



VAJIRAO IAS ACADEMY

India's Premier Coaching Institute for Civil Services (IAS/PCS)

Weekly **CURRENT AFFAIRS**

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DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



“Civil Service is not just a job; it is an opportunity, to do your bit for society and to contribute to nation-building. It is an opportunity to realise your potential and make a meaningful contribution in the emancipation of masses.”

Mr. Dilip Kumar

Director, Vajirao IAS Academy

Good Civil Servants ensure efficient and smooth governance. They are the backbone of the country and they have the power to make a difference in people's life.

We have set up extremely tough targets for ourselves. Now a day's, most of the students are well aware and focused about their aim. They just need a streak of guidance. We feel that we have done our bit in providing that blue streak of guidance and we are honoured to be a reason of smile on certain lips, proud to be your teacher, friend and guide.

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I. SIMPLIFY EDITORIAL

[1.1] Agriculture: A Low Priority in Fiscal Planning

Syllabus: Agriculture, Indian Economy [GS Paper-3]

Context

Agriculture is a cornerstone of India's economy, employing over 50% of the population and contributing approximately 17% to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). However, recent budget allocations indicate a troubling trend of fiscal neglect towards this vital sector. The Union Budget for 2025-26 has seen a cut in allocations for the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, raising concerns about the government's commitment to addressing the real issues faced by farmers and the agricultural sector.

Overview of Budget Allocations

Recent Trends in Budget Allocations: The Union Budget 2025-26 allocated ₹1.37 lakh crore to the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, which represents only a marginal increase from ₹1.32 lakh crore in the previous fiscal year. Notably, this allocation includes a significant cut in capital expenditure, which decreased from ₹118.63 crore to ₹87.87 crore. The allocation for key schemes such as the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-Kisan) remained stable at ₹63,500 crore, yet other critical areas like crop insurance saw reductions.

Historical Context: Historically, budget allocations for agriculture have fluctuated. For instance, in 2024-25, the allocation was ₹1.52 lakh crore, which followed a steady increase over several years. However, this year's cut raises questions about sustained support for a sector that has been grappling with numerous challenges.

Fiscal Year	Budget Allocation
2025-26	₹1.37 lakh crore
2024-25	₹1.52 lakh crore

2023-24	₹1.25 lakh crore
2022-23	₹1.24 lakh crore
2021-22	₹1.16 lakh crore

Key Issues Facing Agriculture

- **Low Productivity and Income:** Despite its significance, Indian agriculture faces persistent challenges such as low productivity and income levels. A large percentage of farmers operate on small and marginal holdings, with 86% cultivating less than two hectares of land. This unviable scale of operations makes it difficult for farmers to achieve meaningful economic returns.
- **Climate Change and Resource Scarcity:** Climate change poses an existential threat to agriculture in India, leading to erratic weather patterns that adversely affect crop yields. Additionally, issues related to water scarcity and soil degradation further exacerbate the situation, making it imperative for the government to invest in sustainable agricultural practices and technologies.
- **Lack of Access to Credit and Insurance:** Access to institutional credit remains a critical issue for farmers. Many rely on informal sources of finance that often charge exorbitant interest rates. The recent budget cuts in schemes like Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (crop insurance) from ₹14,600 crore to ₹12,242 crore highlight the growing risk for farmers who depend on these safety nets during adverse conditions.

Government Initiatives and Their Implications

- **PM Dhan-Dhaanya Krishi Yojana:** The PM Dhan-Dhaanya Krishi Yojana launched its mission to promote agricultural production across 100 districts displaying low crop intensity together with weak credit characteristics. The excellent nature of this program depends on proper budget support and proper execution methods.
- **Focus on Horticulture and Specialty Crops:** Horticulture and Specialty Crops receive prime attention because the government introduced thorough programs for enhancing fruit and vegetable market access while boosting horticulture production efficiency. The establishment of a Makhana Board within Bihar marks a significant effort to enhance the production and marketing activities within particular regions. These initiatives require sufficient funding support for realizing real benefits.

The Need for Comprehensive Reforms

- **Structural Reforms in Agriculture:** To address the systemic issues plaguing agriculture, comprehensive reforms are essential. This includes enhancing access to modern farming techniques, improving irrigation facilities, and promoting sustainable practices that can withstand climate variability.
- **Strengthening Agricultural Research and Development:** Investment in agricultural research is crucial for developing high-yielding and climate-resilient

crop varieties. The budget allocation for agricultural research must be prioritized to ensure that farmers have access to innovative solutions that can enhance productivity while mitigating risks associated with climate change.

- **Enhancing Farmer Support Systems:** Improving farmer support systems through better access to credit, insurance, and market linkages is vital for creating a more resilient agricultural ecosystem. The government must focus on building robust infrastructure that facilitates these connections while ensuring that support reaches the most vulnerable farmers.

