment of SMRs and other renewable energy sources to meet AI's rising power demands.
- 2. Aligning Energy Goals with AI Needs:** Through collaboration, both sectors can align sustainable energy practices with the rapid growth of AI. This synergy ensures that energy supplies keep pace with technological advances.
- 3. Ensuring Long-Term Sustainability:** Public-private models offer a realistic path for long-term, sustainable AI development. They can drive efficient research and development, making sustainable energy for AI a future-ready solution.

Question for practice:

What are the potential benefits and challenges of using Small Modular Reactors (SMRs) to power AI data centres?

India needs monetary easing to sustain cyclical growth recovery

Source: The post India needs monetary easing to sustain cyclical growth recovery has been created, based on the article "**Reaching real equilibrium policy rates**" published in "**Businessline**" on 6th May 2025

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

Context: India's growth slowdown was cyclical, not structural. Growth is reviving due to higher government spending and changing global conditions. This article urges sharper monetary easing, effective liquidity management, and stable exchange rate policy to support growth and manage global spillovers.

For detailed information on **India's Economic Challenges and Policy Adjustments** [read this article here](#)

Growth Recovery and Monetary Policy Response

- 1. Signs of a Cyclical Recovery:** Growth improved from 5.6% in Q2 FY25 to 6.2% in Q3, supported by public expenditure. This, along with the reversal of the Trump trade, helped strengthen the rupee and equity markets.
- 2. MPC's Delayed Action:** The MPC failed to cut rates earlier, contributing to the slowdown. Since policy acts with lags, it must anticipate inflation. Inflation fell below target in February, and FY26 projections are at the 4% target.
- 3. Need for Sharper Rate Cuts:** The February cut was timely but too small. A 50bps cut in April was needed to bring real repo rates closer to equilibrium. Market rates have started adjusting, but a bigger cut would improve the pace.

Arguments Against Aggressive Rate Cuts

- 1. Gradualism in Uncertainty:** Some resist sharp cuts, fearing global shocks. But India must recognise its capacity to absorb shocks and respond decisively.
- 2. Food Inflation and Climate Worries:** Fears of heatwaves and food shocks often delay action. However, many States have liberalised agricultural markets, and startups are improving supply chains. Food is also a smaller part of the consumption basket now.

3. Bank Concerns Over Margins: Banks are cautious due to slow deposit growth. They prefer surplus liquidity before cutting lending rates. Yet their profits remain strong as borrowing costs fall and treasury gains rise.

4. Market Focus vs Real Sector Needs: Markets obsess over nominal rates, but the MPC must prioritise real rates that drive consumption and investment. Banks ultimately benefit as the economy grows, regardless of rate direction.

Liquidity Management and Banking Reforms

1. New Liquidity Perspective: The RBI has injected significant liquidity recently. The approach is shifting from 'liquidity first' to 'liquidity fast,' showing readiness to respond to shocks.

2. Maintaining Surplus Liquidity: Durable surplus liquidity suits India's conditions of external shocks and weak inter-bank lending. The RBI's accommodative stance restricts it to pausing or cutting rates.

3. Avoiding Overreaction: Rate cuts and liquidity injections must be measured. Over-stimulation leads to future tightening and volatility. A low, positive real repo rate supports demand while balancing saver and investor interests.

Exchange Rate Trends and Policy Response

1. Reversal of Rupee Outflows: After initial FPI outflows in Jan–Feb 2025, inflows resumed in March. Debt inflows also returned, despite narrowing US-India rate gaps. The rupee appreciated above 85 as reserves were rebuilt.

2. Strategic RBI Intervention: The RBI intervened only to prevent excess volatility, using reserve buffers strategically. This policy restored rupee stability.

3. Balancing Volatility and Stability: Some volatility helps markets and hedging, but excess volatility hurts exporters and widens rate spreads. The RBI must ensure real alignment, not cater to market demands for volatility.

Exchange Rate Management and Structural Factors

1. Real Exchange Rate Alignment: A real effective exchange rate near 100 supports trade. Sustained misalignment must be avoided. Adjustments also reflect Renminbi's weight in trade indices.

2. Limits of Global Models: Standard theories often misjudge India's structure. For instance, interest rate links with the US hold only in economies with open capital accounts.

3. Policy Coordination Over Conflict: A central bank–government conflict arises only if fiscal deficits fuel inflation. India is cutting deficits and spending wisely. Hence, monetary policy must quickly use available space to reduce growth volatility.

Question for practice:

Evaluate how India's monetary and exchange rate policies are being adjusted to support its cyclical growth recovery amid global and domestic challenges.

Caste census will reshape India's social justice

Source: The post Caste census will reshape India's social justice has been created, based on the article “Caste census announcement is an opportunity to fine-tune reservation policy” published in “Indian Express” on 6th May 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper1- Society- Social justice

Context: The caste census announcement marks a turning point in India's social justice policy. It ends the long neglect of counting OBCs officially. With a shift in the government's stance, the focus now moves to how it will be conducted and what changes it may trigger in affirmative action.

For detailed information on **Caste Census – Significance and Challenges** [read this article here](#)
Political Shift and Historical Oversight

1. **Motivation Behind the Move:** This is a political decision. It aims to counter Rahul Gandhi's push for caste enumeration, which challenges the BJP's non-savarna voter base.
2. **Shared Responsibility for Delay:** Delays are due to both major parties. The Vajpayee government dropped the caste census in 2000. Congress separated caste from the 2011 Census. The BJP government later withheld SECC data.
3. **Who Deserves Credit:** Historically, credit goes to leaders like **Lohia, Karpoori Thakur, Madhu Limaye, and Sharad Yadav**. Politically, **Rahul Gandhi's insistence** made caste census a national issue and led to this policy shift. This is his first major success as Leader of the Opposition.

Ensuring Timely and Transparent Implementation

1. **Integrating with the Main Census:** The caste enumeration must be conducted as part of the regular **decennial Census**, not as a parallel or isolated survey. This prevents bureaucratic delays and ensures legitimacy.
2. **Counting All Castes Without Exception:** The exercise should include **every caste**, not just SCs, STs, and OBCs. Enumerating castes from the so-called "general" category is essential to understand the **full landscape of caste-based privileges**.
3. **Keeping It Free from Political Interference:** There should be no link between caste enumeration and the **National Population Register (NPR)**. Tying the two together may derail the process through controversy or public resistance.

Expanding the Scope of Data Collection

1. **Capturing Detailed Caste Identity:** The new Census must record the **exact jati** of every person, not just their broad category (SC, ST, OBC, General). This is essential to uncover internal disparities within each category.
2. **Including Socio-Economic Indicators:** Key data points from the 2011 **Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC)**—such as land ownership, enterprise, government job, and occupation—should be included in the upcoming Census. These variables provide a more accurate socio-economic profile of each caste.
3. **Filling the Data Gaps Through Other Surveys:** Some high-value data cannot be captured in the Census alone. This includes caste-wise details of **ownership of top businesses, senior government positions, private sector leadership, elite educational access, and political roles**. These gaps must be addressed through existing national surveys like the **Economic Census, Agricultural Census, Labour Force Survey, and educational and company data**.

Pushing Boundaries of Social Justice

1. **Raising the Quota Limit:** If OBCs are over 45% of the population, this may justify increasing the 27% quota. It would challenge the **50% ceiling**, which was overlooked for EWS.
2. **Including the Private Sector:** If disparities are seen in private jobs and education, **affirmative action must extend to the private sector and private institutions**.

Using Data to Reform Affirmative Action

1. **Refining OBC List and Quotas:** Census data should help **revise the OBC list**, removing or adding jatis as required.
2. **Sub-Quotas Within Categories:** It will allow for **sub-quotas within SC, ST, and OBC** categories. Courts demand such evidence-based reform.

3. **Revisiting EWS Quota:** Data may question the **basis for the 10% EWS quota**, based on actual deprivation levels.

Question for practice:

Examine how the proposed caste census marks a shift in India's social justice approach and its potential impact on affirmative action policies.

Global unity against terrorism is falling apart

Source: The post Global unity against terrorism is falling apart has been created, based on the article "**The fragmentation in the global fight against terror**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 7th May 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- Security-Security challenges and their management in border areas – linkages of organized crime with terrorism.

Context: The April 22 Pahalgam terror attack exposed the weakening of global unity against terrorism. While many countries condemned the attack, most urged restraint from both India and Pakistan, showing a lack of resolve to confront the real perpetrators.

Global Response Highlights Divisions

1. **Calls for Restraint, Not Action:** Nations like the **U.S., Russia, and the EU avoided directly holding Pakistan accountable**. They focused on urging both India and Pakistan to maintain peace and solve disputes politically.
2. **Evasion of Terror Label:** Many **leaders avoided using the term "terror attack" for the Pahalgam incident**. The **EU did not even label it as such**, showing a clear shift from earlier "zero tolerance" postures.
3. **Shielding the Perpetrator:** Despite clear patterns from past incidents like Pulwama and 26/11, global players still **demand "proof" from India**, asking the victim to show restraint while ignoring the aggressor.

India Faces a Unique Bias

1. **Stability Over Justice:** India is advised to avoid escalation, as Pakistan promotes the "nuclear threat" narrative. The West, though bold with Russia, hesitates with Pakistan.
2. **Religious Targeting Overlooked:** The Pahalgam attackers identified and shot tourists based on religion. A Muslim pony operator was shot trying to save them. Yet the global response avoided **acknowledging Hinduphobia**.
3. **Silence on Anti-Hindu Hate:** The world reacts strongly to Islamophobia and anti-Semitism. But it remains silent on anti-Hindu attacks. Even U.S. candidate Vivek Ramaswamy faced religious slurs, with little concern shown.
4. **Rare Acknowledgement:** **Tulsi Gabbard, U.S. Director of National Intelligence**, was among the few who called it a "**horrific Islamist terrorist attack**" and recognised the religious motive. This was a rare moment of honesty.

Collapse of a Collective Global Fight

1. **End of Post-9/11 Consensus:** The unified global response post-9/11 is now gone. Countries are handling terrorism selectively, prioritizing threats based on internal interests.
2. **Region-Specific Priorities:** The U.S. under Biden focused on racially motivated extremism. Europe is concerned with right-wing threats. These shifts ignore cross-border terrorism in Asia.
3. **Global Inconsistencies:** The OIC uses Islamophobia to justify silence. Canada denies any responsibility for threats originating from its soil. China blocked India's proposals to blacklist Pakistan-based terrorists at the UN.

4. **Neglect of African Terrorism:** Terror in Africa has surged. The Sahel now accounts for over half of global terrorism deaths, as per the Global Terrorism Index 2025. Yet the global response remains indifferent.

Pakistan's UNSC Tactics and India's Pushback

1. **Reviving the Kashmir Narrative:** Pakistan used its UNSC seat to push for a closed-door session, as it did in 2019. But it produced no result, with most P-5 nations treating Kashmir as a bilateral issue.

2. **Strategic Pressure by India:** India opposed any UNSC statement, as it did in 2021 during the Ethiopia-Egypt water dispute. It also put the Indus Waters Treaty on hold as leverage.

The Way Forward for India

1. **Need for Real Accountability:** India's partners must pressure Pakistan meaningfully, not just issue generic statements. Episodic condemnation is not enough.

2. **India May Act Alone:** If global partners do not act, India must act alone. Strategic autonomy must be used where needed.

3. **Globalising the Fight Against Religiophobia:** India should raise the issue of non-Abrahamic religiophobia at bilateral and global forums beyond the UN.

4. **Reviving Anti-Terror Commitments:** The world must not retreat from the frameworks it built. India should lead efforts to counter state-sponsored terror and its new methods.

Question for practice:

Examine how the global response to the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack reveals a weakening of international consensus against terrorism and its implications for India.

New Security Challenges Force India to Rethink Defence

Source: The post New Security Challenges Force India to Rethink Defence has been created, based on the article "Our defence policy must gear up for a 3.5-front security challenge" published in "Live Mints" on 7th May 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3-Security challenges & Science and technology-indigenization of technology

Context: The Pahalgam attack and increasing tensions with Pakistan, China, and Bangladesh highlight growing security threats. Simultaneously, global instability—driven by the Russia-Ukraine war and Israel-Hamas conflict—necessitates a fresh review of India's defence strategy and spending priorities.

For detailed information on **Challenges faced by India's defense – India's defense budgeting and the point of deterrence** [read this article here](#)

1. Escalating Geopolitical Tensions

- **Multi-Front Security Concerns:** India now faces a 3.5-front challenge—from Pakistan, Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, China, and rising instability in Bangladesh. China's assertive border posturing over the last decade adds to the pressure.

- **Global Rearmament Trends:** The international security environment is shifting. Germany is restarting tank production in a 176-year-old factory, while Japan is considering changes to its pacifist constitution. These changes signal a return to hard-power politics.

- **Conflict as a Global Risk:** 'State-based Armed Conflict' topped the list of global risks for 2025 in a recent survey. Countries are asserting sovereignty and carving out zones of influence, heightening the threat of confrontations.

2. Need for Defence Spending Reform

- **Spending Not Keeping Pace:** India spends around 2% of its GDP on defence. Yet, defence outlays rose only 6.3% in 2023–24, 5.2% in 2024–25, and are budgeted to grow by 6.2% in 2025–26—well below India's nominal GDP growth of 10–12%.

- **China's Military Advantage:** China's military budget exceeds \$300 billion and has grown faster than its GDP, unlike India's sub-\$90 billion defence spending. This widening gap poses strategic risks.

- **Poor Capital Allocation:** Of India's ₹6.8 trillion defence budget for 2025–26, only 26% is for capital expenditure. The rest covers routine costs—salaries, pensions, maintenance. Pension costs alone exceed 20% of revenue expenditure. The upcoming 8th Pay Commission may further tilt spending toward salaries.

3. Advancing Strategic and Technological Capabilities

- **Digital and AI-Based Defence Tools:** India must develop digital defence systems, including AI and cryptographic technologies. Defence R&D should be prioritized, just as physical border infrastructure was earlier strengthened.

- **Emerging Space Threats:** Space may become a future battlefield. Though nuclear weapons are banned under the 1967 Outer Space Treaty, conventional militarization by countries like China is advancing rapidly.

- **Urgent Investment in Space Security:** India must strengthen satellite protection, surveillance, and ground-based systems. Space strategy must align with military needs and prepare for future conflict theatres.

4. Public-Private Collaboration

- **Use India's Startup Ecosystem:** India should involve its private sector and startups in defence production. This can accelerate indigenization and reduce external dependence.

- **Enhance Strategic Autonomy:** Leveraging private innovation will boost national security and help build a self-reliant defence system.

Question for practice:

Discuss how rising regional and global security threats are reshaping India's defence strategy and spending priorities.

India struggles to control rising digital misinformation

Source: The post India struggles to control rising digital misinformation has been created, based on the article "**Power and pitfalls of digital influence**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 7th May 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3-Security

Context: India's rapid digital growth has boosted access to information but also intensified the spread of misinformation. The rise of de-influencing and unchecked social media content has raised serious concerns about regulation, ethics, and public safety.

For detailed information on **Disinformation poses serious short-term threat to India** [read this article here](#)

The Rising Wave of Misinformation in India

1. **Influencers and Sensationalism:** De-influencing, which discourages purchases, may support mindful consumerism. But often, it relies on shock value and clickbait. Health reels and weight-loss videos blur the distinction between organic advice and paid promotion.

2. **Platforms Over Experts:** People now prefer digital platforms over expert advice. This enables quick spread of half-truths. Fact-based information often fails to match the reach of viral, misleading content.

3. **Global Risk Assessment:** India has been identified as highly exposed to misinformation in the World Economic Forum's 2024 Global Risks Report. The rise of AI-generated content and influence-driven social media activity fuels this risk.

4. Impact on Public Perception: Misinformation, especially in health, shapes public opinion using emotional hooks and misleading data. Influencers craft content using selective facts and ambiguity to drive engagement.

Legal and Regulatory Framework to Control Misinformation in India

1. Limits of Free Speech: Article 19(1)(a) guarantees free speech, but Article 19(2) imposes limits for defamation, morality, and public order. Courts confirm that spreading harmful content is not protected.

2. Content Regulation Laws: The Consumer Protection Act, 2019, bans deceptive ads and makes influencers liable. IT Act provisions, Intermediary Guidelines, and SEBI rules regulate harmful content. SEBI has restricted real-time stock tips by financial influencers.

3. ASCI and Voluntary Codes: ASCI guidelines, though not legally binding, set marketing ethics. Non-compliance can lead to blacklisting and public shaming, encouraging influencer responsibility.

Ethical Responsibilities and Legal Accountability

1. Blurred Boundaries: Influencer content often mixes facts with manipulation. Selective data and vague claims mislead viewers, especially in health-related content.

2. Commercial Intent vs Honest Opinion: Genuine reviews help consumers, but exaggerated negativity for clicks or sponsorships damages trust. Indian defamation laws aim to prevent this misuse.

3. Judicial Actions: The Delhi High Court recently barred an influencer from defaming a brand and stressed that health content must be backed by expert credentials.

Way forward

1. Need for Monitoring: A registration system for health influencers is vital. It would ensure accountability, especially for health-related claims.

2. Balancing Law with Ethics: Legal safeguards must be backed by ethical communication. Misuse of public trust in health advice can have serious consequences.

3. Platform and Brand Responsibility: Brands should educate users, and platforms must enforce strong rules to stop misinformation and unchecked promotional activities.

Question for practice:

Discuss how India is addressing the challenge of rising digital misinformation.

India and US cooperation strengthens energy security and resilience

Source: The post India and US cooperation strengthens energy security and resilience has been created, based on the article “**The building blocks of an India-U.S. energy future**” published in “**The Hindu**” on 8th May 2025

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

Context: India and the U.S. are reviving strategic cooperation in energy, defence, technology, and mobility. Recent statements by U.S. Vice-President J.D. Vance and India's foreign policy establishment signal a shift toward structured, long-term collaboration.

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

Strengthening India's Energy Security

1. Three Pillars of Energy Strategy: Stable and affordable resource access, Resilient global supply chains, and A clean energy transition that ensures sustainability and growth.

2. Role of Nuclear and Critical Minerals: Both nuclear energy and critical minerals are essential. They underpin India's energy transition and industrial resilience, making them central to India-U.S. cooperation.

Securing Critical Mineral Supply Chains

1. Strategic Importance Across Sectors:

- Critical minerals are foundational not just for mining but for clean energy, defence, semiconductors, and electronics. Recognising them as a cross-sectoral strategic asset supports long-term policy and tech collaboration.
- China currently controls around 90% of global rare earth processing capacity and has imposed export restrictions for strategic purposes. This makes global supply chains fragile and reinforces the need for India-U.S. cooperation.

2. Bilateral and Global Diversification Efforts: India and the U.S. signed an MoU in 2024 to secure and diversify supply chains. This includes:

- Forming a consortium for joint exploration and processing,
- Investing in mineral-rich countries in Africa, South America, and Southeast Asia, and
- Promoting demand-led policies through bilateral and plurilateral channels.

3. Infrastructure, Transparency, and Technology: To ensure traceability and real-time collaboration, India and the U.S. should:

- Establish a secure digital Mineral Exchange,
- Develop blockchain-based traceability standards (inspired by the EU Battery Passport), and
- Support sensitive industries like EVs and aerospace with mineral access.

4. Stockpiling and Long-Term Planning:

- Strategic reserves should be jointly built using Indian and U.S. storage facilities. A 20-year roadmap with interim targets must be aligned with India's Critical Minerals Mission. Support systems like workforce development and data-sharing should be built through iCET.
- India is the first non-G-7 member of the Mineral Security Partnership and will host the upcoming Quad summit, offering a platform to formalise these strategies.

Scaling Nuclear Energy for Future Demands

1. India's Nuclear Ambition: India aims to reach 100 GW of nuclear power by 2047, up from just 8 GW today. To meet this goal, it must commission 5–6 GW per year from the early 2030s. Some net-zero scenarios suggest the need for over 200 GW by 2070.

2. Policy Reforms to Attract Private Capital: Reforming the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act, 2010 is vital for private entry. India's modular designs and Holtec's SMR tech transfer to Indian firms illustrate the potential of international partnerships.

3. Financing and Bankability: Achieving 100 GW by 2047 requires \$180 billion. With India's financial institutions already exposed to \$200 billion in the power sector, de-risked models, credible offtake guarantees, and predictable returns are essential.

4. Safety, SMRs, and Industrial Use: SMRs offer flexibility, low land use, and cooling solutions for water-scarce areas. Their use in AI and green steel sectors adds industrial value, but long-term safety requires robust waste and decommissioning strategies from the outset.

Building a Resilient Strategic Partnership

1. **Shared Stability in Uncertain Times:** The IMF's April 2025 report shows rising global instability. India's economic growth and U.S. capital and innovation are naturally aligned to build a stable, future-ready partnership.
2. **Reducing the build time of nuclear projects** from nine to six years could cut the levelised cost of electricity by 8%, improving financial viability.
3. **Institutional Vision Beyond Short-Term Gains:** India-U.S. energy cooperation needs enduring institutions, clear policy frameworks, and consistent investment. A resilient energy future will be shaped not by rhetoric, but by execution and shared architecture.

Question for practice:

Evaluate how India-U.S. cooperation in critical minerals and nuclear energy can strengthen India's long-term energy security and industrial resilience.

India needs regulatory reforms to boost growth

Source: The post India needs regulatory reforms to boost growth has been created, based on the article "The road to regulatory reform" published in "The Hindu" on 8th May 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- Growth and Development

Context: India's services-led growth contrasts with the manufacturing-driven path of most emerging economies. Regulatory pressure has historically targeted manufacturing, but services are now increasingly affected. The 2025 Budget's focus on deregulation highlights the need to ease business operations and unlock higher, sustained economic growth in the face of global headwinds.

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

India's Growth Paradox

1. **Uneven Sectoral Contributions:** From 1980 to now, manufacturing's share in gross value added rose marginally from 16% to 17.5%. Meanwhile, services surged from 33% to 55%.
2. **Regulatory Disparity:** Manufacturing faced heavier compliance burdens, while services remained lightly regulated. Factories attracted inspection and licensing, unlike software or call centre firms.
3. **Increasing Scrutiny of Services:** Services now face similar issues. Incidents show how obscure regulations are misused for extortion. Even routine office work triggered police threats under outdated compliance norms.

Urgency for Regulatory Reform

1. **Budget Signals a Shift:** The Finance Minister proposed a high-level committee to cut red tape. This aligns with broader efforts to enhance ease of doing business.
2. **Reducing Regulatory Burden:** Self-certification for low-risk activities can replace inspections. States can extend licence validity using India and Southeast Asia's best practices. Third-party certification can fast-track approvals.
3. **Digital Approvals and Transparency:** Online systems should list required documents and allow automated approvals. For example, buildings not in flight paths or below a certain height can receive an automatic NOC from the Airports Authority of India **based on geotagged location**.

Accommodating the Gig Economy

1. **Recognising Gig Work's Role:** Gig work is integral to India's workforce. Labour laws must adapt to this shift without enforcing rigid norms.
2. **Balanced Regulation:** Efforts to treat gig workers as full-time staff may backfire. Laws should protect dignity while supporting business growth.

3. **From Distrust to Trust:** Current regulatory attitudes hinder enterprise. A trust-based approach is essential for inclusive economic progress.

Improving Factor Markets and Labour Laws

1. **Land and Labour Flexibility:** Industrial land use should be eased by revising acquisition laws, zoning, and byelaws. Labour laws and the Factories Act need a detailed review to eliminate outdated clauses.

2. **Checks Against Harassment:** A time-bound appeals process should be mandated. Overreach by departments must carry consequences. All inspections should follow a standard checklist with prior notice.

3. **Shift in Bureaucratic Culture:** Growth-enabling performance should become part of departmental evaluations to reduce obstructionist attitudes.

Toward a Developed India by 2047

1. **Repeating the 1991 Reform Success:** India's 1991 macroeconomic reforms proved transformative. Now, the country must pursue microeconomic reforms to meet the goal of becoming a developed nation by 2047.

2. **Domestic Reforms Amid Global Headwinds:** While global trade wars pose external challenges, India can strengthen its domestic economy by removing regulatory bottlenecks — an internal lever firmly within its grasp.

Question for practice:

Examine how India's regulatory framework affects its services-led growth and what reforms are necessary to support sustained economic expansion.

India responds to terror with strategic precision

Source: The post India responds to terror with strategic precision has been created, based on the article "Operation Sindoor and beyond: Think about the Pakistan challenge, long-term" published in "Indian Express" on 8th May 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- Security-Security challenges and their management in border areas – linkages of organized crime with terrorism.

Context: The recent Pahalgam attack by Pakistan-linked terrorists marked a serious escalation, prompting India to launch Operation Sindoor. This article analyzes the operation's rationale, broader national strategy, and the continuing challenges posed by Pakistan's proxy war and regional hostility.

Operation Sindoor and Strategic Objectives

1. **Targeted Action Backed by Political Will:** India's response was calibrated to avoid civilian harm while punishing terror outfits. **PM Modi gave operational freedom** to the military. The action was in line with the nation's right to self-defence.

2. **Unprecedented Scale and Planning:** The strike hit **nine sites simultaneously**, including long-standing terror hubs like **Muridke and Bahawalpur**. The action showed deep planning and high risk-taking, designed to achieve objectives with limited escalation or global backlash.

3. **Managing Narrative and Cyber Threats:** India **won the perception battle** early. However, future escalation may require not just military dominance but **communications leadership**. Attention must also be paid to **cybersecurity**, as threats may come from multiple sources.

Diplomatic Challenges and Global Response

1. **Weak Global Pressure on Pakistan:** While India's case was acknowledged, global powers **avoided strong action**. **Western aid to Pakistan rarely enforced terrorism clauses**. US and Europe focus more on preventing conflict than punishing sponsors of terror.

2. **Tactical Blindness and Strategic Bias:** Pakistan's army is seen as essential to regional stability. This leads to tolerance for its **nuclear threats** and **proxy war strategy**. India also faces resistance from **China** and indifference from parts of the **Global South**.

3. **Water Conflicts and Perception Wars:** Pakistan may use the **Indus Water Treaty** to provoke tensions. Similar issues, like **Nepal's resentment post-2015 blockade** or **Bangladesh's Teesta grievances**, show how water can be weaponized against India in public perception.

Terrorism's Persistent Asymmetry

1. **Psychological and Strategic Impact:** Terror attacks deepen Partition-era trauma and weaken social unity. Retaliations **drain military, diplomatic, and economic resources**, even though they are often necessary.

2. **State-Sponsored and Sustainable Proxy War:** Terror groups in Pakistan operate under military protection. With **millions of unemployed, radicalized youth**, Pakistan can sustain low-cost proxy war indefinitely.

3. **Misplaced Coercion Risks:** Forceful steps can either change outcomes or harden hostility. **India must balance pressure with sensitivity**, especially on issues that can trigger long-term resentment in the region.

Strengthening India's Counter-Terror Strategy

1. **Reinforcing the Five Ps Approach:** India must enhance its strategy to **predict, prevent, pre-empt, protect, and punish**. Terrorists need to succeed once, while security forces must succeed every day.

2. **Military Upgradation and Civil Oversight:** India must invest in mobile forces, **terrain-specific unmanned systems**, and asymmetric reach. But secrecy should not prevent **public and parliamentary accountability**.

3. **Inclusive National Security:** **All Kashmiris must not be seen as complicit**. Broader trust and vigilance within society are essential to prevent radicalization and maintain unity.

A Long-Term Vision for South Asia

1. **Strategic Engagement over Dismissal:** India should not ignore Pakistan. Instead, it must **push global recognition of Pakistan's role in terrorism** and work to alter its **internal political dynamics**.

2. **Using Global Standing Wisely:** India must **leverage its rising influence** to gain global endorsement on Jammu & Kashmir and isolate Pakistan diplomatically.

3. **Balancing Global and Regional Focus:** While eyeing global leadership, India must also **secure its neighbourhood**. A safe Bharat is key to building a **Viksit Bharat**.

Question for practice:

Examine how Operation Sindoor reflects India's evolving counter-terrorism strategy in response to Pakistan's proxy war.

Social media deeply affects youth mental health

Source: The post Social media deeply affects youth mental health has been created, based on the article "**Is social media defining self-worth?**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 9th May 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2-Governance – Issues relating to Health.

Context: The tragic death of a young entrepreneur, reportedly due to a drop in social media followers, has sparked urgent concerns about how online platforms shape mental health and self-worth. The article examines how social media influences youth identity, emotional well-being, and the role of adults in addressing these challenges.

For detailed information on **India must act on youth mental health crisis** [read this article here](#)

Social Media and Identity Formation

1. Performance Replaces Authenticity: Social media acts as a mirror and magnifier. Young people now perform versions of themselves to gain approval. The question is no longer “Who am I?” but “Which version of me will gain likes?” This erodes the line between expression and performance.

2. Blended Online-Offline Lives: Unlike older generations, today’s youth don’t separate online life from real life. Digital presence is inseparable from identity. This constant exposure allows little time for personal reflection or growth.

3. Loss of Private Identity Spaces: Identity used to form in safe, private settings like homes or schools. Now, it unfolds publicly — edited and posted for feedback. Adolescents grow up under constant social evaluation.

The Influence of the Influencer Ecosystem

1. The Rewards of Perfection: The algorithm favors curated content. Even “truth” must be attractively packaged. Vulnerability is often punished, creating a culture where surface perfection is everything.

2. Children as Performers: Children, often encouraged by parents, become influencers. Shows like *Bad Influence* highlight how family pride gets tied to follower counts. This can distort values at a young age.

3. Systemic Accountability: Influencers are not the root cause. They are part of a system that incentivizes performance and penalizes honesty. Platforms, algorithms, and audiences all play a role.

Escalating Risks and Shifting Ideals

1. Dangerous Online Trends: Challenges like Blue Whale pushed youth toward extreme behaviors without any discussion of their emotional pain. These trends reward risk over reflection.

2. Shifting Ideals, Lasting Harm: Digital ideals — from body shapes to daily routines — keep changing. Teens struggle to keep up, feeling pressured to constantly adapt their appearance and habits.

3. Role-Based Performance: Young users adopt extreme personas — alpha males or ultra-sassy girls — without understanding the emotional toll. There is no guidance to help them process these roles.

Body Image and Unrealistic Trends

1. Trend-Driven Distortions: Trends like the “thigh gap” or symmetry obsessions set impossible beauty standards. Teens notice even minor facial differences, internalizing unrealistic comparisons.

2. Shame and Therapy: Despite knowing images are edited, teens internalize shame. Therapists report growing cases of eating disorders and identity distress tied to social media trends.

3. Toxic Routines Online: Trends like the ‘girl morning routine’ promote hyper-productivity. Despite being unrealistic, such routines go viral, affecting mental health and setting harmful expectations.

Parental Role and Meaningful Engagement

1. Surveillance Backfires: Monitoring teens out of fear can break trust. Instead of policing, parents should approach with curiosity and empathy to foster connection.

2. Lack of Adult Guidance: Teens are left alone to navigate overwhelming digital worlds. Adults often fail to explain how to evaluate content or seek reliable information.

3. Bridge Through Conversation: Teens use hidden accounts and coded language. Adults must learn their world, ask reflective questions, and move from control to dialogue. Connection is the key.

Question for practice:

Examine how social media influences the identity and emotional well-being of today's youth.

India responds firmly to terror but faces regional challenges

Source: The post India responds firmly to terror but faces regional challenges has been created, based on the article “**India-Pakistan tension and the Subcontinent’s challenge**” published in “**Indian Express**” on 9th May 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- Security-Security challenges and their management in border areas – linkages of organized crime with terrorism.

Context: The Pahalgam terror attack prompted India to conduct retaliatory air strikes in Pakistan and PoK. This has sharpened India's posture against cross-border terrorism and highlighted the enduring challenges in ensuring peace and stability in South Asia.

For detailed information on **Global unity against terrorism is falling apart** [read this article here](#)

India's Firm Retaliation Strategy

- 1. Clear Response to Terror Attacks:** India has openly declared it will strike back against terrorism originating from Pakistan and PoK. The Indian Air Force targeted multiple sites, delivering a strong message.
- 2. Use of Diplomatic and Economic Pressure:** In addition to air strikes, India has employed non-military tools to isolate Pakistan. These include diplomatic messaging and other measures to increase pressure.
- 3. Unified Domestic Political Support:** India's political leadership is united in supporting a tough response. This consensus reflects strong national backing for firm action.

Limits of Escalation and Regional Risks

- 1. High Costs of Full-Scale War:** A full war would damage both nations severely. Neither India nor Pakistan can afford long-term military conflict without hurting their people and economies.
- 2. Dangerous Pattern of Retaliation:** The region risks slipping into tit-for-tat violence. Pakistan justified the Pahalgam attack by referring to a prior incident, continuing the blame game.
- 3. Limited Trust from Global Community:** Few countries fully accept one-sided narratives. While India's version has more support, Pakistan has also found backers.

Need for Diplomatic Reset

- 1. Weak External Mediation Today:** Earlier India-Pakistan wars ended swiftly due to international pressure. Today, such diplomatic leverage may not be available, raising the stakes of escalation.
- 2. Call for Long-Term Security Thinking:** Once hostilities ease, both sides must reflect on who gains from continued disputes. Real security requires economic and social integration.
- 3. Abandonment of Past Frameworks:** The 2000–2007 Vajpayee-Manmohan-Musharraf peace initiative, which once offered a framework for resolving disputes, has been abandoned. Currently, no credible diplomatic effort exists to guide India and Pakistan toward lasting regional peace and security.

Regional Leadership Deficit

1. **No Long-Term Vision for Peace:** South Asia lacks leaders focused on peace and development. Historical burdens and internal divisions continue to dominate political priorities.
2. **Neglect of Neighbourly Relations:** Countries in the region often seek global partnerships while ignoring regional cooperation. This undermines sustainable growth and peace.
3. **India's Growth Faces Vulnerabilities:** India has made economic gains, but any prolonged conflict can derail its growth. Pakistan may seek to exploit this strategic vulnerability.

The Cost of Unrealistic Ambitions

1. **Fantasies of Territorial Reclaim:** Political rhetoric about reclaiming Kashmir or PoK has little practical value. Realists understand the high costs of altering the status quo.
2. **Growth Needs Regional Stability:** India's economic rise—now surpassing Japan—needs peace in its neighbourhood. Ignoring regional concerns could hinder its progress.
3. **Neighbours Want Shared Benefits:** India's neighbours want inclusion in its success. A strategy based on pressure risks alienating them and increasing regional tensions.

Question for practice:

Evaluate India's post-Pahalgam response strategy and its implications for regional peace and stability in South Asia.

India plans major reforms in insurance sector

Source: The post India plans major reforms in insurance sector has been created, based on the article "**Reprioritising issues in insurance sector**" published in "**Businessline**" on 9th May 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 3- Inclusive Growth

Context: India plans to allow 100% FDI in insurance to boost competition, widen rural access, and channel funds for infrastructure. Despite growth in premiums and insurers since liberalisation in 2000, insurance penetration remains low, and significant reforms are needed to address existing structural challenges.

For detailed information on **Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI)** [read this article here](#)

Sector Growth and Persistent Gaps

1. **Rapid Expansion Since 2000:** India's insurance landscape has grown from four to 34 non-life/health insurers and from a LIC monopoly to 26 life insurers. Premiums have surged: non-life from ₹11,808 crore in 2001-02 to ₹3.07 lakh crore in FY2025; life from ₹56,000 crore to ₹9 lakh crore.
2. **Asset Growth vs Penetration:** Assets under management reached ₹67 lakh crore in 2024. Yet, insurance penetration is only 4% of GDP, well below the global average of 6.4%.
3. **Coverage Gaps Remain:** High out-of-pocket medical costs and poor disaster coverage persist, indicating the need for deeper market reforms.

Proposed Reforms and Caution Points

1. **Capital Requirements and FDI Limitations:** Initial capital norms of ₹100 crore (now ₹363 crore, inflation-adjusted) aimed to ensure financial soundness. FDI has risen from 26% in 2000 to 74% in 2021, but utilisation remains modest—20.29% in non-life and 35.23% in life. Only four life insurers have hit the 74% limit.

2. Composite Licensing Risks: Allowing firms to operate both life and non-life under one license raises solvency and regulatory concerns. Structural differences between product lines necessitate ring-fenced entities, not merged operations.

3. Lower Capital Thresholds in Select Cases: Licensing under reduced capital norms may aid rural coverage but must be carefully managed to avoid market fragmentation and systemic risks.

Strategic Agenda 2025–2030

1. Moving to Risk-Based Supervision: IRDAI is shifting to a risk-based capital and supervision system, focusing on innovation, operational flexibility, and distribution reform.

2. Underwriting Losses and Cost Inefficiencies: Combined ratios over 100% show continued losses. FY24 expenses were ₹78,254 crore in non-life and ₹1.4 lakh crore in life. PSU insurers have lost ₹15 crore daily since FY2020, mainly due to underpriced group health policies.

3. Investor Trust and Market Listings: Valuation gaps, restated accounts, and lack of IRDAI-certified data hurt investor confidence. Regulatory gaps under Section 34 of the Companies Act require attention.

Enabling Transparency and Oversight

1. Inter-Agency Coordination: RBI, SEBI, and MoRTH must ensure transparent pricing, disclosures, and value retention across insurer transactions.

2. Enhanced Disclosures and Data Reforms: Insurers should publish expense and cash flow reports. Formalising the Insurance Information Bureau into a utility will help stakeholders.

3. Avoiding Market Concentration: Market power among private players must be monitored using accounting and GST data, similar to the 2004 US Eliot Spitzer investigation.

Way Forward

1. Encouraging New Entrants: Historical figures—107 non-life insurers in 1971, 243 life in 1956—support the case for more licenses to boost innovation and resilience.

2. Long-Term Planning: A five-year roadmap and a 2047 vision must guide reforms, anchored in data, transparency, and inclusive market development.

Question for practice:

Examine the key reforms proposed to improve insurance penetration and transparency in India's insurance sector.

India's Heat Plans Must Protect Informal Workers

Source: The post India's Heat Plans Must Protect Informal Workers has been created, based on the article “**It is time to protect India's workers from the heat**” published in “**The Hindu**” on 10th May 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3-Disaster Management

Context: In April 2025, Delhi's temperature surpassed 41°C, marking an alarming trend of intensifying heatwaves. This new climate reality is particularly harsh for India's urban informal workers, who face grave risks to health and livelihood. Yet, their needs remain absent in current heat response plans.

For detailed information on **Impact of Heat Waves on Informal Workers** [read this article here](#)

Gaps in Current Heat Action Plans

1. Informal Workers Remain Invisible: Most Indian Heat Action Plans (HAPs) do not directly mention informal workers. NDMA's 2019 guidelines refer to them under broad categories. No detailed safety measures exist for vendors, construction workers, gig workers, or waste collectors.

2. Short-Term, Crisis-Focused Approach: HAPs treat heatwaves as seasonal disasters, not long-term climate threats. Plans focus only on immediate summer responses. Ministries like Labour, Health, and Urban Affairs operate separately, causing fragmented and inconsistent protection.

3. Neglect of Work and Livelihood Impacts: Most plans emphasize general health awareness. They ignore income loss, unsafe working hours, and lack of rest or hydration options. Without occupational protections, informal workers face daily heat risks with no support.

Global and Domestic Models for Protection

1. International Good Practices: California and Oregon require employers to provide water, breaks, and shade. France mandates work adjustments and opens public buildings for cooling. Qatar and Australia limit outdoor work during peak heat hours.

2. Indian Success Stories: Ahmedabad's HAP introduced shaded rest zones and adjusted work hours. Odisha banned outdoor work during peak times. These local examples offer replicable models for heat-resilient urban planning.

Steps Towards a Worker-Centric Heat Response

1. Revise National Heat Guidelines: NDMA must update its guidelines to explicitly include informal workers. Protocols should define safe hours, rest breaks, emergency support, and water access — tailored to each worker group.

2. Engage Workers in Decision-Making: HAPs must involve worker unions, collectives, and welfare boards. Policies developed with workers are more practical, realistic, and effective. Community engagement ensures local relevance and acceptance.

3. Ensure Basic Heat Protections in Cities: Cities must set up hydration points, shaded rest areas, and cooling centres in public places and work zones. These facilities must be accessible, gender-sensitive, and co-maintained by the community.

Strengthening Infrastructure and Finance

1. Fund Local Adaptations and Health Coverage: CSR, city budgets, and community funding must support heat response measures. Informal workers should be covered by health insurance for heat-related illnesses, which they currently lack.

2. Make Cooling Infrastructure a Standard Practice: Features like cool roofs, shaded walkways, and natural ventilation must be part of regular city planning. These should no longer be pilot projects but standard elements of urban design.

Institutional Reforms and Integrated Planning

1. Embed Heat Resilience in City Policies: Master plans, building codes, and infrastructure policies must legally include heat adaptation and worker protection. Cities must increase tree cover and create more shaded, water-rich public spaces.

2. Create a National Coordination Mechanism: A central task force must bring together all relevant ministries and disaster agencies. Each city should have a heat officer to coordinate and monitor cross-departmental responses.

Conclusion

For informal workers, climate change is not a distant problem. It affects their health, income, and future every day. Heat response must shift from crisis reaction to long-term, inclusive planning — or the cost will be measured in lives.

Question for practice:

Evaluate how existing Heat Action Plans in India fall short in protecting urban informal workers and what steps can be taken to make these plans more inclusive and effective.

India needs urgent food system transformation now

Source: The post India needs urgent food system transformation now has been created, based on the article “**Sprouting sustainable, nutrition-sensitive food systems**” published in “**The Hindu**” on 10th May 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- issues of buffer stocks and food security

Context: India, despite being a top global food producer, faces severe nutritional challenges including undernutrition, obesity, and hidden hunger. The 2024 Global Hunger Index ranks India at 105 out of 127. With climate change and rising costs affecting food access, a complete transformation of the food system is urgently needed.

For detailed information on **Food Systems and Climate Change: Impacts and Mitigation Methods** [read this article here](#)

India's Dual Nutrition Burden

1. Widespread Undernutrition and Micronutrient Deficiency: Data from NFHS-5 (2019–21) shows 194 million undernourished Indians. Among children under five, 35.5% are stunted, 32.1% underweight, and 19.3% suffer from wasting. Anaemia affects 57% of women of reproductive age.

2. Rise in Overnutrition and Non-Communicable Diseases: Overweight and obesity are increasing rapidly — 24% of women and 22.9% of men are affected. The dual burden of malnutrition now includes undernutrition and diet-related diseases.

3. Inaccessibility of Healthy Diets: About 55.6% of Indians cannot afford nutritious food. The cost of a healthy diet rose from \$2.86 PPP/day in 2017 to \$3.36 in 2022, increasing food insecurity, even among food producers.

Structural and Climate Challenges

1. Failing Food Systems and Economic Loss: Globally, poor food systems cause \$12 trillion in losses annually. For India, failing to act means worsening health costs, weak human capital, and reduced productivity.

2. Climate Change Threatens Food Security: Rising temperatures and erratic rainfall reduce crop yields, biodiversity, and small farmer incomes. These changes heighten India's nutritional vulnerability.

3. Need for Systemic Reform: Current piecemeal efforts are inadequate. Without structural reforms that address food affordability, diversity, and sustainability, malnutrition will persist.

Strategies for Food System Transformation

1. Nutrition-Sensitive Agriculture: Integrating nutrition goals into agriculture involves promoting climate-resilient, biofortified crops, increasing crop diversity, and improving storage systems to reduce food loss.

2. Community-Driven Models: Models like Nutrition-Sensitive Community Planning (NSCP) address local nutrition factors through integrated efforts in health, WASH, and environmental conservation.

3. School-Based and Safety Net Programs: Initiatives like Nutri-Pathshala use biofortified grains in school meals and support local farmers. Expanding PDS and mid-day meal schemes with nutrient-rich, indigenous food ensures support for vulnerable groups.

4. Private Sector and Behavioural Change: Companies must prioritise nutrition by improving labelling, offering fortified or plant-based foods, and using digital tools for consumer awareness. Campaigns using games and radio help spread nutritional knowledge.

For detailed information on **An opportunity to recast India's food system** [read this article here](#)

Innovation and Localisation for SDGs

1. Socio-Technical Innovation Bundles: Research in the Himalayas by TERI and FOLU promotes place-based innovation — growing local nutrient-rich crops, decentralised processing, and farmer-consumer networks enhance nutrition security.

2. Linking Food, Health, and Environment Goals: To meet SDGs 2, 3, and 12, India must align food policies with health and sustainability. Localised innovations are essential to bridge gaps between production and nutrition outcomes.

Role of the Health and Nutrition Community

1. Cross-Sector Collaboration is Vital: Nutritionists and public health professionals must work with planners to embed nutrition into all policies. The NSCP and Nutri-Pathshala demonstrate integrated impact.

2. A Call for Bold, Systemic Change: Incremental efforts are insufficient. A unified push by governments, businesses, and civil society is needed. Nutrition must drive future food, economic, and social policies.

Question for practice:

Examine the major challenges and strategies involved in transforming India's food system to address its dual burden of malnutrition.

Turkey and Pakistan grow closer against India

Source: The post Turkey and Pakistan grow closer against India has been created, based on the article "**The Pakistan-Turkey nexus and where India stands**" published in "**Indian Express**" on 10th May 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2- International Relations

Context: India recently repelled a large-scale Pakistani drone attack along its western border. Investigations suggest the drones were Turkish-made, bringing renewed attention to Turkey's growing strategic partnership

with Pakistan. This raises questions about Ankara's motivations and the implications of this alliance for India's regional and global diplomacy.

The Drone Attack and Turkish Involvement

1. Suspected Turkish Drone Origins: Over 300 drones were used in the Pakistani attack. Preliminary analysis identified them as Turkish-made *Asisguard Songar* models. This was confirmed by Colonel Sofiya Qureshi and Wing Commander Vyomika Singh during a Ministry of Defence press briefing.

2. Turkey's Military Presence in Pakistan: A Turkish *Ada-class* anti-submarine corvette docked at Karachi port on May 2. A Turkish *C-130 Hercules* military transport aircraft landed at Karachi airport on April 27. Although Turkey claimed these were routine visits without arms, their timing raised concerns.

3. Turkey's Distinct Stance Compared to Gulf Nations: Turkey openly condemned India's *Operation Sindoor*, unlike Gulf countries such as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), which refrained from taking Pakistan's side and instead showed sensitivity to India's position on Kashmir.

Turkey-Pakistan Strategic Convergence

1. Historical and Ideological Alignment: Turkey and Pakistan share Islamic ties and were Cold War allies in blocs like the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) and the Regional Cooperation for Development (RCD). Pakistan supported Turkey during the Cyprus crises in 1964 and 1971.

2. Erdogan's Active Engagement: Since 2003, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has visited Pakistan at least ten times. In February 2025, he co-chaired the 7th session of the Pakistan-Türkiye High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council in Islamabad.

3. Rivalry with Gulf Powers and Alternative Alliances: Turkey, along with Qatar, challenges the regional dominance of Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Turkey seeks partnerships with non-Gulf Muslim states like Pakistan and Malaysia, evident from the 2019 Kuala Lumpur Summit, which was seen as a challenge to Saudi leadership.

Pakistan's Gains from Turkish Partnership

1. Support on Kashmir Issue: President Erdogan's recent statement reaffirming solidarity with Kashmiris prompted India to protest officially. Pakistan identified Turkey, China, and Azerbaijan as its strongest international supporters during the crisis.

2. Advanced Defence Cooperation: Turkey is Pakistan's second-largest arms supplier after China. Deals include Bayraktar drones, Kemankes cruise missiles, and now the *Asisguard Songar* drone. These reflect expanding military-industrial cooperation.

3. Naval Modernisation Aligned with Indian Ocean Strategy: Turkey's STM Defence Technologies signed a \$1 billion deal to build four new corvettes for the Pakistan Navy. It is also upgrading Pakistan's Agosta 90B submarines, continuing a legacy of naval support.

India's Diplomatic Counterbalance

1. Partnerships with Cyprus and Armenia: India supports Greece-backed Cyprus and has become Armenia's largest arms supplier in 2024. These moves counterbalance Turkish and Pakistani positions in Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus.

2. Exclusion from Indo-Pacific and IMEC Projects: Pakistan and Turkey are excluded from the U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy (2022) and the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC). President Erdogan has criticised IMEC and is pushing Turkey's "Iraq Development Road" as a rival initiative.

3. Turkey's Position in Anti-India Bloc: Despite India's humanitarian aid to Turkey in 2023, Turkey remains firmly aligned with Pakistan. Ankara now ranks as Pakistan's most active ally after China, posing ongoing strategic concerns for India.

Question for practice:

Examine the strategic dimensions of the Turkey-Pakistan partnership and its implications for India's regional and global diplomacy.

Caste census will make India more just and equal

Source: The post Caste census will make India more just and equal has been created, based on the article "**Why India must get the Caste Census right**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 12th May 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper1-Society- Social justice

Context: The Modi government's decision to include caste enumeration in the next Census marks a turning point in policymaking. This step addresses decades of data blindness, offering a pathway toward evidence-based governance and inclusive development.

For detailed information on **Caste Census – Significance and Challenges** [read this article here](#)

The Rationale for Caste Enumeration

1. From Caste Blindness to Data Visibility: Post-Independence India sought to abolish caste while pursuing social justice, creating a contradiction. The refusal to count caste in the Census upheld a policy of caste blindness, undermining affirmative action goals. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar had called the omission of caste data "petty intelligence," stressing its necessity for inclusion.

2. Legal and Constitutional Mandates: Though SCs and STs have been counted since 1951, OBCs remain excluded. However, constitutional amendments (73rd and 74th) mandate OBC reservations in local bodies. The introduction of EWS reservations further necessitates comprehensive caste data for fair implementation.

3. Inequity and Elite Capture: The absence of caste data has led to the entrenchment of upper castes and dominant OBCs in power structures. Data submitted to the Justice G. Rohini Commission revealed that 10 OBC castes cornered 25% of benefits, while 37% received none. Enumeration would help in sub-categorising groups and defining the creamy layer.

Past Lessons and Practical Models

1. The 2011 SECC Failure: The 2011 Socio-Economic and Caste Census ended in failure. It was conducted without the Census Act's authority and lacked technical capacity. Confusing, open-ended questions led to an inflated and unusable caste count of 46 lakh entries.

2. Technical and Institutional Flaws: Enumerators lacked training and conflated gotras, sub-castes, and surnames. Conducted by ministries unfamiliar with sociological surveys, the effort lacked credibility. The data was never released, making the exercise a wasted opportunity.

3. Bihar's Model of Success: In contrast, Bihar's caste survey used a vetted list of 214 castes and one "Other Castes" category. It followed a focused, well-planned methodology, proving that a credible caste survey is entirely feasible.

Blueprint for a Credible Caste Census

1. Legal and Institutional Framework: Amend the Census Act, 1948, to explicitly mandate caste enumeration. Entrust the task solely to the Registrar General and Census Commissioner to avoid political interference and ensure professional execution.
2. State-Specific Caste Lists: Prepare draft caste lists for each State in consultation with governments, sociologists, and community leaders. Publish them online and invite public feedback before finalising.
3. Standardised and Structured Questionnaires: Use closed-option questions with dropdowns covering sub-caste, aliases, broader caste groups, and surnames. Assign unique digital codes to prevent confusion between similar caste names.
4. Enumerator Training: Conduct region-specific training sessions using mock examples and clear dos and don'ts. This will help enumerators accurately record local caste details and reduce errors.
5. Use of Digital Tools: Provide handheld devices to enumerators preloaded with verified caste lists. Restrict data entry to predefined options to prevent manual entry errors.
6. Representative Staffing: Deploy enumerators from diverse backgrounds in areas where they have no personal or community conflicts of interest. This will enhance neutrality and trust.
7. Independent Oversight Mechanism: Set up district-level audit committees to monitor fieldwork, verify data samples, and ensure quality control across regions.
8. Participatory Questionnaire Design: Engage experts and communities in the questionnaire design process to capture the full complexity of caste identities and prevent misclassification.
9. Pilot Testing in Multiple States: Conduct pilot surveys in socially and geographically diverse states such as Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, and Assam. Use findings to refine methodology before nationwide implementation.

Conclusion:

Every Census since 1951 has counted nearly 2,000 SC/ST communities. Completing the count for the remaining 4,000-odd OBC and upper caste groups is feasible and overdue. The upcoming Census is an opportunity to correct a historic data gap and move toward a more just India.

Question for practice:

Examine how caste enumeration can contribute to evidence-based policymaking and social justice in India.

Women lead protests but lack decision power

Source: The post Women lead protests but lack decision power has been created, based on the article "**The women who remain largely invisible**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 12th May 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper1-Social empowerment

Context: Across India and South Asia, women have consistently led protests against harmful development and environmental degradation. Yet, despite their leadership, they remain largely excluded from formal decision-making processes, land rights, and climate policy frameworks. The article highlights the need for structural reforms to ensure gender-inclusive development and climate justice.

For detailed information on **Women Empowerment- Economic Political and Social** [read this article here](#)

Women-Led Resistance Across Regions

1. Sustained Movements on the Ground: From Odisha's Sijimali forests to Tamil Nadu's coastlines, women have been central in opposing mining, nuclear, and coal projects. In Jharkhand, Adivasi women actively defend ancestral land, while Tamil Nadu's fishing communities resist infrastructure threats to coastal life.

2. Facing Repression and Risk: These women often endure state violence and marginalisation while upholding community rights and environmental protection. Their activism reflects deep-rooted ecological knowledge and survival concerns.

Exclusion from Decision-Making

1. Marginalisation in Consultations: Despite playing key roles in protests, women are largely excluded from community decisions and official consultations, even in processes claiming to follow Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC). Male-dominated meetings overlook their priorities and perspectives.

2. Dismissal of Women's Knowledge: Women's insights are often viewed as emotional rather than informed, despite being grounded in real-life socio-environmental understanding.

Legal Gaps and Governance Failures

1. Laws That Exist Only on Paper: Frameworks like India's Forest Rights Act and PESA Act, Nepal's joint land ownership policy, and Bangladesh's Khas land initiative promise land rights and participation. However, women are rarely listed as landowners or decision-makers.

2. Implementation Barriers: Patriarchal norms, male-centric Gram Sabhas, and lack of gender-sensitive mechanisms restrict women's access to legal rights. Many displaced women are denied compensation due to not being recognised as household heads.

3. Custom Over Statute: Even after legal reforms like the 2005 amendment to the Hindu Succession Act, customary practices continue to override women's entitlements, especially in tribal regions.

Climate Change Deepens Gender Inequality

1. Disproportionate Impact on Women: Women face increased hardship due to extreme heat, water scarcity, and pollution. They walk longer distances for water, care for ill family members, and work longer hours.

2. Exclusion from Climate Solutions: Women are rarely included in climate adaptation and resilience planning. Their traditional ecological knowledge is overlooked in official frameworks.

3. Inadequate FPIC Application: Although FPIC is gaining traction in international discourse, its application remains flawed. Women often feel unsafe or unheard in consultation spaces dominated by men.

Way Forward

1. Inclusive Consultation Practices: Governments and corporations must ensure that FPIC processes are truly inclusive. This includes holding meetings at accessible times, creating women-only spaces, and offering translation and legal aid.

2. Recognition of Women as Stakeholders: Women must be acknowledged as independent landowners, not just dependents. Laws and compensation mechanisms must reflect this change.

3. Support for Women's Leadership: Women's leadership in movements must be promoted beyond grassroots mobilization. They need a seat at policy tables, in legislatures, and in decision-making bodies.

4. Reframing Development and Climate Justice: Development and climate strategies must center women's visions, not merely treat them as victims. True justice requires that their voices lead, not follow.

Question for practice:

Evaluate the structural barriers that limit women's participation in environmental governance and climate policy in South Asia.

India must fix trade finance to boost export growth

Source: The post India must fix trade finance to boost export growth has been created, based on the article "Fixing India's trade finance bottleneck" published in "Businessline" on 12th May 2025

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

Context: India aims to reach **\$2 trillion in exports by 2030**, backed by merchandise exports of **\$437 billion in FY 2023-24** and new trade agreements. But a **fragile trade finance system**, especially for MSMEs, could stall this ambition.

Fragility of India's Trade Finance System

1. Widening Credit Gap: Export credit supports only **28.5%** of the **\$284 billion** needed for shipments. From 2021 to 2023, **priority sector lending** for export credit fell **41%**, from ₹19,861 crore to ₹11,721 crore — showing structural neglect.

2. Declining Credit Availability: Between March 2023 and March 2024, outstanding export credit fell from **₹2.27 lakh crore to ₹2.17 lakh crore**. Exporters face rising input costs, higher freight rates, and delayed global payments.

3. MSMEs Locked Out of Finance: MSMEs contribute **nearly 40%** to goods exports but face **limited access to affordable credit**. They lack safeguards like **dedicated lending norms**, and banks demand high collateral.

4. Policy Support Missing: The **Interest Equalisation Scheme** expired in 2023, removing a key subsidy. Many exporters are **unaware of tools** like **post-shipment finance** or **receivables discounting**, highlighting poor financial literacy.

Regulatory Roadblocks and Rigid Lending Norms

1. Inflexible Risk Norms: The RBI **does not recognise private trade credit insurance** for capital relief. Only **ECGC-backed cover** qualifies, making risk-sharing tools unattractive for banks.

2. Factoring System Underdeveloped: India's exporters need factoring for **liquidity and buyer risk transfer**, especially in open account trade. But factoring remains **underused**, often limited to large firms and backed by collateral.

3. Stark Global Comparison: India's factoring volume was only **€17.38 billion** in 2023 — less than **0.5%** of global turnover. Europe accounted for **67%**, and China alone reported **€634.6 billion**, showing India's lag.

4. Over dependence on Collateral: Fintech lenders also demand **traditional security**, excluding **asset-light MSMEs** who trade on trust and require flexible finance options.

Limited Progress in Digitising Trade Finance

1. **Slow TReDS Adoption:** TReDS aims to support invoice-based MSME financing, but **low awareness, poor documentation, and buyer reluctance** have slowed its uptake.
2. **Fragmented Digital Ecosystem:** Despite tools like **e-invoicing, e-way bills, and customs digitisation**, there is **no integrated platform** linking banking, logistics, and trade data.
3. **Legal Disconnect from Global Norms:** India has delayed adopting **UNCITRAL's MLETR**, which gives legal status to electronic trade documents. This is due to **outdated laws and fragmented regulatory control**.

Strategic Reforms for a Robust Trade Finance Ecosystem

1. **Regulatory Modernisation:** Allow **private trade credit insurance** for capital relief. Relax capital norms to enable more **flexible lending**.
2. **Platform Integration and Legal Reform:** Integrate **digital trade platforms**. Align domestic law with **MLETR** to support **paperless commerce**.
3. **Boost TReDS Participation:** Mandate **wider usage** of TReDS. Encourage both buyers and MSMEs to participate.
4. **Support MSMEs and Build Literacy:** Create tools to **educate exporters**. Provide **risk mitigation frameworks** and improve access to finance.

Question for practice:

Examine how the weaknesses in India's trade finance system could hinder the country's goal of achieving \$2 trillion in exports by 2030.

Universities are losing their freedom and academic purpose

Source: The post Universities are losing their freedom and academic purpose has been created, based on the article "**The educational landscape, its disconcerting shift**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 13th May 2025

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

Context: Universities have traditionally upheld critical thinking and academic freedom. However, recent shifts driven by centralisation, political interference, market pressures, and weakened academic governance threaten their democratic and intellectual role. This article explores how these changes are eroding the foundational purpose of higher education institutions.

For detailed information on **Limiting Academic Freedom in Universities** [read this article here](#)

Erosion of Academic Autonomy

1. **From Self-Governance to Centralised Control:** Earlier, universities designed their curricula based on faculty expertise and evolving intellectual needs. Now, agencies like the University Grants Commission (UGC) and frameworks such as the National Education Policy (NEP) dictate academic content, often driven by political or economic agendas.
2. **UGC as a Controlling Authority:** The UGC, once a coordinator of academic standards, has become an instrument of bureaucratic control. It interferes in appointments and curricula, undermining institutional autonomy and critical thought.

3. Consequences of Uniform Curricula: Standardised syllabi across institutions restrict diverse ideas and innovation. This creates an intellectually flat environment, discouraging challenges to dominant narratives and suppressing creative exploration.

Suppression of Critical Inquiry

1. Silencing Dissent in Campuses: Historically active in social change, campuses are now regulated to avoid confrontation. Scholars referencing thinkers like Noam Chomsky or discussing nationalism risk state reprimand, leading to censorship of dissenting voices.

2. Marginalisation of Critical Disciplines: Academics challenging injustice or nationalist rhetoric face penalties. Disciplines in humanities and social sciences are defunded or dismissed as politically problematic, further narrowing academic exploration.

3. Climate of Self-Censorship: Fear of professional and academic backlash has led to a culture of silence. Teachers avoid controversial subjects, and students refrain from critical engagement, mistaking conformity for wisdom.

Corporatisation and Market Alignment

1. Education as a Commodity: Universities are now seen as profit-generating brands. Their goals align more with market success than public knowledge, changing the very purpose of higher education.

2. Unequal Support Across Disciplines: Fields with financial appeal — like business and technology — receive funding and visibility. Humanities and critical disciplines are sidelined for lacking market value.

3. Metrics Over Meaning: Faculty performance is judged by publication counts and rankings, promoting conformity to global norms. This undermines context-based inquiry and indigenous knowledge traditions.

Challenges in Academic Governance

1. Managerial Takeover of Leadership: Corporate professionals are being appointed as university administrators, valuing efficiency and branding over scholarly depth. This detaches governance from academic realities.

2. Ideological Biases in Leadership: Vice Chancellors often lack meaningful academic engagement, reflecting ideological filtering in selections. Leadership must be rooted in liberal intellectual traditions, with objective and rigorous appointments.

3. Collapse of Collegial Ethos: The collegial nature of academia is fading as decision-making shifts from scholars to managers. This diminishes collaborative scholarship and erodes pedagogical richness.

Reclaiming the Purpose of Education

1. Need for Imaginative Reform: The deeper crisis is one of imagination. Education must be restored as a pursuit of knowledge, not reduced to transactional value or ideological conformity.

2. Safeguarding Democratic Values: Protecting universities as spaces of free thought is essential for preserving democracy. Reclaiming their intellectual essence will revive their transformative potential in society.

Question for practice:

Examine how recent institutional and policy changes have impacted the democratic and intellectual role of universities in India.

India must manage rising e-waste with urgency

Source: The post India must manage rising e-waste with urgency has been created, based on the article “**India’s rising e-waste, the need to recast its management**” published in “**The Hindu**” on 13th May 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3-Environment and Bio-diversity Conservation

Context: India’s push toward becoming a developed nation is driven by digital expansion and rising electronics use. But this growth has caused a steep rise in e-waste, demanding urgent reforms in pricing and policy to avoid environmental damage and social harm.

For detailed information on **New e-waste rules and India’s e-waste challenge** [read this article here](#)

Rising E-Waste in a Digitally Driven Economy

1. Rapid Growth of E-Waste: India’s e-waste increased by 151% in six years — from 7.08 lakh metric tonnes in 2017–18 to 17.78 lakh metric tonnes in 2023–24. The annual increase now stands at 1.69 lakh metric tonnes.

2. Technology as a Double-Edged Sword: Widespread use of electronic items like phones, laptops, and medical tools drives progress but also produces vast amounts of e-waste, demanding proper systems to manage it.

Consequences of Poor E-Waste Management

1. Environmental Hazards: Toxic substances such as cyanide and sulphuric acid pollute water, while lead fumes, open coal burning, and plastic incineration damage air and soil. These practices degrade soil and threaten ecosystems.

2. Social Impact on Informal Workers: Informal recycling is done mainly by women and children. Their exposure to toxic materials reduces life expectancy to under 27 years. The estimated annual social loss from such practices exceeds \$20 billion.

3. Economic Losses from Informal Sector: India loses ₹80,000 crore annually in critical metals due to crude extraction methods. Another \$20 billion is lost in tax revenue because most informal recycling remains unrecorded and cash-based.

Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR): A Key Policy Tool

1. Concept and Benefits: EPR mandates that producers, importers, and brand owners take responsibility for waste from their products. It supports sustainable design, pricing reform, and shifts burden away from municipalities.

2. Shifting Away from Informality: Since 95% of e-waste is handled informally, EPR aims to redirect waste to certified channels, improving health outcomes and accountability.

Introducing Floor Price: Ensuring Market Stability

1. Fair Pricing for Recyclers: The E-waste (Management) Rules, 2022 introduced a floor price for EPR certificates. It ensures stable returns for formal recyclers and prevents market collapse.

2. Boost to Safe and Modern Recycling: A fixed price encourages investment in clean technology. It improves recovery of metals like gold and copper, reducing landfill and pollution.

3. Correcting Informal Cost Advantage: Floor pricing balances the cost gap between formal and informal sectors. It strengthens compliance, reduces leakage, and encourages certified processing.

Countering Concerns and Driving Innovation

1. Addressing Cost Criticism: Some argue that floor pricing may raise product prices. But the cost of inaction—pollution, health crises, and lost materials—is far greater than the minor impact on consumer pricing.

2. Encouraging Sustainable Product Design: Producers can reduce costs by designing longer-lasting, recyclable products. Globally, EPR fees are higher than India's floor price, aligning with best practices.

3. Learning from Plastic Sector Failure: The plastic sector's underpricing led to fake recyclers and loss of trust. Floor pricing prevents such risks in e-waste and supports real innovation.

A National Vision for Sustainable Recycling

1. Linking Economy and Ecology: Weak pricing harms rivers, soil, crops, and communities. Fair valuation of recycling can reverse damage and promote responsible practices.

2. Formalising the Sector for Future Growth: A stable price can transform e-waste into a national resource. It allows India to build infrastructure, ensure compliance, and lead global sustainability efforts.

3. A Call for Urgent Action: A 73% surge in e-waste over five years signals a crisis. With a strong floor price, India can balance development with environmental safety.

Question for practice:

Examine how the introduction of a floor price under the E-waste (Management) Rules, 2022 can promote formal recycling and reduce environmental and economic losses in India.

Global shipping agrees on hybrid emissions levy model

Source: The post Global shipping agrees on hybrid emissions levy model has been created, based on the article "How is shipping industry tackling emissions?" published in "The Hindu" on 13th May 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- Environment

Context: The International Maritime Organization (IMO), through its Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC-83), deliberated on a Market-Based Measure (MBM) to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in shipping. The session concluded with the adoption of a hybrid emissions levy model amid significant geopolitical and economic divisions.

Deliberations and Proposals at MEPC-83

1. Diverse Approaches to Emissions Levy

Five proposals were presented:

- The International Chamber of Shipping suggested a fixed levy per tonne of CO₂ emitted.
- China proposed a compliance unit trading model encouraging investment in alternative fuels.
- The EU backed a fixed GHG levy, administered by an IMO fund.
- India advocated a 'bridging mechanism' penalising under-compliant ships and rewarding those using zero or near-zero fuels.
- Singapore proposed a tiered GHG Fuel Standard (GFS) based on India's idea, adding mechanisms for surplus and remedial units.

2. Geopolitical Influence and Tensions: The U.S., under Trump, distanced itself from climate goals and threatened "reciprocal measures" if the EU-backed plan passed. Political divisions hindered open consensus.

3. Outcome of the Vote: The committee accepted Singapore's hybrid model, inspired by India's framework, by 63 votes to 16. However, the model requires amendment of Annex VI of the MARPOL convention and a two-thirds majority for final adoption. One-third of members with 50% of shipping tonnage can still block it.

Conflicting National Interests and Equity Challenges

- 1. Opposition from Fossil Fuel Exporters:** Saudi Arabia and others strongly resisted any meaningful shift toward green fuels. Their focus was on protecting fossil fuel markets rather than climate commitments.
- 2. Divergent Demands from Developing Nations:** Small island states and least developed countries pushed for steep carbon levies. Their aim was to redirect revenues toward green development, viewing shipping emissions as a threat to their survival.
- 3. Pressure to Preserve Market Competitiveness:** China and other large shipping nations lobbied for minimal levies, prioritising affordability and competitiveness. Meanwhile, Norway and other Scandinavian countries sought credit for early investments in decarbonisation through surplus credit systems.
- 4. Unfair Burden on Developing Countries:** A key concern raised during deliberations was the erosion of the principle of “common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities” (CBDR-RC), enshrined in the UNFCCC and Paris Agreement. While this principle acknowledges historical responsibility and unequal capabilities, developed countries increasingly pushed for equal compliance, shifting disproportionate burdens onto the developing world.
- 5. Scepticism from Traditional Maritime Powers:** Shipowners from Greece and similar nations expressed doubt about the feasibility and need for a carbon levy. Others, lacking viable green technologies, requested delayed timelines for implementation.

Significance of Green Shipping

- 1. Scale of Emissions:** Shipping emits nearly 1 billion metric tonnes of GHG annually — 2.8% of global emissions. If classified as a country, it would be the sixth-largest emitter globally.
- 2. IMO's Evolving Measures:** Since 2011, IMO has introduced standards including the Energy Efficiency Design Index, Ship Energy Efficiency Management Plan, and mandatory fuel consumption reporting.
- 3. Targets and Principles:** IMO aims to reduce carbon intensity by 40% by 2030, 70% by 2040, and achieve net-zero by 2050. These targets align with the UN SDGs and Paris Agreement and are more concrete than aviation goals.

India's Strategic Advantage

- 1. Limited Immediate Impact:** India's international fleet is small, and domestic ships are exempt. The expected cost impact is modest until 2030.
- 2. Potential as a Green Export Hub:** India's green hydrogen initiative meets IMO's reward thresholds. With major industry and port investment, India could become a global leader in green fuel exports.

Conclusion

The IMO's adoption of a binding carbon levy framework marks a transformative moment for global shipping. If successfully implemented, it could become the first international sector to operate under enforceable climate goals, setting a precedent for other industries.

Question for practice:

Discuss how geopolitical and economic interests influenced the adoption of the hybrid emissions levy at MEPC-83.

Ecology is the permanent economy guiding true sustainable development

Source: The post Ecology is the permanent economy guiding true sustainable development has been created, based on the article “**Ecology is the world’s permanent economy**” published in “**The Hindu**” on 14th May 2025
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- Ecology and Environment

Context: Sunderlal Bahuguna’s phrase “Ecology is the permanent economy” serves as a critical reminder of the deep link between human prosperity and ecological well-being. Amid climate change and biodiversity loss, the article urges us to shift from scientific understanding alone to a deeper moral and emotional reconnection with nature.

Ecology and Economy: An Inseparable Link

1. **The Core Idea:** Economic development depends on nature. We cannot achieve lasting prosperity without conserving natural resources. Human survival, security, and progress are rooted in ecological health, making ecology the real economy.
2. **Defining Sustainability:** Sustainability means balancing environmental protection with economic development. Without this equilibrium, neither can endure. This principle gives clarity to how we must approach future progress.
3. **Lessons from Other Species:** Unlike humans, other animals only consume what they need for survival. They live in harmony with nature. Human societies, however, exploit resources on a much larger and anticipatory scale, leading to imbalance.

Human Evolution and Growing Disconnection

1. **From Survival to Excess:** Early humans used nature for basic survival. Over time, this evolved into large-scale consumption for communities, then nations, and eventually global competition — creating pressure on ecosystems.
2. **Civilisation’s Drift from Nature:** As humans advanced, they became more disconnected from nature. This distancing is now recognised as a cause of biodiversity loss, highlighted in reports like IPBES’s Transformative Change study.
3. **Unique Human Pattern:** Only humans exploit resources for both present and future use. This anticipatory consumption separates us from the rest of the animal kingdom and accelerates environmental degradation.

The Dual Crisis of Consumption and Dependence

1. **Overburdened Ecosystems:** Human consumption and global competition have intensified climate change. Ecosystems now bear an unsustainable load, straining the earth’s ability to self-regulate.
2. **Nature-Based Solutions:** Conservation efforts now advocate using nature’s resilience to mitigate climate change and restore biodiversity. These include ecosystem-based strategies to support sustainable development.
3. **A Dangerous Paradox:** While we exploit nature for economic gains, we also expect it to protect us from climate risks. This contradictory dependence increases the threat of deeper ecological imbalance.

Reframing the Environmental Discourse

1. **From Science to Stewardship:** Understanding nature scientifically is not enough. What’s needed is a shift in worldview — seeing ecological health not as a limit, but as the foundation of human existence.
2. **The Moral Reckoning:** The climate crisis is more than scientific. It is a moral issue. Protecting nature is a duty rooted in our shared existence and survival.

3. **Proactive Sustainability:** We must move from reactive measures to proactive stewardship. Ecology must be seen as central to future economic and social stability.

The Urgent Need to Reconnect with Nature

1. **Changing From Within:** Sustainability must start at the individual level. People must adopt lifestyles that reflect harmony with nature, recognising they are part of the ecosystem.

2. **Emotion as a Reconnector:** Despite modern distancing, humans have the unique emotional capacity to reconnect with nature. Conservation must appeal to this emotional bond.

3. **A Realisation Over Understanding:** True change requires internalising that ecology is not a subject to study but a reality to live by. This realisation is the first step toward a sustainable future.

Question for practice:

Evaluate how the idea that "*ecology is the permanent economy*" reshapes our understanding of sustainability and human responsibility toward nature.

India's Repairability Index aims to make electronic items more durable

Source: The post India's Repairability Index aims to make electronic items more durable has been created, based on the article "**The right to repair movement in India**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 14th May 2025

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

For detailed information on **Right to Repair Portal** [read this article here](#)

Context: The Department of Consumer Affairs (DoCA) has received a report proposing a **Repairability Index (RI)** for electronics. It aims to help consumers identify how easily products can be repaired, amid concerns over product durability, repair costs, and growing e-waste.

Understanding the Repairability Index (RI)

1. **Scoring Consumer Electronics:** The RI will score mobile and electronic appliances based on **ease of repair**. Criteria include **availability of spare parts**, **cost of repair**, **software updates**, and **product information**.

2. **Purpose of the Framework:** The government aims to implement RI **without affecting innovation or business ease**. It seeks to balance **consumer welfare** with **industry interests**.

3. **Industry Involvement:** The committee drafting the RI included **electronics manufacturers and industry bodies**. However, **consumer advocates** were also part of the panel, giving hope for a more **balanced outcome**.

Why Repairability Matters

1. **Declining Product Lifespans:** Older appliances like washing machines often last longer. Newer ones fail more quickly. This isn't always due to "planned obsolescence." Often, **lower-quality materials** are used to reduce costs.

2. **Impact of Metal Shortages:** Attero Recycling's CEO Nitin Gupta noted that **metal content in appliances has declined**. Shortages in materials like copper lead to **leaner engineering**. India's status as a **net metal importer** adds pressure.

3. **A Global Concern:** U.S. lawmakers have proposed displaying **repair costs** on product labels. Durable products are seen as "**durable wealth**", helping consumers save over time.

Environmental and Economic Implications

1. **Reducing E-Waste:** Repairable products support a **circular economy**, where **parts and metals are reused**. This approach has long been discussed but **remains underachieved**.
2. **Limiting Virgin Metal Demand:** Longer-lasting products help reduce the demand for **newly mined metals**, promoting **resource conservation**.
3. **Economy and Ecology Aligned:** Smartphones and computers are no longer improving rapidly. So, **repairability and longevity** make sense both **ecologically and financially**.

The Right to Repair Movement

1. **Consumer Demand for Flexibility:** Globally, the “right to repair” means consumers can **repair products as they choose**. It challenges companies that **monopolise repair services**.
2. **India’s Portal Approach:** India’s right to repair portal lists **authorised service centres** and manuals. It reflects a **non-confrontational approach**, favouring manufacturers.
3. **Corporate Resistance:** In the U.S., companies resist repair laws to protect **repair revenue**. Example: McDonald’s ice cream machines can only be repaired by the manufacturer’s technicians.

Balancing Industry and Consumer Interests

1. **Consumer Rights vs Manufacturer Control:** Consumer advocate Pushpa Girimaji called refusal to repair older lifts “**highly exploitative**.” She supports **third-party repair** and **freedom of choice**.
2. **A Shift in Policy Direction:** The RI framework reflects growing **consumer and environmental awareness**. It aims to **make products repair-friendly**, while also addressing **industry concerns**.

Question for practice:

Examine how the proposed Repairability Index framework seeks to balance consumer rights, environmental concerns, and industry interests in the electronics sector.

Gene Editing and the Ethical Challenges of Biotechnology

Source: The post Gene Editing and the Ethical Challenges of Biotechnology has been created, based on the article “**Gene editing: Are humans really ready to rewrite the book of life?**” published in “**Live mint**” on 14th May 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- bio-technology

Context: Since the discovery of DNA’s double helix in 1953, gene editing has progressed rapidly. With tools like Crispr, major advances have occurred in medicine and agriculture. These developments raise ethical, legal, and social concerns, making regulation and oversight essential.

For detailed information on **Human genome editing: significance and associated challenges** [read this article here](#)

Scientific Advancements in Gene Editing

1. **From Recombinant DNA to Genome Mapping:** In the 1970s, scientists created recombinant DNA, enabling gene transfers across species. The 1980s introduced genetically modified organisms. The Human Genome Project, launched in the 1990s, aimed to map the entire human genome.
2. **Human Genome Decoding Milestone:** By 2003, 92% of the human genome was successfully mapped. This provided a base for personalized medicine and advanced genetic science.

3. Rise of Crispr Technology: Crispr-Cas9, developed in 2012, made gene editing faster, cheaper, and more accurate. It expanded research opportunities and intensified ethical debates about genetic interventions.

Applications in Medicine and Agriculture

1. Therapies for Genetic Diseases: Between 2023 and 2025, the UK and US approved Crispr-based therapies that cured sickle cell anaemia. Patients are now free from chronic pain and regular transfusions.

2. Immune Cell Reprogramming: Gene editing is being used to modify immune cells for targeted cancer treatment. This boosts the body's ability to destroy tumour cells.

3. Genetically Modified Crops: Crispr is helping develop crops that resist drought and spoilage. These advances aim to improve nutrition and enhance food security amid climate change.

Ethical and Regulatory Concerns

1. Risks from Unregulated Use: Crispr kits sold online raise concerns about misuse. Though no major incidents are known, the ease of access underlines the need for regulatory checks.

2. Lulu and Nana Case: In 2018, Chinese scientist He Jiankui edited embryos of twin girls to make them HIV-resistant. The lack of approval and secrecy led to international criticism and demands for stricter rules.

3. Call for Global Frameworks: The case exposed gaps in regulation. Experts urge the creation of international standards to guide responsible gene editing.

Legal and Social Implications

1. Cloning Developments and Boundaries: Animal cloning, like Dolly the sheep in 1996, is used in farming and conservation. Human cloning remains ethically and legally restricted.

2. Gene Patents and Public Access: In 2013, the US Supreme Court ruled that naturally occurring genes cannot be patented. But synthetic or altered gene sequences can be, raising questions about access and control.

3. Concerns over Genetic Inequality: Gene-editing technologies are costly and not equally accessible. Without fair regulation, they may widen the gap between the rich and the poor. Genetic advantages could be limited to the wealthy, creating new forms of social and biological inequality.

Balancing Innovation with Responsibility

1. Clear Lines Between Therapy and Enhancement: Therapeutic gene editing is broadly accepted. However, editing for appearance, intelligence, or athletic ability remains controversial. Embryo editing for heritable traits is mostly restricted.

2. Need for Cautious Progress: Gene editing offers major benefits but also poses serious risks. Responsible innovation requires strong ethical standards and equal access for all.

Question for practice:

Examine how advancements in gene editing have raised ethical, legal, and social concerns, and discuss the need for responsible regulation.

Procedural law ensures fair and principled criminal justice

Source: The post Procedural law ensures fair and principled criminal justice has been created, based on the article “**Principled criminalisation and the police as pivot**” published in “**The Hindu**” on 15th May 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2-Governance - Justice

Context: A recent Supreme Court judgment in *Imran Pratapgarhi vs State of Gujarat* has brought attention to the importance of procedural criminal law. It highlights how the police's adherence to the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) is essential to ensure lawful and principled criminalisation.

Meaning and Purpose of Criminalisation

- 1. Power and Duty of the State:** Criminalisation allows the state to define wrongful conduct as crime and impose penalties. It is also a duty—to address harm by holding individuals accountable through legal means.
- 2. Criminal Law Within Society:** Legal theorist Victor Tadros explains that criminalisation works within broader social systems—like families and private law—that also address wrongdoing.
- 3. Value Beyond Outcomes:** Criminalisation is not just about punishment or deterrence. It carries independent value by publicly condemning harmful acts through a legal process.

Principles Behind Substantive Criminal Law

- 1. Guiding Criteria for Criminalisation:** Tatjana Hörnle identifies three core principles: conduct should be criminalised only if it harms collective interests, involves personal violence, or violates the right to non-intervention. These guide India's substantive criminal law under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS).
- 2. Imbalances in Application:** Despite clear principles, laws may still result in over-criminalisation or under-criminalisation depending on how they are applied in practice.

Role of Procedure in Shaping Outcomes

- 1. Procedural Law and Real-World Impact:** Criminalisation becomes real through steps like arrest, charge, and sentencing. These depend on how justice agencies, especially police, use procedural law.
- 2. Police as Gatekeepers:** The police lead the process by registering cases and arresting suspects. Their discretion significantly shapes criminalisation outcomes.
- 3. Risks of Overreach:** Without limits, police may over-criminalise minor acts while neglecting serious offences. This can distort justice.
- 4. Section 173(3) of BNSS:** This provision allows a 14-day preliminary inquiry before filing an FIR in offences punishable by three to seven years. It seeks to prevent unnecessary or hasty criminalisation.

Supreme Court Ruling and Its Message

- 1. The Imran Pratapgarhi Case:** The Court quashed an FIR against Mr. Pratapgarhi for sharing a poem. Police failed to follow Section 173(3), which required a preliminary inquiry.
- 2. Protecting Constitutional Freedoms:** The judgment underlines that procedural safeguards must be respected, especially when fundamental rights like free speech are involved.
- 3. Need for Accountability:** For criminalisation to remain principled, both sound laws and responsible policing are essential. Procedural law must be followed, and police must be held accountable.

Question for practice:

Examine the role of procedural criminal law in ensuring lawful and principled criminalisation, in light of the *Imran Pratapgarhi vs State of Gujarat* judgment.

India needs urgent road safety reforms amid rising urbanisation

Source: The post India needs urgent road safety reforms amid rising urbanisation has been created, based on the article “**The road to safety**” published in “**The Hindu**” on 15th May 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- Infrastructures

Context: India faces a severe road safety crisis amid rising urbanisation and vehicle use. In 2022, 1.68 lakh people died in road accidents — about 12.2 deaths per 1 lakh people. In comparison, Japan and the UK recorded just 2.57 and 2.61. Road crashes cost India 3% of GDP annually.

For detailed information on **Road Safety in India- Reasons and Impact** [read this article here](#)

Constitutional and Moral Foundation of Road Safety

- 1. Right to Life as a Legal Principle:** Road safety is part of the right to life under Article 21 of the Constitution. Every citizen — pedestrian, cyclist, or driver — deserves safe public spaces.
- 2. State and Societal Responsibility:** Recognising this right creates a legal and moral duty for the state and society to treat road safety as a public good and basic human right.

Urbanisation and Demand for Safer Streets

- 1. Rising Urban and Vehicle Growth:** By 2047, nearly 50% of India’s population will live in cities. This will raise vehicle ownership and pressure road infrastructure.
- 2. Vulnerable Users at Higher Risk:** Pedestrians, cyclists, senior citizens, and public transport users must be protected through people-first planning.
- 3. Reimagining Urban Streets:** Wider footpaths, cycling tracks, marked crossings, refuge islands, and reduced speed zones are essential for safer mobility.

Adopting the Safe System Approach

- 1. Designing for Human Error:** The Safe System Approach recognises human mistakes but ensures those mistakes don’t result in death or injury.
- 2. Focus on Forgiving Roads:** It shifts the focus from blaming individuals to building resilient, error-tolerant infrastructure.

Government Measures and Infrastructure Steps

- 1. MoRTH’s Key Interventions:** The ministry has identified and started fixing 5,000+ black spots, enforced audits, and mandated airbags and ABS in vehicles.
- 2. Training and Testing Centres:** Driving schools and vehicle fitness centres are being established in every district to prevent unskilled driving accidents.

Funding Strategy and Industry’s Role

- 1. CSR for Road Safety:** Auto-makers could be required to contribute CSR funds to road safety for 20–25 years. These funds could support black spot removal, awareness, training, and trauma care.

2. Shared Responsibility in Mobility: As key stakeholders, manufacturers must actively support India's Vision Zero mission.

Strategic Framework and Economic Rationale

1. Four Es of Road Safety: Engineering, enforcement, education, and emergency care are the four key pillars. Infrastructure and education need urgent focus.

2. High Returns on Investment: The World Bank estimates India needs \$109 billion in 10 years to halve road deaths. Each rupee invested can return up to four.

3. Vision for Viksit Bharat 2047: Safe, inclusive roads are essential for sustainable, equitable development. Road safety must be a national priority.

Question for practice:

Discuss the measures India can adopt to improve road safety in the context of rapid urbanisation and rising vehicle ownership.

India develops climate-resilient genome-edited rice varieties

Source: The post India develops climate-resilient genome-edited rice varieties has been created, based on the article “How did India develop genome edited rice?” published in “The Hindu” on 15th May 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3-bio-technology

Context: India has become the first country to develop rice varieties using genome editing. Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan announced that the seeds will be released within six months. This step aims to meet growing food demand and address climate challenges.

For detailed information on **Genome-Edited Rice Varieties** [read this article here](#)

Development of Genome-Edited Rice Varieties

Introduction of New Varieties: Two rice varieties—**DRR Dhan 100 (Kamala)** and **Pusa DST Rice 1**—have been developed using genome editing. DRR Dhan 100 is derived from **Samba Mahsuri**, and Pusa DST Rice 1 is developed from **MTU1010**. The research was led by ICAR scientists in collaboration with other institutions.

Performance of DRR Dhan 100 (Kamala)

1. Higher Yield and Early Maturity: Kamala recorded an **average yield of 5.37 tonnes per hectare**, compared to **4.5 tonnes** for Samba Mahsuri. It matures **20 days earlier**, which helps save **water, fertilizer**, and reduces **methane emissions**.

2. Climate Resilience and Efficiency: The variety shows strong **drought tolerance** and **high nitrogen use efficiency**. These traits make Kamala suitable for **climate-resilient farming** and better resource use.

Performance of Pusa DST Rice 1

1. Improved Yield in Stress Conditions: Pusa DST Rice 1 showed a **yield of 3,508 kg per hectare**, which is **9.66% higher** than MTU1010 under **inland salinity stress**. It also performed better under **alkaline soils** with a **14.66% yield gain**, and under **coastal salinity stress** with a **30.4% advantage**.

2. Adaptation to Soil Conditions: Its tolerance to various **soil stresses** makes it ideal for cultivation in regions with **problematic soil types**, ensuring **stable productivity**.

Technology Used in the Innovation

1. Genome Editing Tools: The varieties were developed using **SDN-1** and **SDN-2** genome editing methods. SDN-1 causes natural DNA repair after a cut, while SDN-2 guides the cell's repair process. Both techniques do **not insert foreign genes**.

2. Scientific Recognition: Pusa DST Rice 1 was described in a **2020 peer-reviewed paper**, now cited in over **300 studies**. Kamala's paper is **awaiting publication**. Both varieties are **approved by the international scientific community**.

Clarifying Their Genetic Status

1. Not Genetically Modified (GM) Crops: These are **not GM crops**. Unlike SDN-3, no foreign DNA is introduced. Only **native genes** are altered. The mutation process is **precise and natural**.

2. Regulatory Exemptions: Many countries **exempt** such genome-edited crops from **GM regulations**. These varieties were **field-tested** during 2023 and 2024 under the **All India Coordinated Research Project on Rice**.

Rising Concerns and Criticisms

1. Questions on Transparency: Venugopal Badaravada, a former ICAR member, termed the announcement **premature**. He demanded **clear data** and **field-based validation**. ICAR expelled him, accusing him of **spreading misinformation**.

2. Legal and Sovereignty Issues: The **Coalition for a GM-Free India** questioned the **legality and safety** of gene editing. They said the tools are **under IPR ownership**, which threatens **farmers' seed rights**. They urged the government to **disclose IPR details immediately**.

Conclusion

India's genome-edited rice offers **higher yield** and **climate resilience**. But it also raises valid concerns over **IPR**, **testing transparency**, and **seed sovereignty** that must be addressed.

Question for practice:

Discuss the benefits and concerns associated with India's newly developed genome-edited rice varieties.

India must empower nurses as healthcare leaders

Source: The post India must empower nurses as healthcare leaders has been created, based on the article "**The yearly 'thank you' to nurses is not enough**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 16th May 2025

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

Context: International Nurses Day on May 12 brings attention to nurses' critical role in healthcare. However, the recognition often fades quickly, while deeper reforms to empower nurses in India remain unaddressed.

The Role and Potential of Nurses in India

1. Underutilisation of Nurses: Nurses and midwives make up 47% of India's health workforce but are often seen only as assistants to doctors. Their contributions to leadership and clinical decision-making remain limited.

2. Global Trends in Nurse Autonomy: Many countries, including the US, UK, Australia, and Brazil, have embraced Nurse Practitioners (NPs) as independent care providers. NPs diagnose, treat, and prescribe with autonomy, especially in underserved areas.

3. India's Slow Integration of NPs: India recognised the need for NPs in the National Health Policy 2017. Programmes like the NP in Critical Care (2017) and NP in Primary Health Care have been initiated. However, progress is slow due to unclear legal status, undefined roles, and lack of formal recognition.

Challenges in Nurse Practitioner (NP) Implementation

- 1. Lack of Legal Clarity:** NPs face confusion over licensure, scope of practice, and prescriptive rights. Titles are unprotected, and their roles lack legal and regulatory backing.
- 2. Medical Resistance and Power Dynamics:** Some in the medical community oppose NP roles, fearing a loss of authority. Gender and cultural biases also reinforce the idea of nurses, mostly women, as subordinates.
- 3. Educational and Institutional Gaps:** Some institutions offer in-house training for specialised roles like stroke nurses or diabetes educators, but these lack national recognition. Many nursing colleges suffer from poor regulation and corruption.

Learning from Australia's Nurse Practitioner Model

- 1. Policy and Political Backing:** Australia's NP movement succeeded through legal protections, structured licensure, and formal career ladders. Nurse-led care centres proved effective even without physician oversight.
- 2. Role of Nursing Movements:** Australia's reforms were supported by strong nursing advocacy in policymaking. In India, the absence of such collective movements weakens nurses' influence on health policy.

The Path Forward for Nursing in India

- 1. Systemic Educational Reforms:** India must shut down substandard colleges, improve faculty quality, and include leadership, ethics, and policy training in curricula.
- 2. Legal and Professional Recognition:** NPs need legal status, licensure, and defined practice rights. Career pathways and fair pay must replace current stagnation.
- 3. Promoting Nurse Leadership:** Nurses must drive reform through policy engagement and grassroots movements. Beyond yearly appreciation, India must empower nurses as equal leaders in healthcare delivery.

Question for practice:

Examine the challenges and opportunities in empowering Nurse Practitioners in India and how lessons from global models like Australia can guide reforms.

Fertility in Bihar remains high despite progress

Source: The post fertility in Bihar remains high despite progress has been created, based on the article "**Is Bihar's high replacement rate a consequence of poverty?**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 16th May 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper1-Society- population and associated issues.

Context: The Sample Registration System report (2021) showed India's Total Fertility Rate (TFR) at 2.0, with Bihar recording the highest TFR at 3.0. Despite falling poverty and improved social indicators, fertility in Bihar remains high. This raises concerns about the roles of **culture, poverty, gender norms, and development**.

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

High TFR in Bihar: A Persistent Challenge

- 1. Fertility Trends in Bihar:** Bihar's TFR has stayed near **3.0 for 6-7 years**. It is expected to reach the replacement level (2.1) only by 2039, making it the slowest state in India's fertility transition.

2. Infant Mortality and Social Indicators: Infant mortality in Bihar has dropped from **42 to 27 per 1,000 live births**. Women's education levels have also improved. Yet, TFR remains high, indicating that improvements in health and education **have not lowered fertility**.

3. Cultural Norms and Fertility Preference: While poverty plays a role, **cultural attitudes matter more**. Only **49.6% of women in Bihar** think two children are ideal, compared to **67% nationally**. This shows a persistent **cultural preference for larger families**.

Economic and Urban-Rural Dimensions of Fertility

1. Urban-Rural Fertility Gap: Nationally, the TFR gap between rural (2.2) and urban (1.6) areas is **0.6 points**. In Bihar, rural TFR is **3.1** and urban is **2.3**, a **0.8 point** gap. This small difference hides the real concern: **Bihar's urban TFR is significantly above the national average**.

2. Conscious Fertility Choices in Cities: Urban areas usually reflect lower fertility due to education and services. But in Bihar, the high urban TFR points to **conscious choices**. Fertility stays high even with **better contraception use and declining child mortality**.

3. Economic Structure and Family Size: Bihar's low industrialisation and dependence on agriculture **encourage large families** for labour and income. The **lack of jobs and high migration** further reinforce the need for more children, especially sons.

Literacy, Gender Norms, and Household Dynamics

1. Female Literacy and Fertility Link: Female literacy in Bihar was only **53% in 2011**. Government schemes to promote girls' education exist, but the link between **higher education and lower fertility** still needs stronger impact at scale.

2. Son Preference and Family Size: Among families who want **three children**, **88.2% desire two sons**. Since the chance of having two sons in a row is only **26.4%**, many families **end up with larger families unintentionally**.

3. Decision-Making Power of Women: Many educated women are **first-generation learners**, with limited exposure and **low decision-making power**. In several households, **mother-in-laws control interactions with ASHA workers**, limiting women's reproductive autonomy.

Political and Policy Implications of Fertility Disparities

1. TFR and Delimitation Debate: High-fertility States like Bihar, UP, MP, and Rajasthan now account for a **larger population share**. In the future, this may lead to **parliamentary constituencies with 25–30 lakh voters**, raising concerns about **disproportionate representation**.

2. Risks of Unequal Representation: States with lower TFR may have **fewer seats and resources**, despite social progress. This could **penalise successful States** under the current allocation methods.

3. Need for Policy Convergence: If fertility divergence continues, it may lead to **political and democratic imbalances**. Policymakers must work toward a **converging fertility trend** to avoid deepening regional inequalities.

Conclusion

Bihar's high fertility is rooted in **culture, economics, and social norms**. Without addressing these deeply, **demographic and political challenges** will intensify. The issue needs **urgent and inclusive attention**.

Question for practice:

Examine the key social, economic, and cultural factors contributing to Bihar's persistently high Total Fertility Rate despite improvements in health and education indicators.

Supreme Court ensures digital access for disabled people

Source: The post Supreme Court ensures digital access for disabled people has been created, based on the article "Does Article 21 include right to digital access?" published in "The Hindu" on 16th May 2025

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

Context: On April 30, the Supreme Court expanded the scope of Article 21 to include the 'right to digital access'. It directed changes in digital Know-Your-Customer (KYC) norms to make online identity verification inclusive for persons with disabilities (PwDs), ensuring digital equality.

For detailed information on **Persons with Disabilities in India** [read this article here](#)

Legal Foundations for Disability Rights

1. **Constitutional and Statutory Mandates:** The Constitution — through the Preamble, Fundamental Rights, and Directive Principles — obligates the state to ensure equality and dignity for PwDs. These duties are supported by specific disability laws and international conventions.

2. **The RPwD Act, 2016:** India passed the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, to comply with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). The law follows a 'social-barrier' approach, viewing disability as arising from impairments and social or physical obstacles that hinder full participation in society.

3. **Section 42: Accessibility Measures:** Section 42 of the Act mandates that all media — audio, print, and electronic — must be accessible. It requires audio descriptions, sign-language interpretation, captions, and universal design in everyday electronic devices and systems.

Understanding KYC and Its Digital Framework

1. **Purpose and Legal Basis:** To prevent money laundering, the Prevention of Money-laundering Act, 2002, and its 2005 Rules require banks and financial institutions to verify identities and maintain records. KYC is now essential for services like opening bank or trading accounts, obtaining SIM cards, insurance, and accessing welfare schemes.

2. **RBI's 2016 Master Direction:** The RBI's Master Direction on KYC outlines a Customer Due Diligence (CDD) framework. Clause 18 introduced the Video-based Customer Identification Process (V-CIP), enabling real-time identity verification through video interaction.

3. **Digital Verification Process:** Customers verify identity by clicking selfies, signing on paper or digitally, uploading photos, entering OTPs, and reading a random code on screen. These steps are now standard for digital KYC.

Challenges Faced by Persons with Disabilities

1. **Exclusion from Standard Methods:** PwDs, including acid-attack survivors and blind individuals, have filed writ petitions. They face difficulty with steps like reading codes, writing responses, and taking selfies — making digital KYC inaccessible.

2. Non-Compliance with Accessibility Standards: Despite the 2021 and 2022 ICT Accessibility Standards, most KYC apps lack screen reader prompts, audio cues for focus or lighting, or clear guidance for uploading documents. These gaps make the process unusable for blind users.

3. Signature and Biometric Issues: Thumb impressions are not accepted, and PAN cards with such signatures are rejected. Aadhaar-based biometric systems lack basic features like text-to-speech or self-verification, adding to the exclusion.

4. Lack of Support or Assistance: RBI's directions bar 'prompting' during KYC. Without support features, many users are forced to appear in person or face rejection for unclear technical reasons.

Supreme Court's Landmark Intervention

1. Accessibility as a Fundamental Right: In *Rajive Raturi vs Union of India* (2024), the SC ruled that accessibility is central to Article 21 — the right to life, dignity, and movement. It had earlier upheld the need for accessible digital registration during the COVID-19 vaccination drive.

2. Directive for Inclusive KYC: The Court held that digital KYC guidelines violate disability rights. It ordered authorities to revise them with accessibility as the core requirement, based on the principle of 'substantive equality'.

3. Broader Call for Digital Inclusion: Invoking Articles 14, 15, 21, and 38, the Court linked digital access with liberty. It stressed that all digital platforms must be inclusive, especially for PwDs, rural users, senior citizens, and linguistic minorities.

Question for practice:

Discuss how the Supreme Court's recent judgment has expanded the scope of Article 21 to promote digital accessibility for persons with disabilities.

Copyright laws face new challenge from AI

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

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

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

For detailed information on **On copyright infringement and AI** [read this article here](#)

Evolution of Copyright Law and Technological Shifts

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

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

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

Legal Tensions Around AI Training

1. **Litigations Across Jurisdictions:** Open AI is facing copyright infringement claims in India and the U.S. These involve literature, music, and photos accessed through internet scraping for training its large language models.
2. **Case in India:** The Federation of Indian Publishers and ANI filed cases against Open AI in the Delhi High Court. They object to the use of their content without consent. Amicus curiae Dr. Arul George Scaria raised key questions—whether AI can “unlearn” trained content and how the court should address false source attribution and access to legitimate copyrighted material.
3. **Differences in Legal Standards:** India's Copyright Act uses a fixed list of exceptions, unlike the U.S. 'fair use' test. Education-related exceptions in India are limited to classroom use. This strict framework gives right-holders a stronger legal position.

Broader Implications for AI and Innovation

1. **Impact of Opt-Out Mechanism:** Open AI's opt-out mechanism applies only to future training, not past use. This could affect how future AI platforms are trained. If they cannot access quality materials, their development may be limited.
2. **Unequal Playing Field:** Smaller AI developers may not have the same access to rich training data as large firms. Courts must ensure fair competition between resource-rich and emerging AI platforms.

Reimagining Copyright for the AI Era

1. **Balancing Creativity and Protection:** Creativity—human or AI—relies on existing knowledge. Copyright should not prevent future creators from accessing the materials needed to innovate.
2. **Distinguishing Human and Machine Learning:** Ongoing litigation may lead to different legal treatment for human and machine creation. Yet, the current law treats both alike.
3. **Core Principles as the Solution:** Copyright protects the *expression* of an idea, not the idea itself. If AI uses information without copying expression, it is not infringement. The foundational principles remain strong enough to manage the new challenges.

Conclusion

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

Question for practice:

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

President requests Supreme Court clarification on constitutional bill timelines

Source: The post President requests Supreme Court clarification on constitutional bill timelines has been created, based on the article “**What is a Presidential reference?**” published in “**The Hindu**” on 19th May 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2-Structure, organisation and functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary—Ministries and Departments of the Government

Context: The President of India has invoked **Article 143** of the Constitution to seek the **Supreme Court's advisory opinion** on a set of legal questions. This move follows a recent **Supreme Court judgment** that laid down

timelines for the President and Governors to act on Bills passed by State legislatures, sparking debate on **judicial review and federal powers**.

Historical Origins of Advisory Jurisdiction

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

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

Legal Framework of Article 143

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

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

Notable Past References and Their Impact

1. Key Legal Clarifications

- *Delhi Laws Act (1951)*: Clarified **delegated legislation**.
- *Kerala Education Bill (1958)*: Harmonized **Fundamental Rights** and **Directive Principles**; protected **minority education rights**.
- *Berubari Case (1960)*: Held that ceding territory needs a **constitutional amendment**.

2. Clarifying Institutional Powers

- *Keshav Singh Case (1965)*: Defined **legislative privileges**.
- *Presidential Poll Case (1974)*: Upheld elections despite **vacancies**.
- *Special Courts Bill (1978)*: Court may **decline vague references** and must not **encroach on Parliament's domain**.

3. Judiciary Appointments and Exceptions

- *Third Judges Case (1998)*: Set **guidelines for collegium system**.
- *Ram Janmabhoomi Case (1993)*: Court **declined to offer an opinion**—the only such instance so far.

Issues Raised in the Current Reference

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

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

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

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

Question for practice:

Examine how Article 143 has been used to clarify constitutional questions and its significance in balancing executive and judicial powers in India.

AI is changing the way Indian businesses function

Source: The post AI is changing the way Indian businesses function has been created, based on the article "**From pyramids to hourglasses: how AI can change Indian workplaces**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 19th May 2025
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3 – science and technology – Awareness in IT, Space, Computers, and Robotics.

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

For detailed information on **AI's disruptive economic impact**, an India check [read this article here](#)

The Hourglass Model of Work

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

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

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

India's Unique Approach to AI Integration

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

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

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

Benefits of AI-Human Blending

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

Emerging Challenges and Limitations

- 1. Job Displacement Risks:** Globally, up to 800 million jobs may shift by 2030. In India, low-skilled and older workers are especially vulnerable. Pew estimates 19% of U.S. jobs face high AI exposure.
- 2. Ethical and Privacy Issues:** AI errors can arise from biased data. With 79% of Indians opposing data sales (ISACA), trust is critical. The 2023 Data Protection Act is a step forward but still evolving.
- 3. Infrastructure and Cultural Gaps:** Around 65% of Indians live in rural areas with poor AI access. Many businesses lack funds for AI adoption. Resistance from traditional structures also slows change.

Way Forward for Indian Firms

- 1. Focus on Reskilling:** Programs like Skill India should teach AI basics, data use, and critical thinking.
- 2. Adopt a Balanced AI Model:** Use AI for analytics and customer service, but retain humans for key decisions.
- 3. Build Ethical, Inclusive AI:** Follow OECD standards to ensure fairness and reduce bias. Partner with global firms to adapt affordable AI for Indian SMEs.
- 4. Treat AI as a Long-Term Process:** Track risks and regulations continuously. India's model must reflect its social and economic realities, not just global trends.

Question for practice:

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

Advancement Index improves grassroots data use

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

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

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

Gaps in Evidence-Based Governance

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

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

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

Local Data and Its Poor Integration

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

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

Significance and Structure of the Panchayat Advancement Index

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

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

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

Connecting Data with Action

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

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

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

Strengthening Local Data Use

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

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

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

Conclusion:

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

Question for practice:

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

OPEC policy shift may hurt India in long run

Source: The post OPEC policy shift may hurt India in long run has been created, based on the article “**The ongoing oil price tensions**” published in “**The Hindu**” on 20th May 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- Infrastructure

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

OPEC+ Policy Shift and Triggers

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

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

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

Saudi Arabia's Strategic Shift

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

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

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

For detailed information on **Saudi Arabia uses oil policy for diplomacy** [read this article here](#)

Shifting Dynamics in Oil Market

- 1. Fragmented Producer Base:** Unlike earlier times, the current market is crowded with independent producers. Heavy investments in costly offshore and marginal fields require continued output to avoid political fallout.
- 2. Declining Demand Growth:** The International Energy Agency (IEA) projects only 0.73% oil demand growth in 2025. Factors like EV adoption in China, climate commitments, and a global slowdown support the “peak demand” outlook, once seen as unrealistic.
- 3. Global Economic Weakness:** S&P forecasts global GDP growth at just 2.2% in 2025 and 2.4% in 2026. The WTO predicts a 0.2% decline in global trade in 2025, limiting demand recovery even if supply tightens.

Saudi Arabia's Broader Calculations

- 1. Revenue Maximization Strategy:** Anticipating long-term stagnation, Saudi Arabia may be frontloading oil sales to maximize earnings before sanctions on Russia, Iran, and Venezuela are lifted and U.S. production rises under Trump's “Drill, Baby, Drill” push.
- 2. Political Coordination with U.S.**
The timing also coincides with President Trump's planned visit. Saudi Arabia may be signaling alignment with U.S. goals of low oil prices to counter inflation, in exchange for defence deals, nuclear cooperation, and arms sales worth over \$100 billion.

India's Position and Challenges

- 1. High Import Dependence:** India, the world's third-largest crude importer, spent \$137 billion on oil in 2024–25. Its demand rose by 3.2%—almost four times the global rate—and is expected to be the main growth driver till 2040.
- 2. Short-Term Benefits:** A \$1 fall in crude prices saves India \$1.5 billion annually. Lower prices ease inflation and reduce fiscal burdens.
- 3. Long-Term Risks:** Lower oil revenue in Gulf nations could reduce trade, investment, and tourism. Remittances from nine million Indian expatriates in the Gulf—over \$50 billion—may decline. Refinery margins and tax revenues may also fall.

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

Question for practice:

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

India faces sharp decline in MTech student enrolment

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

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

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

Understanding the Decline in Postgraduate Enrolment

- 1. Sharp Fall in Numbers:** In 2023–24, fewer than 45,000 students enrolled against an offered intake of 1.3 lakh seats. This is a significant drop from the approved intake of 1.81 lakh in 2018–19.
- 2. Early Employment Preference:** Today's graduates often choose immediate employment after BTech, motivated by strong industry demand and attractive salaries.
- 3. Shift to Foreign Institutions:** Many bright students prefer studying abroad due to better infrastructure, scholarships, global exposure, and job opportunities.

Key Barriers Discouraging Postgraduate Pursuits

- 1. Low Perceived Value of MTech Degrees:** Unless obtained from premier institutes, MTech is often not seen as significantly improving employability or skill levels.
- 2. Inadequate Financial Assistance:** The current PG scholarship of Rs 12,400 per month, unchanged since 2015, is insufficient to meet urban living expenses amid rising inflation.
- 3. Lack of Research Ecosystem:** Several institutions lack advanced labs, mentorship, industry collaboration, or interdisciplinary opportunities, weakening student motivation for research.
- 4. Reduced Appeal of Academic Careers:** With limited faculty job growth, concerns over job security, salary parity, and promotion avenues have made academic careers less attractive.

AICTE's Efforts to Address Immediate Challenges

- 1. Proposal for Scholarship Hike:** AICTE has recommended increasing the monthly scholarship to Rs 18,600 for GATE-qualified students to address affordability concerns.
- 2. Expanding Scholarship Eligibility:** It has proposed including students with a CGPA of 8.5+ from AICTE-approved institutes, even if they haven't cleared GATE, to broaden access.

Structural Reforms for Research and Education Quality

- 1. PhD Oversight and Quality Standards:** AICTE plans to regulate PhD programmes to ensure regular evaluations, promote interdisciplinary research, and introduce effective monitoring.
- 2. Upgrading Research Infrastructure:** Through the YASHASWI scheme, AICTE is investing in labs, innovation hubs, and Centres of Excellence to attract PG and PhD students.
- 3. Industry Collaboration in Curriculum:** By embedding internships, live projects, and co-designed syllabi, AICTE aims to link academic learning with real-world relevance.

Rebuilding the Appeal of Postgraduate Education

- 1. Strategic National Need for Researchers:** India's technological future in AI, green energy, and quantum tech depends on a strong pool of advanced researchers and specialists.
- 2. Making Teaching Careers Attractive:** The Council is working to improve pay structures, mobility, and professional development to make academia a viable career choice.

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

Question for practice:

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

Scheme-based workers demand recognition fair wages and rights

Source: The post Scheme-based workers demand recognition fair wages and rights has been created, based on the article “**Scheme-based workers, the struggle for an identity**” published in “**The Hindu**” on 21st May 2025

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

Context: Despite playing vital roles in public welfare schemes, millions of scheme-based workers (SBWs) in India lack formal recognition as workers. Their ongoing demands for minimum wages, social security, and legal identity as workers have triggered strikes, legal battles, and policy debates at state and national levels.

Expanding Workforce in Social Welfare Delivery

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

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

Persistent Denial of Worker Rights

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

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

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

Labour Mobilisation and Political Constraints

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

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

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

Judicial Interventions and Policy Shifts

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

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

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

State Apathy and the Fight for Recognition

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

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

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

Question for practice:

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

India needs a unified climate risk framework

Source: The post India needs a unified climate risk framework has been created, based on the article "**Progress should not just be fast but future-proof**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 21st May 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- Environment

Context: India faces rising climate threats, from floods and droughts to heatwaves. Over 80% of its population lives in high-risk districts. Despite this, the country lacks a unified, forward-looking framework to assess and manage climate physical risks (CPRs).

For detailed information on **How India's new government should scale up climate action** [read this article here](#)

Understanding Climate Physical Risks

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

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

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

Global and Domestic Gaps in Adaptation Efforts

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

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

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

Deconstructing Climate Risk: Hazard, Exposure, Vulnerability

1. **IPCC's Risk Formula:** CPRs are defined by hazard (type of event), exposure (who or what is at risk), and vulnerability (ability to recover). All three shape actual risk levels.
2. **Beyond Frequency of Disasters:** Understanding exposure and vulnerability is key. Risk is not just about how often events occur but also about who is affected and how prepared they are.
3. **Need for Integrated Risk Thinking:** This approach allows governments and businesses to move from reactive to proactive planning.

Institutional Responses and Regulatory Evolution

1. **Mandatory Climate Disclosures Emerging Globally:** Regulators worldwide now demand CPR disclosures. The IFRS ISSB S2 sets global reporting standards.
2. **India's Financial Response:** The Reserve Bank of India is integrating CPRs into its regulatory framework, linking climate risks with economic and financial stability.
3. **Business Continuity at Stake:** Climate disclosure is becoming central to investment, operations, and risk management.

Fragmented Approach in India and Emerging Efforts

1. **Scattered Risk Assessments:** India's CPR data is spread across agencies and research bodies, each using different tools and priorities.
2. **Lack of Standardised Data:** Despite having flood maps and vulnerability atlases, there is no central system. This limits policy and business decision-making.
3. **Global Models Fall Short:** Existing international models fail to capture India's local climate variations accurately.

Towards a Comprehensive Climate Risk Framework

1. **Initial Steps Underway:** India submitted its first Adaptation Communication in 2023. A complete National Adaptation Plan is in progress, covering nine sectors at the district level.
2. **Need for a Dedicated CPR Tool:** India must build a unified, localised CPR tool combining standardised data, risk models, and transparent methods to support public and private planning.
3. **Future-Proofing Development:** This tool is essential to align climate resilience with India's development goals under *Viksit Bharat*.

Question for practice:

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

Supreme Court revives rule affecting judicial exam entry

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

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

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

Historical Background and Legal Shifts

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

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

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

Challenges in Talent Attraction and Retention

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

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

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

Barriers to Entry and Inclusion

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

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

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

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

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

Proposed Reforms and the Road Ahead

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

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

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

Question for practice:

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

Urban biodiversity conservation is key to sustainable development

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

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- Environment

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

For detailed information on **Urban Biodiversity in India- Significance and Challenges** [read this article here](#)

Understanding the Biodiversity Crisis

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

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

Why Urban Biodiversity Matters

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

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

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

Tools and Frameworks for Greener Cities

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

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

Urban Conservation Models and Successes

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

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

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

Enforcement and Public Participation

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

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

Question for practice:

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

India's global diplomacy faces truth and legitimacy challenges

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

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2-International Relations

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

Strategic Purpose of India's Diplomatic Move

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

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

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

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

Erosion of Credibility in the Information Age

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

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

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

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

Crisis of Persuasion in Global Diplomacy

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

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

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

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

Question for practice:

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

India's poverty reduction has significantly slowed down

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

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

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

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

Challenges in Poverty Estimation

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

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

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

Three Broad Estimation Methods Identified

- 1. Alternative NSSO Surveys:** Some studies rely on alternate NSSO surveys such as the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS), but these suffer from limited comparability and depend on weak consumption indicators.
- 2. National Accounts-Based Scaling:** Surjit Bhalla and colleagues used Private Final Consumption Expenditure (PFCE) from the National Accounts Statistics (NAS) to scale HCES 2011–12 data. This assumes uniform consumption growth, which may not reflect real conditions.
- 3. Survey-to-Survey Imputation:** This method fills data gaps by linking compatible surveys. Though outcomes may vary based on survey choice, it helps track long-term trends in poverty.

New Approach and Findings on Poverty Trends

- 1. Use of Consistent Survey Pairs and Poverty Lines:** The authors use the Tendulkar Committee poverty line. They impute consumption data from the Employment-Unemployment Survey (EUS) of 2011–12 and Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) from 2017–18 onwards. Both surveys share similar sampling and design features.
- 2. Enhanced Accuracy via State-Level Modelling:** Unlike World Bank studies, the authors include State-fixed effects or State-level estimates, improving the precision and reliability of their poverty estimates.
- 3. Main Findings:** Their results show poverty declined from 37% in 2004–05 to 22% in 2011–12, and only to around 18% by 2022–23. The number of poor fell marginally from 250 million to 225 million, showing that progress has slowed significantly since 2011.

Diverging Trends Across Indian States

- 1. Significant Gains in Uttar Pradesh:** Uttar Pradesh showed marked poverty reduction during this period, according to the authors' estimates.
- 2. Slow Progress in Some Poorer States:** Jharkhand and Bihar showed little improvement. In states like Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh, poverty reduction has largely stagnated.
- 3. Call for Comparable Official Data:** The authors stress the need for consistent, publicly available government data to resolve current uncertainties.

Supporting Evidence from Broader Indicators

- 1. Slower GDP Growth:** Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth slowed from an annual average of 6.9% (2004–2011) to 5.7% (2011–2023), reflecting a broader economic deceleration.
- 2. Rural Wage Growth Falls:** Real rural wages grew at 4.13% annually until 2011–12, but slowed to 2.3% annually after that, indicating weakening income gains.
- 3. Return to Agriculture:** Between 2004–05 and 2017–18, 66 million workers left agriculture. Since 2017–18, 68 million re-entered the sector, which has lowered productivity and wages, aggravating rural poverty.

Conclusion

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

Question for practice:

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

Indian States Face Unfair Borrowing Costs Without Credit Ratings

Source: The post Indian States Face Unfair Borrowing Costs Without Credit Ratings has been created, based on the article “**Complexities in rating States’ debt**” published in “**Businessline**” on 24rd May 2025

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

Context: A recent auction of State Development Loans (SDLs) has reignited debate over whether Indian States should be rated individually like corporate entities. Despite similar or better fiscal indicators, some States face higher borrowing costs. This inconsistency questions the fairness and transparency of current borrowing frameworks under RBI's implicit guarantees.

For detailed information on **Issues with borrowing powers of States** [read this article here](#)

Mismatch Between State Finances and Borrowing Costs

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

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

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

Credit Ratings and Their Absence in SDLs

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

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

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

Challenges in Implementing State Ratings

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

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

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

Fiscal Flexibility and Welfare Priorities

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

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

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

Toward a Balanced Rating Framework

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

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

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

Question for practice:

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

Supreme Court bail order raises concerns about free speech

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

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2- Justices

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

Bail with Punitive Conditions

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

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

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

Questionable Use of Investigative Mechanisms

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

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

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

Shrinking Space for Free Expression

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

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

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

Alarming Trends in State and Judicial Conduct

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

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

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

Broader Threats to Rights

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

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

Question for practice:

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

Green energy raises electricity costs despite popular belief

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

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- infrastructure- energy

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

The Green Energy Cost Paradox

- 1. Rising Costs in Rich Nations:** Solar and wind are believed to be cheap, but utility bills in **Germany and the UK show otherwise**. Electricity costs have increased with more green energy.
- 2. Double Energy Systems:** Green power is not always available. **Fossil fuel backups are still needed**, meaning countries must pay for two systems.
- 3. Cost Recovery Issues:** As backup plants run fewer hours, they must **recover capital over limited use**, pushing prices even higher.

Evidence from Global Studies

- 1. High True Costs:** A Chinese study found solar power was **twice as expensive as coal**. A peer-reviewed study from Germany and Texas showed that solar and wind were **many times costlier than fossil fuels**.
- 2. Strong Link to Higher Prices:** IEA data shows for every **10% rise in solar and wind**, electricity prices rise by **more than 4 cents per kWh**. Countries with low green energy pay around **11 cents per kWh**.
- 3. Germany’s Experience:** Germany pays **34 cents per kWh**, twice the US rate and nearly four times China’s. Despite having enough installed capacity to **generate twice its demand**, actual supply often falls short.

Power Gaps and Storage Issues

- 1. Intermittency Problems:** On days with good sun and wind, **up to 70% of Germany’s needs** are met. But on **cloudy, windless days**, solar and wind deliver **less than 4%** of required power.
- 2. Battery Shortfalls:** Germany’s battery capacity lasts **only 20 minutes**. The rest of the day relies on fossil fuels. During such periods, **prices reached \$1 per kWh**.

Policy Models and Inequities

- 1. Transparent vs Hidden Costs:** Europe includes green costs in bills, making impacts **visible**. In the US, they are **masked by tax deductions**, likely making actual prices **25% higher**.
- 2. Harm to Poor Nations:** Poor countries are discouraged from using fossil fuels. Yet, in 2023, most new power in these nations came from **coal**, not renewables.

Way Forward

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

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

Question for practice:

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

Global Health Leaders Must Act to Ensure Oxygen Access

Source: The post Global Health Leaders Must Act to Ensure Oxygen Access has been created, based on the article “A medical oxygen access gap SE Asia must bridge” published in “**The Hindu**” on 24rd May 2025

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

Context: Access to medical oxygen is a critical global health issue, especially in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). The COVID-19 pandemic exposed serious infrastructure gaps. Despite short-term emergency measures, **long-term access remains inadequate**. The WHO and The Lancet Commission urge **immediate and collective action** to close the oxygen gap.

Scale and Urgency of the Oxygen Crisis

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

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

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

Key Barriers to Oxygen Access

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

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

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

Need for Long-Term Investment and Innovation

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

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

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

Infrastructure and Technological Innovations

1. **Local production and supply chains:** Local manufacturing reduces costs and **ensures last-mile oxygen delivery**. It also minimizes dependency on imports.
2. **Innovative, decentralised solutions:** **Portable concentrators, solar-powered systems, and booster pumps** can reach remote areas effectively when included in health plans.
3. **Addressing energy disruptions:** In LMICs, **solar-powered systems** offer **cost-effective, low-maintenance oxygen supply**. Ethiopia and Nigeria have implemented these successfully.

Building Sustainable Oxygen Ecosystems

1. **Policy and Regulations:** Governments should integrate oxygen into **universal health coverage** and establish standards for **quality, storage, and distribution**.
2. **Private and global engagement:** The private sector must invest in **affordable, scalable systems**. Global agencies should support **funding, infrastructure, and workforce training**.
3. **Innovation through Research and Technology:** Academia can design **low-cost oxygen technologies**, while digital tools improve **real-time monitoring and supply chain efficiency**.

Conclusion

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

Question for practice:

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

District level data reveals India's unequal economic growth

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

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3-Growth and Development

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

Regional Concentration of Economic Output

1. **Skewed Contribution Across States:** A few districts dominate their State's economic activity. **In Uttarakhand, Haridwar, Udham Singh Nagar, and Dehradun generate 71% of the GSDP**, while the other 10 districts contribute less than 30%. **In Karnataka, Bengaluru alone produces 38%**, with the next highest district at just 5.5%. **In Maharashtra, Mumbai, Thane, Pune, and Nagpur account for over 60%** of total output.
2. **National Pattern of Imbalance:** This is common across India. **The top 10% of districts generate 50–60% of State output**, while hundreds of others contribute only marginally. Even in **Madhya Pradesh, Indore contributes 6.7%**, double or triple the average of other districts.

Consequences of Economic Concentration

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

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

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

Challenges in Measuring District Economies

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

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

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

The Need for District-Led Development

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

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

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

Toward Inclusive and Balanced Growth

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

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

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

Question for practice:

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

Climate change is putting South Asia's children at risk

Source: The post Climate change is putting South Asia's children at risk has been created, based on the article "Save children from climate extremes" published in "Financial Express" on 24rd May 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- Conservation, environmental pollution and degradatio

Context: South Asia is facing a severe climate crisis, with repeated extreme weather events affecting millions. These are no longer isolated occurrences but signs of a long-term emergency. The impact is particularly dangerous for children, whose health, learning, and development are increasingly under threat.

For detailed information on **Planetary crisis puts children at risk: UNICEF report** [read this article here](#)

Scale of the Climate Crisis in South Asia

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

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

Children's Exposure to Climate Risks

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

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

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

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

Policy and Infrastructure Gaps

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

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

Actionable Solutions and Regional Cooperation

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

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

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

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

Conclusion

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

Question for practice:

Examine how climate change is impacting children in South Asia.

India’s water crisis needs collective farming shift

Source: The post India’s water crisis needs collective farming shift has been created, based on the article “Ensuring sustainable water use in agriculture” published in “Businessline” on 26th May 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3-Environment

Context: India’s water crisis is driven by economic misalignments, not just scarcity. Agriculture consumes over 80% of freshwater, with rice and sugarcane alone using more than 60%. Current policies reward water-intensive farming. Sustainable solutions demand a shift from individual incentives to collective, cooperative strategies that align with ecological realities.

Misaligned Incentives and Water Misuse

- 1. Input Subsidies and Output Guarantees:** Rice and sugarcane benefit the most from MSPs, procurement, and free or flat-rate electricity. This reduces the marginal cost of groundwater extraction to almost zero, encouraging overuse and depletion of aquifers.
- 2. Private Gains, Public Losses:** This situation reflects **moral hazard** and **negative externalities**. Farmers act rationally for personal gain, but their choices impose long-term social and environmental costs.
- 3. Limits of Conventional Schemes:** Efforts like Haryana’s *Mera Pani Meri Virasat* provide ₹7,000 per acre to shift from paddy to less water-intensive crops. But uptake remains limited due to weak economic appeal and poor alignment with ground realities.

Economic Rationality of Farmers

- 1. High Profits from Paddy Cultivation:** In districts like **Sonepat**, the basmati paddy variety **PB 1121** is popular. In 2023, it offered **net profits of over ₹50,000 per acre**, largely due to strong demand from Gulf nations.
- 2. Lower Returns from Alternative Crops:** Even with subsidies, crops like **bajra** earned only about **₹32,000 per acre**, making them less attractive. The ₹7,000 incentive does not bridge this gap.
- 3. Status Quo Bias Among Small Farmers:** Small and marginal farmers prefer paddy because it offers predictable, higher income. Unless alternative incentives meet or exceed this profitability, behavioral change is unlikely.

Geographic Constraints and Spatial Externalities

- 1. Water’s Diffusive Nature:** Groundwater flows across boundaries through lateral subsurface movement, capillary rise, and soil pathways. This undermines conservation efforts on individual plots.
- 2. Compounding Issues in Low-Lying Areas:** In regions with high water tables and slow percolation, paddy cultivation nearby leads to over-saturation and **anoxic stress** for crops like bajra or pulses.
- 3. Failure of Isolated Solutions:** Without **hydrological zoning** or collective frameworks, individual crop-switching efforts are ineffective. Spatial spillovers cancel out water-saving gains.

Need for Collective and Cooperative Incentives

1. **Village-Wide Incentive Models:** Linking subsidies to **group behavior**, where **60–70% of farmers** in a village adopt water-saving crops, spreads risk and encourages broader adoption.
2. **Social Accountability and Peer Monitoring:** Collective compliance reduces monitoring costs and misreporting. Villages are more likely to self-regulate when incentives are tied to community performance.
3. **Success of Decentralised Models:** The **Participatory Guarantee Mechanism (PGM)** in organic farming shows how community-led certification can replace costly external checks. Similar approaches can work for water governance.

A New Policy Vision for Water Sustainability

1. **Towards Cooperative Water Governance:** A scheme like *Hamara Pani Hamari Virasat* could reward entire villages that commit to crop diversification. Shared goals and peer accountability would guide implementation.
2. **Beyond Technocratic Solutions:** Water policy must reflect how farmers think under uncertainty. Aligning individual and group incentives with ecological outcomes is essential.
3. **The Next Agricultural Revolution:** India must shift from state-led food security to **community-driven ecological sustainability**. Policies must embed **collective action, spatial planning, and local stewardship** into resource management.

Question for practice:

Examine how misaligned economic incentives contribute to India's water crisis and the need for collective solutions.

India's coal sector achieves growth through reforms and innovation

Source: The post India's coal sector achieves growth through reforms and innovation has been created, based on the article "**India's coal sector is stepping up to fuel our economic expansion**" published in "**Live Mint**" on 26th May 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper1-Resource

Context: India's coal sector has crossed a historic milestone by producing and dispatching **over 1 billion tonnes** of coal in 2024–25. This result stems from a decade of reforms and has triggered fresh updates to the **Shakti Policy** aimed at making coal allocation more transparent and efficient.

Decade of Reforms and Record Production

1. **From Deficit to Surplus:** In 2014, coal production was insufficient. Between 2009–10 and 2013–14, it grew at just **1.89% annually**, failing to meet the rising demand of a growing economy.
2. **Commercial Mining and Auctions:** The **2015 cancellation** of 204 coal blocks by the Supreme Court opened the door for change. **Commercial coal mining** began in 2020. By 2025, **150 mines** have been auctioned across **11 rounds**, with the 12th underway.
3. **Boost in State Revenues:** Coal reforms have benefited state governments. **₹4.4 trillion** has been earned from mining, including **₹1.6 trillion** from coal alone through **auction premiums and royalties**.

Private Sector and Historical Shift in Policy

1. **Era of Public Monopoly:** After Independence, coal production was state-controlled. A **1957 bill** sought greater public control. By 1956, production was only **38 million tonnes**.

2. **Slow Expansion:** The sector saw poor growth due to **distrust in private players**. By 1990, coal output was only **200 million tonnes**.

3. **Major Policy Shift:** The new **commercial auction regime** has reversed this trend. It enabled **private participation** and created a competitive environment for coal production.

Sustainability and Technological Innovation

1. **New Green Focus:** Sustainability is now a priority. Coal India is investing in **solar, wind, and pumped storage projects**. It also acquired a **non-coal mineral block**.

2. **Clean Transport Methods:** The ministry is pushing for **90% mechanized coal loading** through eco-friendly conveyor belts as part of **first-mile connectivity projects**.

3. **Underground Mining and Closures:** Underground mining is safer and more eco-friendly. A roadmap to reach **100 million tonnes by 2029–30** is underway. **Mine closure guidelines** are also being revised.

Future Role of Coal in Energy Mix

1. **Declining Share, Strong Presence:** Coal's share in installed capacity has declined from **60% in 2014–15** to **47%**, but it still supplies **79% of India's electricity**.

2. **Meeting Peak Demand:** A summer action plan ensures stable supply. As of 21 May, **thermal plants held 54.56 million tonnes** of coal—enough for **20 days**.

3. **Coal and Viksit Bharat:** With **per capita electricity use** still below global levels, coal remains vital. India aims for a **\$35 trillion economy by 2047**, with **carbon neutrality by 2070**.

Modernization and Global Leadership

1. **Technology Upgrade:** Digital platforms with **AI, 5G, and GPS** are being used. A **coal trading exchange** is being developed for better efficiency and safety.

2. **Sector Image Revamped:** Once seen as corrupt, the sector is now a symbol of **modern, transparent, and sustainable mining**, ready for **global leadership**.

Question for practice:

Discuss how reforms in India's coal sector since 2014 have transformed production, sustainability, and transparency.

Digital gap in Indian schools remains a serious concern

Source: The post Digital gap in Indian schools remains a serious concern has been created, based on the article "**Digital divide in schools needs to be bridged**" published in "**Businessline**" on 26th May 2025

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

Context: The **UDISE+ 2023–24 report** highlights the widening **digital divide in Indian schools**. Despite increased investment in education, more than half the schools still lack access to basic digital infrastructure, especially in **rural areas**. This deepens inequality and hinders hybrid learning.

Digital Infrastructure Remains Inadequate

Limited Availability of Devices and Internet: According to the **2023–24 UDISE+ report**, only **52.7% of schools have functional computers**, and **53.9% have internet access**. This shows that nearly half of schools still lack basic digital tools.

Slow Progress in Recent Years: In **2021–22**, only **44.9% of schools** had computers and **33.9% had internet**. The **2022–23 and 2023–24 reports** were released late, in **December 2024**, with only **marginal improvement**.

Lack of Access in Rural Areas: Despite higher spending, rural schools remain digitally excluded. Many students still **cannot access online resources**, a problem that existed even **during and after the pandemic**.

Urban–Rural Divide Widening

1. **Digital Disparity Across Regions:** As per MoE data, **68.7% of urban schools** have digital infrastructure, compared to only **44.9% of rural schools** — a gap of **23.8%**.

2. **Uneven Connectivity:** Internet access in rural schools lags behind urban schools by **29%**. This gap stems from the **unequal availability of resources**.

Policy Failures and Delayed Projects

1. **Ineffective Outcomes of Government Initiatives:** The **Digital India School programme** has failed in rural areas due to poor connectivity. The **BharatNet Project**, launched in **2011**, aimed to connect **6.3 lakh villages** with broadband.

2. **Repeated Delays and Missed Targets:** By **October 2024**, only **2,14,283 villages** were connected. The earlier **May 2023 deadline** was missed, and the project is now expected to complete in **2025**.

Gaps in Tele-density and Electricity Supply

1. **Tele-density Shows Stark Contrast:** As of **March 2024**, **urban tele-density** was **133.72%**, while **rural tele-density** stood at just **59.19%**, a huge gap of **74.53 percentage points**.

2. **Electricity Issues Undermine Progress:** Though **89.7% of schools** report having electricity, **frequent outages** in rural areas limit usability. Even existing digital tools become **redundant without stable power**.

3. **Basic Amenities Must Precede Digitisation:** If schools lack **electricity and water**, they likely lack digital tools too. **Fixing these essentials** must come first.

Question for practice:

Discuss how the UDISE+ 2023–24 report highlights the digital divide between urban and rural schools in India.

India builds strength through reform and innovation

Source: The post India builds strength through reform and innovation has been created, based on the article “**An operation that was also about a self-reliant India**” published in “**The Hindu**” on 27th May 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- Growth and Development

Context: India has experienced a decade of major transformation under Prime Minister Narendra Modi. His vision focuses on making India a global economic, strategic, and technological power. The article outlines key reforms and strategic efforts that helped India become a resilient, self-reliant nation.

Industrial Resurgence and Manufacturing Push

1. **Shift in Manufacturing Strategy:** The launch of **Make in India in 2014** marked a decisive change. India aimed to become a core player in global manufacturing. Major reforms improved ease of doing business and encouraged investment.

2. **Boost through Incentives and Focus Areas:** **Production-linked incentive (PLI) schemes** enhanced India's appeal as a manufacturing hub. Sectors like electronics, defence, and automobiles received focused support.

3. **Self-Reliance through Atmanirbhar Bharat:** The **Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan in 2020** pushed this further. It aimed to make India a global hub in *state-of-the-art manufacturing*, focusing on defence, semiconductors, pharmaceuticals, and critical minerals. These are not only economic sectors but also crucial for *national security*.

Rise of Innovation and Start-up Ecosystem

1. **Global Recognition in Start-ups:** India is now the *world's third-largest start-up ecosystem*. Start-ups in fintech, agritech, edtech, and health tech are solving local problems and competing globally.

2. **Strategic Tech Advancements:** Start-ups contribute to *defence tech, AI, cybersecurity, and space*. These areas have strategic implications for India's long-term capabilities.

3. **Partnerships for Technological Growth:** Collaborations like the *U.S.-India TRUST initiative* and *India-France roadmap* are strengthening cooperation in *AI, quantum, and defence technology*.

Indigenous Defence Capability and Strategic Confidence

1. **Validation through Operation Sindoor:** *Operation Sindoor* showed India's capability to strike with precision using *indigenous defence technologies*. This was a result of long-term investment under *Make in India* and *Atmanirbhar Bharat*.

2. **Surge in Defence Exports:** *India's defence exports* reached ₹23,622 crore in FY25, covering nearly *80 countries*. The *private sector* contributed ₹15,233 crore, showing growing strength.

3. **From Importer to Exporter:** India is moving from a dependent arms importer to a global exporter of defence equipment, reinforcing *technological self-reliance*.

Pursuit of Technology Leadership

1. **National Missions in Critical Areas:** Government-led missions like the *National Quantum Mission* and *India Semiconductor Mission*, along with *ISRO's Chandrayaan and Gaganyaan*, reflect India's growing technological maturity.

2. **Role of Industry in Hi-tech Sectors:** Industry is contributing to *semiconductors, clean tech, mobility, defence, and electronics*. It supports satellite launches and combat platform development.

3. **AI and Workforce Development:** Through initiatives like *Bhashini* and *FutureSkills Prime*, industry is building India's *AI capabilities* and training a skilled workforce.

Strengthening Industry's Role in R&D and Collaboration

1. **Need for Greater Investment:** The *private sector* must scale up R&D spending and form overseas partnerships to accelerate technological growth.

2. **Tripartite Collaborations:** Industry should lead in *linking academia and public research* to foster innovation and generate trained engineers and scientists.

India's Vision for Global Leadership

1. **A Nation Shaping the Future:** India is no longer catching up; it is *shaping the global order* with resilience, innovation, and manufacturing power.
2. **Call to Action:** The journey to *Viksit Bharat* requires stronger *industry-government collaboration* to build a *secure, self-reliant, globally respected India*.

Question for practice:

Examine how India's strategic reforms under Prime Minister Modi have strengthened its position as a self-reliant and globally competitive nation.

Artificial intelligence is transforming science and healthcare rapidly

Source: The post Artificial intelligence is transforming science and healthcare rapidly has been created, based on the article "**We should prepare for a world of ever-improving super-Einsteins**" published in "**Live Mint**" on 27th May 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- Awareness in the fields of IT, Space, Computers, robotics, nano-technology, bio-technology

Context: The article explains how artificial intelligence (AI) is evolving rapidly—from chatbots to superintelligent systems. It highlights the growing role of AI beyond digital tools and shows how it is already transforming healthcare, scientific research, and drug discovery. This shift demands urgent attention from institutions and society.

Evolution of AI Across Four Stages

1. **From Chatbots to Action Agents:** The early 2020s began with chatbots—**clever but basic**. These soon gave way to **agentic systems** that perform tasks like booking flights, editing images, and managing spreadsheets.
2. **Emergence of Embodied Intelligence:** Next comes AI embedded in the physical world—**robots, smart tools, and adaptive systems**. These machines will **learn and act** by interacting with their environment.
3. **Rise of Cognitive Supremacy:** A future stage will bring **superintelligent systems** that outperform even the **most brilliant human minds** in all fields. Some models already match **Olympiad-level students in mathematics**.
4. **Endless Scaling and Improvement:** These systems will scale endlessly, becoming faster, better, and more capable without hitting a performance ceiling.

Healthcare as the First Frontier

1. **AI Outperforms Human Experts:** In diagnostics, AI now **outperforms radiologists** in reading **X-rays, cancer scans**, and other medical images. The improvements are **leaps in accuracy, speed, and scale**.
2. **Cognitive Strength in Real Use:** These systems show that AI can **reason through complexity**, solving tasks once limited to specialists.
3. **Decisions in Seconds, Not Days:** AI makes medical decisions in **seconds**, while humans need **days or weeks**. It is tackling complex problems directly and efficiently.
4. **The Real Transformation Has Begun:** While public attention stays on robots and gadgets, **diagnostics marks AI's real impact**—a turning point in applied intelligence.

AI-Led Drug Discovery Revolution

1. **Creative Intelligence in Action:** Drug discovery goes beyond pattern detection. It requires AI to **imagine solutions, design molecules, and test ideas** through simulations.
2. **Freedom from Human Frameworks:** Traditional biology used **simplified models** suited to human limits. AI operates in **vast molecular and mechanistic spaces**, beyond such constraints.
3. **Powerful New Tools:** Platforms like **Absci's zero-shot antibody generators** and **Recursion's phenomics system** create **viable drug candidates** and screen compounds at scale—**without needing prior data**.
4. **Expanding What Science Can Do:** AI lets science explore **more questions, test more ideas, and navigate massive solution spaces** that were previously unreachable.

A Deeper Scientific Revolution Unfolds

1. **Rapid Progress in Synthetic Biology:** AI now helps design **gene circuits** that work on the **first attempt**. Whole-cell simulations are becoming feasible.
2. **Prediction Without Experimentation:** AI models now predict **binding affinity, stability, and biological effects** without lab trials or training data.
3. **From Linear to Exponential Growth:** Each breakthrough fuels another. Science is shifting from a **step-by-step process** to an **exponential transformation**.

Reframing the Public Discourse

1. **Beyond Entertaining AI Feats:** Public focus is still on **AI composing emails or jingles**, but these are outdated examples.
2. **Birth of Non-Human Minds:** We are now creating **new kinds of minds**. These systems won't just assist—they will **co-create knowledge** using **alien and powerful reasoning**.
3. **Unanswered Ethical Questions:** There are rising concerns about **ethics, accountability, and AI governance**. These issues need urgent attention, though this article only flags them.
4. **Preparing for the True AI Era:** The real change isn't about digital assistants. It's about **minds we barely understand**, already reshaping science, society, and the future.

Question for practice:

Discuss how artificial intelligence is reshaping science and healthcare, according to the article.

Exclusionary nationalism is weakening Indian constitutional values

Source: The post Exclusionary nationalism is weakening Indian constitutional values has been created, based on the article "**We should prepare for a world of ever-improving super-Einsteins**" published in "**Indian Express**" on 27th May 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2-Constitution of India —historical underpinnings, evolution, features, amendments, significant provisions and basic structure.

Context: The recent **India-Pakistan conflict** has revealed a fundamental shift in Indian nationalism. The inclusive, democratic spirit inherited from the freedom struggle is now replaced by a **narrow, imitative, and exclusionary ideology** that endangers constitutional values and national unity.

Distortion of Indian Nationalism

1. **Imitating Foreign Models:** Indian nationalism now mimics **German ethnonationalism**, the **Israeli security state**, and **Pakistan's religious identity model**. This departs from the original idea of a secular and plural India.
2. **Collapse of Constitutional Discourse:** In the **Ali Khan Mahmudabad case**, the **Supreme Court** did not refer to **freedom of expression or constitutional rights**. Legal reasoning was overshadowed by rhetoric around **national interest**, and dissent was treated as betrayal.
3. **Citizens Positioned Against the Nation:** A **false binary** now exists: **loyalty to the nation vs. personal liberty**. Even nuanced critiques of policy are condemned as **anti-national**, stifling democratic dialogue.

Undermining Democratic Norms

1. **Government Becomes the Nation:** Criticism of government silence on issues like the US President's remarks is punished, while **leaders use propaganda and military optics** freely. Questioners are accused of playing politics; leaders are exempt.
2. **Loss of Democratic Accountability:** In contrast, **Atal Bihari Vajpayee** demanded a **special Parliament session after the 1962 war**, and **Ram Manohar Lohia** criticised **Nehru's China policy**. Neither was branded anti-national.
3. **Uniformity Replaces Unity:** Calls for **One-Nation-One-Something** confuse **unity with sameness**. Victims of hate, like **Mahmudabad**, are blamed for division, while those spreading hate avoid scrutiny.

Legacy of Indian Nationalism

1. **Belonging Without Othering:** Original Indian nationalism focused on **fighting colonialism**, not attacking communities or neighbours. It supported **anti-colonial movements in Asia, Africa, Latin America**, and **anti-apartheid struggles in South Africa**.
2. **Mutual Respect Across Communities:** Majorities often defended minorities. **Hindi speakers supported non-Hindi regions**, while **non-Hindi speakers worked for the Nagari Pracharini Sabha**. Indian identity embraced religious and linguistic diversity.
3. **Pluralist Democratic Nationhood:** India adopted a **state-nation model**, not a European-style **nation-state**. It allowed **debate over national identity**, balancing **democracy with deep differences**.

Rise of Narrow and Aggressive Nationalism

1. **Neglect of Real Issues:** Today's nationalism obsesses over **Kashmir and Muslims**, ignoring pressing issues like **Manipur**, or **inter-state disputes** between **Punjab-Haryana** or **Karnataka-Tamil Nadu**. Ideological division takes priority over real governance.
2. **Strategic Weakness and Isolation:** Despite aggressive posturing, there is **meekness before China or the US**. Obsession with Pakistan has **diplomatically coupled India with it** and alienated neighbours, creating **hostile borders** on all sides.
3. **Principle-Free Foreign Policy:** India lacks **reliable global allies** in times of crisis. The recent episode showed that **without principle-driven diplomacy**, national interest cannot be protected.

Shared Responsibility and the Path Forward

- 1. Elite Disconnection from People:** Post-independence elites promoted **shallow modernity** devoid of **emotional or spiritual content**. Their **cosmopolitanism** did not connect with the masses, leaving a void filled by **exclusionary ideologies**.
- 2. Vacuum in Nationalist Ownership:** Haunted by **European fascism**, liberal elites abandoned nationalism. This allowed forces with **no contribution to the freedom movement** to capture the nationalist narrative.
- 3. Urgent Need for Reclaiming Legacy:** The most pressing task today is to **reclaim the inclusive, democratic, and plural Indian nationalism**. It must be re-rooted in **justice, belonging, and diversity**.

Question for practice:

Examine how the rise of exclusionary nationalism in India has distorted its constitutional values and democratic legacy.

Urban India battles hidden metabolic health crisis

Source: The post Urban India battles hidden metabolic health crisis has been created, based on the article “**India’s new urban worry — rising overnutrition**” published in “**The Hindu**” on 28th May 2025

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

Context: A recent Nature article revealed a striking prevalence of Metabolic Dysfunction-Associated Fatty Liver Disease (MAFLD) among IT workers in Hyderabad, with 84% affected. This highlights a broader public health crisis fueled by chronic stress, unhealthy eating habits, disrupted sleep, and sedentary lifestyles prevalent in India’s rapidly urbanizing technology sector.

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

Urban Health Crisis in India

- 1. Double Burden of Malnutrition:** India faces simultaneous challenges of undernutrition and overnutrition. Globally, it ranked second in obesity prevalence in 2021. Urban IT hubs especially reflect this issue, creating a silent metabolic crisis. India’s paradoxical nutrition scenario partly explains its poor Global Hunger Index ranking.
- 2. Prevalence of Noncommunicable Diseases (NCDs):** WHO’s 2024 report warns that NCDs caused 74% of global deaths in 2019, disproportionately affecting India and other middle-income countries. Economic productivity suffers, with South-East Asia unlikely to achieve 2030 SDG targets for reducing NCD-related deaths.
- 3. Health Data Insights from Tamil Nadu:** Tamil Nadu’s 2023-24 STEPS Survey shows 65% of deaths in Chennai due to NCDs. Blood pressure control remains low among hypertensive patients (16%), worse among young adults (9.3%). Only 9.8% of young diabetics achieve glycemic control. Overweight and obesity prevalence stands at 31.6% and 14.2%, respectively.

Growing Obesity Trends

- 1. Age and Economic Disparities:** Obesity rises with age, from 7% in younger males (15-19 years) to 32% in middle-aged men (40-49 years). Wealth significantly impacts obesity rates, from 10% in lower-income groups to 37% in higher-income ones, reflecting a broad demographic crisis rather than a confined occupational hazard.
- 2. Gender and Urban-Rural Divide:** Waist-to-hip ratio, another critical marker, worsens with age: 46% to 65% in women and 28% to 60% in men (ages 15-49). Tamil Nadu urban areas have higher overweight and obesity rates (46.1% men, 43.1% women) than rural regions (35.4% men, 31.6% women).
- 3. Youth Vulnerability and Future Predictions:** India’s working-age population (18-59) faces heightened NCD risks. A Lancet 2025 study projects India’s overweight adult population to reach 450 million by 2050. Childhood obesity surged by 244% over three decades and may rise an additional 121% in the next three.

Regulatory Actions and Challenges

- 1. Role of Regulators and Industry:** Awareness alone is insufficient; regulatory intervention is crucial. Despite consumer knowledge increasing, unhealthy ultra-processed food dominates markets. FSSAI's "Eat Right India" initiative promotes healthier eating but faces implementation challenges.
- 2. Efforts in Food Labelling and Standards:** FSSAI proposed the Health Star Rating (HSR) for clearer nutritional information, sparking debates on effectiveness. The Supreme Court requested technical guidance on labelling norms. Effective regulation demands stricter enforcement and broader multisectoral efforts.
- 3. Comprehensive Health Policy: Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030** successfully integrates NCD prevention into national policies, enforcing calorie labelling, imposing taxes on sugary drinks and energy drinks, and limiting sodium in processed foods. This cohesive approach has significantly improved public health outcomes.

Urban Lifestyle and Public Health Risks

- 1. Rise of Unhealthy Eating Habits:** Cities like Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Pune, and Chennai are economic hubs driven by IT sectors. Flexible work hours fuel the demand for nutrient-poor, energy-dense foods from late-night eateries and cloud kitchens, exacerbating nutritional health risks.
- 2. Need for Regulatory Reforms:** Reversing the growing burden of NCDs requires urgent regulatory reforms in the food industry. Introducing taxes on unhealthy foods high in sugar and salt could be a significant and effective health-promoting measure.

Question for practice:

Examine how urban lifestyles and regulatory gaps contribute to the rising burden of noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) in India.

Indo-German Strategic Partnership at 25 Years

Source: The post Indo-German Strategic Partnership at 25 Years has been created, based on the article "The silver jubilee of a strategic partnership" published in "The Hindu" on 28th May 2025

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

Context: India and Germany celebrate 25 years of strategic partnership. The partnership has steadily evolved and now addresses contemporary global challenges. Recent interactions between German and Indian leaders indicate a commitment to deepen collaboration, outlined explicitly in Germany's 'Focus on India' strategy and the German Coalition Treaty.

Peace and Stability

- 1. Shared Global Vision:** India and Germany both value a peaceful, stable, and rules-based world. Central to their relationship are Intergovernmental Consultations, effectively coordinating governmental cooperation.
- 2. Defence Sector Cooperation:** Joint military exercises, such as the Tarang Shakti Exercise (2024), strengthen strategic ties. Increased port visits by the German Navy underscore Indo-Pacific importance. Future collaboration will enhance strategic coordination and integration of defence industries.
- 3. Strategic Coordination:** High-level dialogues reinforce trust and strategic alignment. Leaders from both nations consistently coordinate to address global security challenges, affirming mutual geopolitical interests.

Economic Prosperity

1. Thriving Economic Relations: About 2,000 German companies operate in India, creating over 750,000 jobs. The Delhi-Meerut Rapid Rail, operated by Deutsche Bahn, symbolizes successful German-Indian industrial collaboration.

2. Integrated Supply Chains: Indian companies increasingly integrate into Germany's high-tech supply chains, highlighting deep mutual trust. This cooperation could expand significantly with the anticipated India-EU Free Trade Agreement.

3. Science and Technology Partnership: Joint research ventures enhance prosperity, with Indian researchers prominent in German institutions. Technology collaboration transforms environmental challenges into profitable ventures.

People-to-People Connections

1. Indian Community in Germany: Over 50,000 Indian students constitute Germany's largest foreign student group. These individuals contribute significantly to Germany's economy and society, deepening cultural and personal ties.

2. Cultural Integration and Exchanges: Young Indians adapt and thrive in Germany, often returning home enriched by their experience. Personal stories from these individuals enhance mutual understanding, creating stronger emotional bonds.

3. Increasing Language Engagement: Interest in learning German is growing across India, requiring innovative solutions to address the need for qualified German teachers. Conversely, Germany encourages more citizens to study Indian languages and culture, fostering deeper mutual appreciation.

Green and Sustainable Development

1. Significant Financial Commitment: In 2022, Germany pledged €10 billion in preferential loans and grants over ten years under the Indo-German Green and Sustainable Development Partnership (GSDP), focusing on renewables, biodiversity, and smart cities.

2. Renewable Energy Initiatives: Private sector collaborations notably contribute to renewable energy projects in Gujarat, utilizing German technology for wind turbine components. This partnership significantly supports India's energy transition goals.

3. Environmental Cooperation for Future Resilience: Joint efforts address environmental sustainability and climate resilience. Projects span large-scale renewable infrastructure, emphasizing mutual commitments to ecological sustainability.

Future Prospects

1. Strong Foundations for the Future: Years of diplomatic engagement have established robust foundations for continued growth. The past 25 years have set the stage for expanded bilateral relations in coming decades.

2. Optimism and Continued Growth: Reflecting on achievements, there is optimism for deeper, broader cooperation. The next 25 years promise to enhance bilateral relations, benefiting both nations profoundly.

Question for practice:

Evaluate how the Indo-German strategic partnership has evolved over the past 25 years and identify the key areas that define their current and future collaboration.

Experiential learning can transform modern education system

Source: The post Experiential learning can transform modern education system has been created, based on the article “**Experiential learning: how students can learn more effectively**” published in “**The Hindu**” on 28th May 2025

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

Context: Modern education faces significant challenges. While technology makes vast information accessible, schools remain outdated, emphasizing rote learning and exam performance. To effectively equip students for real-world challenges, education must evolve beyond memorization to include practical skills, emotional intelligence, and critical thinking, aligning better with varied learning styles and real-world applications.

For detailed information on **Future Ready Workforce- Significance & Challenges** [read this article here](#)

Current Education System Issues

- 1. Infrastructure and Quality Disparities:** Many Indian schools, particularly government-run, lack essential resources such as laboratories, computers, toilets, and clean water. The stark urban-rural divide results in uneven access to quality education, highlighting urgent needs for infrastructure improvement and teacher training.
- 2. Limitations of Examination-Centric Education:** Schools predominantly focus on memorization for high-stakes testing, neglecting comprehensive skill development. This approach restricts students to basic cognitive skills, failing to cultivate advanced thinking abilities necessary for practical life and professional success.
- 3. Recognizing Diverse Learning Styles:** Students possess varying learning styles, as described by Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences. Education systems often overlook individual differences, emphasizing uniformity rather than leveraging unique student strengths and preferences.

Role of Experiential Learning

- 1. Understanding Experiential Learning:** Experiential learning, formulated by David Kolb, emphasizes "learning by doing." It involves continuous cycles of experience, reflection, conceptualization, and experimentation, fostering deeper understanding and adaptable knowledge.
- 2. Stages of the Experiential Learning Cycle:** Kolb's cycle consists of concrete experience (sensory engagement), reflective observation (interpreting experiences), abstract conceptualization (integrating new insights), and active experimentation (applying knowledge). This iterative process supports lifelong learning and cognitive flexibility.
- 3. Benefits of Active Learning:** Active participation through practical experiences makes students proactive learners. They develop essential skills, including critical thinking, problem-solving, and self-directed learning, preparing them for real-life applications beyond classroom constraints.

Implementing Experiential Learning

- 1. Pedagogical Methods and Approaches:** Experiential learning encompasses various interactive methods like inquiry-based experiments, collaborative projects, role-playing, field trips, arts and crafts, and simulation-based technology use. These methods actively engage students, enhancing their understanding and retention.
- 2. Flipped Classroom Model:** The flipped classroom exemplifies experiential learning by shifting traditional roles. Students first explore topics independently, then collaboratively discuss and solve problems in class, fostering deeper interactions, responsibility, and active learning.

Challenges in Implementation

- 1. Resource Constraints and Logistical Issues:** Experiential learning demands significant resources, training, and careful management, making widespread implementation challenging, especially in resource-poor contexts like India.
- 2. Contextual Limitations and Readiness:** Student readiness for experiential methods varies widely. Practical challenges like language barriers or low baseline skills may hinder the effectiveness of experiential learning, suggesting adaptations rather than complete system overhaul.

Conclusion

Experiential learning offers a powerful tool to modernize education, addressing both educational quality and equity issues. By integrating practical experiences and diverse learning approaches, schools can better prepare students to thrive in a complex, evolving world.

Question for practice:

Discuss how experiential learning can address the limitations of the current education system.

India's NEP 2020 Transforms Education for Innovation and Employability

Source: The post India's NEP 2020 Transforms Education for Innovation and Employability has been created, based on the article "A case of practical, pragmatic and innovative education" published in "The Hindu" on 29th May 2025

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

Context: The New Education Policy (NEP) 2020 addresses long-standing concerns about the practicality, innovation, and global competitiveness of Indian education. It introduces a phased, structural reform focused on enhancing employability, boosting research, and preparing students for a global future.

Enhancing Employability through Education Reform

- 1. Flexible Academic Structure:** The NEP introduces a four-year flexible degree programme. Students can exit with a credential and rejoin later. This benefits those who might otherwise drop out and allows for varied career paths.
- 2. Industry-Academia Integration:** The policy includes internships and vocational training. **167 universities and 59 colleges** have adopted four-year degrees. **224 universities and 101 colleges** now offer multidisciplinary programmes. These steps build real-world skills and improve job readiness.
- 3. Research Internships and R&D Focus:** Higher education institutions offer research internships. **242 universities and 113 colleges** have established R&D cells to develop innovation among students and strengthen industry-aligned learning.
- 4. Skill Development through Apprenticeships:** Diploma holders and degree dropouts can now enrol as apprentices within five years of graduation. These include **government-supported stipends**. Currently, **3,07,564 undergraduates** and **58,834 postgraduates** are engaged in internships.

Strengthening Global Competitiveness

- 1. Improved Global Rankings:** Eleven Indian universities are in the QS Top 500. India leads in the QS Asia Rankings 2025 with 163 institutions. Indian universities saw a 25.7% increase in subject-specific entries, with 10 institutions in the global top 50.

2. Rising Patent Activity: Patents filed by Indian higher education institutions rose from **7,405 in 2021–22** to **19,155 in 2022–23**—a **158% increase**. This shows stronger research output.

3. Global Innovation Recognition: India ranks **39th in the Global Innovation Index**, improving from **76th** a decade ago, reflecting a significant leap in innovation.

4. International Research Collaborations: Policies like the **ANRF Act 2023**, **AICTE's IDEA Labs**, and **SPARC** promote global research. SPARC enables partnerships with **28 countries**, including the US, UK, and Germany.

Promoting Indigenous Knowledge and Innovation

1. Indian Knowledge System: NEP promotes India's traditional wisdom and pedagogy across education levels, encouraging cultural grounding.

2. Smart India Hackathon: This platform nurtures innovation. Since 2017, it has supported **13.9 lakh students**, with submissions increasing **sevenfold**.

Transforming Employment Landscape

1. Positive Employment Trends: From **2018–19**, educated youth employment steadily rose. By **2023–24**, male employment reached **53.4%**, female **22.7%**, and overall **38.6%**, nearing **2004–05 levels**.

2. Female Workforce Participation: Women's employment grew post-2017–18, reaching **30.7%** in 2023–24, showing broader inclusion.

3. Growth of Regular Employment: The share of regular male workers increased from **17.2% in 2004–05** to **24.88% in 2023–24**, indicating more stable jobs.

4. Decline in Casual Labour: Casual employment dropped—from **30.31% to 16.68%** among women and **28.85% to 19.83%** overall—reflecting improved job quality.

Conclusion

NEP 2020 is transforming education by aligning it with innovation, employability, and global standards. Its focus on practical training and indigenous thinking is driving India towards a more skilled, competitive, and stable employment future.

Question for practice:

Examine how the New Education Policy 2020 aims to improve employability, innovation, and global competitiveness in India's education system.

India needs deep reforms in financial sector

Source: The post India needs deep reforms in financial sector has been created, based on the article "**India's financial sector reforms need a shake-up**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 29th May 2025

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

Context: India's financial sector faces deep-rooted inefficiencies that limit inclusive growth. Despite years of reform in banking, financial services, and insurance (BFSI), several structural frictions persist. These now demand

urgent and comprehensive correction, especially in nomination processes, bond markets, retirement instruments, and shadow banking regulation.

For detailed information on **India's Economic Challenges and Policy Reform Needs** [read this article here](#)
Inconsistencies in Nomination Rules

- 1. Fragmented Regulations Across BFSI Sectors:** Nomination procedures vary widely across banks, mutual funds, and insurance products. Some accounts permit only one nominee, others allow multiple, each with different entitlements. This fragmented system lacks logical and legal consistency.
- 2. Consequences for Investors and Legal Clarity:** These contradictions confuse savers and often result in legal disputes. Such ambiguities are exploited, benefiting those who use them for prolonged litigation.
- 3. Urgency of a Unified Framework:** A harmonised nomination regime is essential. It must clearly define the difference between nominee rights and legal heir claims. If variations are justified, the government must share supporting evidence or case studies.

Challenges in Corporate Bond Market

- 1. Shallow and Inefficient Market:** Despite repeated policy focus, India's corporate bond market remains small, illiquid, and non-transparent. This raises the cost of capital—the biggest factor in business viability—by 2–3%.
- 2. Failure of Regulatory Implementation:** The RBI once directed NSE to create a secondary bond market, but the order was ignored. Equity markets are more profitable due to opaque algorithmic trading, which has even drawn regulatory and journalistic scrutiny.
- 3. Transparency in Capital Flow and FATF Norms:** India's bond market reform is tied to capital flow transparency. As an FATF member, India must enforce Know Your Customer (KYC) norms, including Ultimate Beneficial Owner (UBO) identification, as per 2022 guidelines.
- 4. Disclosure Loopholes:** Current UBO disclosure thresholds—10% for companies, 15% for partnerships—let investors avoid scrutiny by structuring stakes below these limits. This undermines market integrity and complicates regulatory oversight, especially with entities based in Mauritius.

Gaps in Retirement Planning Instruments

- 1. High-Cost Annuities:** Retirement options largely rely on annuities, which involve high intermediary fees taken by insurance firms, reducing long-term returns.
- 2. Cost-Effective Alternatives Exist:** Zero-coupon long-dated government bonds are a cheaper option. Stripping principal and coupon components eliminates the 2% annual cost, resulting in large gains over time.
- 3. Lack of Government Initiative:** Despite available technology, neither the RBI nor the government has promoted these instruments. This delays the creation of a credible, low-cost retirement ecosystem backed by sovereign security.

Rising Threat of Shadow Banking

- 1. Unregulated Lending Practices:** NBFCs, brokers, and margin lenders offer quasi-bank services without full regulation. Brokers provide loans as margin funding, often charging rates over 20%.
- 2. Hidden Risks to Retail Investors:** Brokers lend using the investor's own money as collateral, charging interest on the total sum. Many investors are unaware of these exploitative terms.

3. Need for Transparency and Data: India lacks comprehensive data on shadow banking. The EU has already acted. India must prioritise transparency before effective regulation.

Call for Coherent Structural Reform

1. Beyond Cosmetic Changes: India must stop relying on slogans and surface-level amendments. Core systems require structural reform.

2. Blueprint for a Stronger Financial System: The path forward includes unified rules, deep bond markets, efficient retirement tools, and regulation of shadow lending. Only then can the financial sector support sustained growth.

India's Remittance Landscape Is Rapidly Transforming

Source: The post India's Remittance Landscape Is Rapidly Transforming has been created, based on the article "Examining the RBI's remittances survey" published in "The Hindu" on 29th May 2025

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

Context: Remittances significantly contribute to India's external financial stability. Recently released RBI data highlighted record remittances of \$118.7 billion in 2023–24, surpassing foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows and financing more than half of India's merchandise trade deficit. This underscores remittances' critical role amid global economic uncertainties.

Shifts in Remittance Sources

1. Emerging Dominance of Advanced Economies: Advanced economies (AEs) now dominate remittance inflows, with the U.S. alone contributing 27.7%, an increase from 23.4% in 2020–21. Collectively, the U.S., U.K., Canada, Australia, and Singapore account for 51.2%, surpassing Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries at 37.9%.

2. Changing Migrant Profiles: The shift reflects India's changing migrant demographic from predominantly low-skilled workers in Gulf nations to high-skilled professionals and students in AEs. Such migrants usually earn higher, more stable incomes and remit less cyclically sensitive amounts.

3. Long-term Stability and Risks: While AE migrants provide steady remittance flows, their deeper integration abroad may eventually reduce their remittance frequency. Additionally, remittance inflows might become vulnerable if host-country immigration policies adversely affect high-skilled migration.

Concentration of Remittance Values

1. High-value Transactions Dominate: In 2023–24, transactions above ₹5 lakh constituted nearly 29% of total remittance value despite representing only 1.4% of transactions. This indicates increasing dominance by high-earning, professional Indian migrants.

2. Implications for Vulnerability: While high-value remittances reflect diaspora upward mobility, their concentration creates vulnerabilities. Any negative shift in immigration policies could disproportionately impact overall inflow stability.

Digital Transformation of Remittances

1. Growing Digital Remittance Channels: Digital channels now handle 73.5% of remittance transactions, significantly reducing transaction costs. Sending \$200 to India costs an average of 4.9%, below the global average (6.65%) but still above the Sustainable Development Goal target of 3%.

2. Uneven Adoption Across Countries: Digital adoption varies significantly: UAE (76.1%) and Saudi Arabia (92.7%) lead, while Canada (40%), Germany (55.1%), and Italy (35%) lag. These differences highlight infrastructural and regulatory constraints needing policy intervention.

3. Policy Focus on Digital Payments: India must strengthen cross-border digital payment systems to enhance efficiency, reduce costs, and maintain remittance flows within formal channels.

Regional Disparities in Remittance Distribution

1. Persistent Geographic Inequality: States like Maharashtra, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu received approximately 51% of total remittances. In contrast, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and Rajasthan combined received less than 6%.

2. Need for State-specific Skill Initiatives: Disparities result from uneven migration-enabling resources such as language training and credential pathways. National skilling missions should address state-specific needs to prevent perpetuating inequality.

Data Gaps and Policy Implications

1. Missing Household-level Insights: Current data lacks insights into household usage of remittances, hindering assessment of their developmental impact beyond macroeconomic stability.

2. Enhancing Developmental Impact: Evaluating whether remittances fund consumption or investment is essential. Policies promoting savings-linked remittance products, targeted financial literacy, and investment incentives could significantly enhance remittances' long-term developmental impact.

Question for practice:

Examine how recent shifts in remittance sources and patterns are influencing India's external financial stability and developmental priorities.

Early childhood care builds strong future foundations

Source: The post Early childhood care builds strong future foundations has been created, based on the article "Rewriting the script of early childhood education" published in "The Hindu" on 30th May 2025

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

Context: India's employment crisis partly stems from unequal childhood opportunities. Many children are born into poverty, affecting their future. However, targeted early childhood care and education (ECE) can reverse this. Inspired by Nobel Laureate James Heckman's work, Indian states are adopting ECE reforms to improve life outcomes from an early age.

For detailed information on **National Curriculum for Early Childhood Care and Education 2024** [read this article here](#)

Importance of Early Childhood Education (ECE)

1. Heckman's Economic Model Heckman's curve shows high returns on early childhood investments, generating \$7 to \$12 per dollar invested. Early educational interventions profoundly impact lifelong earnings, home ownership, and overall life quality.

2. Critical Learning Gaps By age five, foundational disparities emerge, affecting lifelong outcomes. Skills such as basic object matching and number recognition, crucial for primary education, are underdeveloped if early instruction is insufficient.

Challenges in India's ECE System

1. Limited Instructional Time: About 5.5 crore children aged three to six attend Anganwadis and pre-primary schools, yet instruction is minimal. Anganwadi workers dedicate only 38 minutes daily to preschool education instead of the recommended two hours, severely limiting learning outcomes.

2. Resource Allocation Issues: India spends just ₹1,263 annually per child on ECE versus ₹37,000 per student in primary education. Resources often remain underutilized due to teacher shortages and inadequate oversight, with one supervisor managing 282 Anganwadis.

3. Parental Engagement Gap: While parents value education, many lack the resources or guidance to effectively support early learning. Greater parental involvement through accessible methods such as EdTech apps or direct engagement programs can significantly enhance children's educational outcomes.

State-led Innovations

1. Uttar Pradesh Initiatives: Uttar Pradesh is recruiting 11,000 ECE educators for its Balvatikas across all districts. It also initiated intensive training programs for master trainers, focusing on early childhood pedagogy.

2. Odisha's Approach Odisha introduced Shishu Vatikas in government schools for five-to-six-year-olds, using innovative tools like the Jaduipedi Kits to enhance early learning and ensure school readiness.

3. Madhya Pradesh's Parental Engagement: The state's monthly Bal Choupal program educates parents about play-based learning benefits. Additionally, using smartphones, initiatives like WhatsApp and EdTech apps can further strengthen parental participation in early childhood development.

Future Implications and Vision

1. Economic and Social Potential: With targeted ECE funding and effective parental engagement, India could empower 200 million citizens to overcome birth disadvantages, significantly boosting future workforce productivity and global economic influence.

2. Pathway to India's Global Leadership: Strategically investing in early education is crucial to achieving India's ambition of becoming a global leader—Vishwa Guru—by preparing today's children to become tomorrow's innovators and leaders.

Question for practice:

Examine how targeted investment in early childhood education and parental engagement can help overcome the disadvantages associated with the lottery of birth in India.

Supreme Court restores three years practice requirement for judges

Source: The post Supreme Court restores three years practice requirement for judges has been created, based on the article "Is the three-year practice mandate for judicial service welcome?" published in "The Hindu" on 30th May 2025

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

Context: On May 20, the Supreme Court reinstated a rule requiring a minimum of **three years of legal practice** to apply for entry-level judicial services. This reverses its 2002 ruling and has sparked debate on judicial competence, systemic reform, inclusivity, and constitutional propriety.

For detailed information on **Supreme Court revives rule affecting judicial exam entry** [read this article here](#)

Arguments Supporting the Practice Requirement

1. **Empirical Backing from High Courts and Bar Council:** Out of 25 High Courts, **23 reported unsatisfactory outcomes** from directly recruiting fresh graduates. The **Bar Council of India** stated that judges without Bar experience were often incapable of handling cases effectively.

2. **Need for Real-World Exposure:** Judicial roles demand skills that are hard to teach in classrooms. Practical experience helps develop **legal reasoning, procedural understanding, and emotional maturity**, which improve with age and exposure to real cases.

3. **Limitations of Judicial Training Academies:** Training institutions often lack adequate resources. They are unable to provide **individual feedback or mentorship** needed for effective skill-building. Real-world experience is considered more valuable than theoretical learning.

Criticisms of the Practice Requirement

1. **Minimal Value from Short-Term Experience:** The initial years of legal practice often involve minor tasks like **seeking adjournments**, not substantial case handling. This limited exposure may not translate into better judicial decision-making.

2. **Lack of Clear Assessment and Verification:** There are no specific guidelines on what constitutes valid practice. Without clear parameters, the rule may become a **symbolic formality**, especially affecting those without access to strong mentorship. Suggestions like a **digital diary** with verifiable records were proposed for better monitoring.

3. **Exclusion of Marginalised and Poorer Candidates:** Earlier, fresh graduates could directly enter the judiciary. The new rule imposes **financial and time burdens**, discouraging candidates from non-elite law schools or weaker economic backgrounds. Many lack support systems in early legal practice.

4. **Reduced Appeal and Shrinking Talent Pool:** Delaying judicial entry to one's late 20s, while offering the same pay and conditions, **lowers the career's attractiveness**. Some may prefer direct entry into senior roles.

5. **Gender-Based Disadvantages:** Women often face **family and social barriers** in litigation. The added requirement may deter them, though **reservations in most states** help maintain their presence in the judiciary. Lack of women in litigation affects representation in the judiciary.

Concerns About Procedural and Constitutional Validity

1. **Absence of Public Consultation:** The decision lacked **stakeholder engagement**. Broader consultation could have addressed practical challenges and improved implementation.

2. **Breach of Constitutional Role Division:** Under **Article 234**, eligibility norms are set by state governments and High Courts. The Supreme Court's action **raises concerns of overreach**.

3. **Need for Broader Institutional Reform:** Eligibility alone cannot solve deeper issues. Improving **recruitment, training, and service conditions** is essential for judicial reform.

Question for practice:

Evaluate the impact of the Supreme Court's decision to mandate three years of legal practice on the inclusivity, effectiveness, and structure of the judicial recruitment system.

Agriculture can drive India's growth as developed nation 2047

Source: The post Agriculture can drive India's growth as developed nation 2047 has been created, based on the article "Agriculture's road to 2047" published in "**Business Standard**" on 30th May 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- Agriculture

Context: At NITI Aayog's 10th Governing Council meeting, the Prime Minister stressed making India a developed nation by 2047. Agriculture, having immense growth potential through innovation and sustainability, is crucial in achieving this national goal.

For detailed information on **Pillars for development of Indian Agriculture** [read this article here](#)

India's Agricultural Journey and Emerging Potential

1. **From Deficit to Surplus:** India transformed **from food scarcity to surplus**, increasing food grain production from **50.82 million tonnes (1950-51)** to **353.96 million tonnes (2024-25)**. This remarkable growth made India food-secure.
2. **Global Agricultural Leader:** India became a major exporter, with agricultural exports reaching **₹4.08 trillion in 2023-24**. Predictions of widespread famine were proven incorrect by Indian agriculture's consistent growth.
3. **Agriculture's Role in Development:** Agricultural research, education, and extension can significantly contribute to India's goal of becoming a developed nation. The sector can drive innovation, employment, and environmental sustainability.

Challenges and Opportunities in Agriculture

1. **Current Agricultural Challenges:** Indian agriculture faces problems such as shrinking farm sizes, climate change, depleted natural resources, shifting consumer preferences, and tough global competition.
2. **Technological Opportunities:** Advancements in biotechnology, precision agriculture, digital farming, and sustainable practices provide opportunities to overcome these challenges and improve productivity.
3. **Expert Recommendations:** The National Academy of Agricultural Sciences (NAAS), comprising over 800 experts, has published a roadmap titled "**Indian Agriculture by 2047**". It focuses on innovative solutions, visionary leadership, and sustainable agriculture.

Research for Innovation and Resilience

1. **Priority Research Areas:** Research should target genomics, biotechnology, climate-resilient agriculture, digital farming, and resource sustainability. Diversification into horticulture, livestock, and fisheries sectors is also essential.
2. **Technology Adoption in Research:** Scientists must adopt modern technologies such as **CRISPR gene editing, Artificial Intelligence (AI), Geographic Information Systems (GIS), big data analytics, smart sensors, IoT devices**, and field robotics. Achieving this requires increased funding and stronger public-private collaborations.
3. **Connecting Research to Markets:** Research should guide policy reforms, enhance agricultural infrastructure, promote farm mechanisation, improve agro-processing, and reduce post-harvest losses.

Reforming Agricultural Education

1. **Updating Educational Content:** Courses must include new topics such as AI in agriculture, agri-business, climate-smart practices, sustainable farming, and export strategies to better prepare students.
2. **Experiential and Practical Learning:** Hands-on experiences, internships, village adoption programs, startup incubators, and hackathons should be emphasised to foster entrepreneurial skills in students.

3. Global Partnerships and Faculty Skills: Agricultural universities must collaborate with global institutions to keep curricula current. Faculty training should also align with emerging agricultural trends.

Strengthening Agricultural Support Systems

1. Modernising Extension Mechanisms: The agricultural extension system must be transformed using digital tools such as mobile apps, helplines, WhatsApp groups, YouTube tutorials, and online platforms to ensure timely and effective outreach to farmers.

2. Upgrading Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs): KVKs should be integrated with advanced agri-tech tools and function as innovation hubs for training and advisory services. This will improve agricultural productivity and help farmers adopt sustainable practices.

3. Scaling Proven Models and Partnerships: Successful initiatives like **e-Choupal**, **Mahindra Samriddhi Centres**, and **Digital Green** should be expanded. Strengthening farmer-producer organisations and engaging NGOs, startups, and private players can boost knowledge dissemination and market access.

4. Boosting R&D Investment for Innovation: India invests only **0.65% of its GDP** in agri-research and extension—much below global standards. Raising it to **1% of GDP** is essential for making agriculture more competitive, climate-resilient, and technology-intensive.

Question for practice:

Discuss how strengthening agricultural research, education, and extension can help India achieve the goal of becoming a developed nation by 2047.

India becomes fourth largest global economy

Source: The post India becomes fourth largest global economy has been created, based on the article “**India may soon become the third-largest economy in the world. But there is more to it**” published in “**Indian Express**” on 31st May 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- growth and development

Context: India is expected to overtake Japan as the world's fourth-largest economy, based on nominal GDP, according to IMF projections. This marks a significant moment in India's economic journey and global positioning, triggering comparisons with past power shifts and varied international responses.

India's Economic Rise

1. Historical Perspective: The sustained growth of India's economy since 1991 has steadily increased its global prominence. Former finance minister Manmohan Singh predicted India's emergence as a major economic power, citing Victor Hugo's notion of an unstoppable idea whose time had come.

2. Recognition by Angus Maddison: Angus Maddison's influential study underscored India's potential resurgence. He noted that in 1700, China and India together generated half of global income. Colonialism and Europe's Industrial Revolution caused their subsequent economic decline, but recent growth rekindles hope for their global economic revival.

Comparing India and Japan

1. Nominal vs. Per Capita GDP: India's nominal GDP (\$4.187 trillion) narrowly surpasses Japan's (\$4.186 trillion), but significant disparities remain. India's per capita GDP is only \$2,880 compared to Japan's \$33,900, highlighting India's ongoing developmental status versus Japan's mature economy.

2. Demographic and Economic Factors: India's youthful demographics support sustained growth, contrasting Japan's ageing population. However, Japan remains an advanced industrialized economy, whereas India continues as a developing, lower-middle-income nation.

Japan's Economic Struggles

1. Impact of China's Rise: China overtook Japan in 2010 during the global financial crisis, marking a pivotal geopolitical shift. Unlike India's current overtaking, China's rise prompted significant alarm in Japan, intensifying economic anxiety and influencing domestic politics.

2. Abenomics and Economic Revival Attempts: Japan responded to its economic challenges through Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's "Abenomics"—monetary easing, fiscal stimulus, and structural reforms aimed at boosting growth. While initially hopeful, Japan's momentum slowed post-Abe due to weak leadership and external pressures, notably from the U.S.

3. Germany's Competitive Pressure: Germany recently overtook Japan, pushing it to fourth place. Fluctuations between these two slowing economies illustrate persistent volatility in global economic rankings.

Japan's Reaction to India's Rise

1. Minimal Impact and Reporting: India's overtaking of Japan elicited minimal concern in Japan. Unlike China, India is viewed positively as an economic opportunity rather than a competitive threat, partly due to strong bilateral diplomatic and economic relations.

2. India as Opportunity, Not Threat: Japan perceives India neither as a trading competitor nor geopolitical rival. This contrasts starkly with Japan's reaction to China's rise, reflecting the differing international roles of these Asian economies.

Future Economic Dynamics

1. Ranking Volatility: Exchange rate fluctuations, global trade dynamics, and seasonal performance mean India, Japan, and Germany might continue shifting rankings temporarily. The small economic differences keep the competition alive.

2. Long-term Positioning and Strategy: India's trajectory towards becoming a stable third-largest economy is promising, provided it crosses the \$5 trillion mark decisively. India's long-term strategy should emphasize inclusive and competitive growth, improving domestic living standards rather than merely chasing rankings.

Question for practice:

Question Examine how India's economic ascent and demographic advantage differ from Japan's developed economy and ageing population, and what this implies for future global economic rankings.

Language choice can transform engineering education in India

Source: The post Language choice can transform engineering education in India has been created, based on the article "We should teach engineering in Indian languages" published in "businessline" on 31st May 2025

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

Context: India's technical education is heavily English-dependent, creating barriers for students unfamiliar with the language. With over 1,369 mother tongues, this issue raises concerns about inclusivity, national progress, and how language shapes engineering education outcomes.

The Language Challenge in Engineering Education

1. English as a Barrier and a Gateway: English is the standard in higher education, seen as a passport to global opportunities. But for students from rural and semi-urban areas, it becomes a barrier due to low proficiency, limiting career growth.

2. Loss of Potential Due to Language: Many talented students fail to perform well, not due to lack of ability, but because the instructional language alienates them. Their grasp of technical content is hindered by unfamiliar vocabulary and delivery.

3. NEP 2020's Inclusive Vision: The **National Education Policy 2020** addresses this problem by promoting education in mother tongues. It highlights that students understand complex ideas better in their native language, ensuring equal opportunities for all.

Technology as an Ally

1. Real-Time AI Translation: Technology now enables real-time translation of lectures, making technical content more accessible in multiple languages. This bridges the language gap without excluding English.

2. Multilingual Digital Tools: Learning platforms are evolving to support multilingual content, helping students learn in the language they understand best. This approach turns diversity into an advantage.

3. Peer Learning and Bilingual Resources: Institutes are promoting bilingual learning resources and forming peer support groups. This helps students gradually become comfortable with both native and English content.

IIT Jodhpur's Innovative Initiative

1. Bilingual Course Option: IIT Jodhpur allowed first-year students to choose between Hindi and English for their courses. Over 80% of students at the institute come from Hindi-speaking backgrounds, making this a student-focused move.

2. Positive Student Feedback: The response was overwhelmingly positive. Students felt more confident and engaged. Many said it removed a long-standing burden, allowing better learning and participation.

3. Improved Results: Pilot results from **AY 2024-25 Semester I** showed that students from vernacular backgrounds were now competing for top grades—once out of reach due to language limitations.

Reframing Global Competitiveness

1. Dismissing False Fears: Fears that multilingual education could weaken global competitiveness are unfounded. On the contrary, learning in a familiar language enhances conceptual clarity and confidence.

2. Empowering Global-Ready Engineers: Multilingual engineers are not only technically skilled but also culturally aware and adaptive—traits valued globally. This diversity strengthens India's global standing.

Language as a Tool for Inclusion

1. Rethinking Linguistic Diversity: Language is not a hurdle—it is a resource. Ignoring 94% of Indians not fluent in English limits national progress and innovation.

2. Role of IITs and Policy: **Institutes of National Importance** must lead reforms to make classrooms inclusive. Education must empower every student, regardless of language.

3. Vision for Inclusive Innovation: Multilingual learning nurtures broader participation. It helps unlock creativity, ensures representation, and builds a future where all voices contribute to India's growth.

Question for practice:

Examine how language of instruction influences inclusivity and learning outcomes in India's engineering education system.

Climate change is reshaping India's monsoon clouds and rainfall

Source: The post Climate change is reshaping India's monsoon clouds and rainfall has been created, based on the article "Climate change reshaping India's monsoon clouds" published in "businessline" on 31st May 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- Environment

Context: India's monsoon clouds are changing due to global warming. A recent study using 20 years of data highlights shifts in cloud structure, with serious effects on agriculture, rainfall, and climate resilience. These changes signal that climate change is already impacting daily life.

Changing Cloud Dynamics Over India

1. Increase in Cloudy Days, Decline in Rain Clouds: Cloudy days during monsoon have risen by 13% per decade. However, this increase is not due to rain-heavy, low-level clouds. These have actually declined by 8%, while high-level clouds have increased by 11% per decade.

2. Significance of Cloud Type Changes: Low-level clouds are thicker and reflect sunlight, helping cool the surface and bring stable rain. Their decline is worrying. High clouds trap heat, and often don't bring rain, or are linked to extreme weather.

3. Rising Cloud Heights: As the atmosphere warms, clouds form at higher altitudes. This vertical shift points to deeper changes in the structure of monsoon clouds, with high clouds becoming more frequent and elevated.

The Role of Global Warming

1. Warming Atmosphere and Moisture Shift: The study shows strong warming in the upper troposphere. Heat and moisture are rising, leading to more high cloud formation and fewer rain-bearing low clouds.

2. Tropopause Rising Rapidly: The tropopause has risen by 480 metres per decade. This is a clear signal that the troposphere is expanding, driven by increased warming.

3. Impact on Atmospheric Stability: The rise in equivalent potential temperature at higher levels shows that the upper atmosphere is holding more heat and moisture. This promotes high cloud formation and alters rainfall behaviour.

Influence of Global Climate Systems

1. Global Indicators Linked to Cloud Changes: The study found strong links between rising global temperatures (GWI) and high cloud growth. Other systems like ENSO and NAO also influence monsoon patterns.

2. Monsoon Not Just a Local Process: Cloud changes over India are connected to broader global systems. This makes forecasting harder and strengthens the case for deeper climate research.

Urgent Need for Adaptation

1. Threat to Food and Water Security: Changing cloud types affect when and how rain falls, impacting crops and groundwater. This threatens food and water availability.

2. Action on Resilience and Forecasting: India must invest in better forecasting tools and climate-resilient farming. The evidence is clear: monsoon patterns are shifting, and adaptation is urgent.

Question for practice:

Examine how global warming is altering monsoon cloud patterns in India and its implications for agriculture and climate resilience.