Conclusion

The recent budget allocations reflect a concerning trend of neglect towards agriculture at a time when it needs robust support more than ever. While initiatives like PM Dhan-Dhaanya Krishi Yojana show promise, they require substantial backing to be effective. It is imperative for policymakers to recognize agriculture's critical role in India's economic landscape and prioritize investments that address its myriad challenges comprehensively.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

[1.2] Revitalizing India's Shipping Industry

Syllabus: Economy [GS Paper-3]

Context

India's shipping industry, a crucial component of its economic framework, has seen significant investments and policy initiatives aimed at revitalization. Despite these efforts, the sector continues to face stagnation, marked by minimal fleet expansion and a declining global ranking in ship ownership. This analysis explores the current state of India's shipping industry, the challenges it faces, and the potential pathways for growth.

Current Status of India's Shipping Industry

Economic Context: The Indian economy has experienced robust growth, with GDP rising from ₹153 trillion in 2016-17 to an estimated ₹272 trillion in 2022-23, reflecting a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of approximately 7%. However, the shipping industry has not kept pace with this growth. The Indian-registered fleet has increased only marginally from 1,313 ships in 2016-17 to 1,526 ships by 2024, while the average age of vessels has improved from 26 years to 21 years. Despite these improvements, India's global ship ownership ranking has slipped from 17th to 19th position.

Sagarmala Programme: The Sagarmala Programme, launched to enhance maritime infrastructure with a projected investment of ₹5.8 lakh crore by 2035, aims to modernize ports and improve connectivity. As of September 2024, significant progress has been made with 241 projects completed out of a total of 839 outlined projects. Key areas of focus include:

- **Port Modernization:** ₹2.91 lakh crore allocated.
- **Port Connectivity:** ₹2.06 lakh crore earmarked.
- **Port-led Industrialization:** ₹55.8 thousand crore planned.
- **Coastal Community Development:** A portion of the investment is directed here.

Despite these advancements, cargo handling and vessel numbers have not seen corresponding growth.

Challenges Facing the Shipping Industry

- **Financial Constraints:** One of the primary challenges hindering the growth of India's shipping industry is high borrowing costs. Indian shipping companies face strict collateral requirements and short loan tenures. Unlike their foreign counterparts, they cannot use ships as collateral for loans, making financing particularly challenging. Furthermore, lenders often lack a comprehensive understanding of the cyclical nature of the industry, leading to rigid loan restructuring policies that do not accommodate the industry's unique dynamics.
- **Unfavorable Tax Policies:** Indian-flagged ships are subject to a 5% Integrated Goods and Services Tax (IGST) on their purchase price. This tax is not imposed on foreign vessels operating in Indian waters, creating an uneven playing field that disadvantages domestic shipping companies. Such tax disparities further exacerbate operational challenges and hinder competitiveness.
- **Limited Domestic Supply Chain:** The lack of a robust domestic supply chain for high-tech maritime components poses another significant challenge. Indian shipyards often rely on imports for critical materials and technologies, increasing costs and limiting competitiveness against global players who benefit from established supply chains.

Recent Developments and Government Initiatives

Union Budget 2025

The Union Budget 2025 introduced several measures aimed at boosting the shipping sector. Key initiatives include:

- A ₹25,000 crore Maritime Development Fund to support infrastructure development.
- Extended customs duty exemptions for raw materials used in shipbuilding.
- Revamped financial assistance policies to address cost disadvantages faced by domestic shipbuilders.

These initiatives are designed to create a more favorable environment for investment in the shipping sector and promote indigenous shipbuilding.

Infrastructure Improvements: The government's focus on port modernization through initiatives like the Sagarmala Programme is expected to enhance logistics efficiency and multimodal connectivity. These improvements will reduce turnaround times for vessels and lower logistics costs, making Indian ports more attractive for international shipping lines.

Future Prospects: A Way Forward

To revitalize its shipping industry and regain competitiveness on the global stage, India must adopt a multifaceted approach:

- **Investment in Infrastructure:** Continued investments in port infrastructure are essential. Establishing mega ports as transshipment hubs can optimize cargo movement and improve efficiency. A National Port Grid Authority could coordinate development across major and minor ports to promote specialization and eliminate inter-port competition.
- **Streamlining Regulatory Processes:** Streamlining regulatory processes will facilitate smoother operations within the shipping sector. This includes reducing bureaucratic hurdles that currently impede timely decision-making and project implementation.
- **Fostering a Skilled Workforce:** Developing a skilled workforce tailored to meet the demands of modern maritime operations is crucial. This involves enhancing training programs in shipbuilding, navigation, logistics management, and maritime law.
- **Embracing Technological Advancements:** Adopting advanced technologies such as blockchain-based Port Community Systems can facilitate paperless transactions and improve operational efficiency through IoT-based trade management systems. Emphasizing research and development within domestic shipyards can also lead to innovations that enhance competitiveness.

Conclusion

India's shipping industry stands at a crossroads. While recent government initiatives provide some wind behind its sails, significant challenges remain that could hinder its growth potential. By addressing financial constraints, tax disparities, and infrastructural deficits while fostering innovation and skill development, India can position itself as a formidable player in global maritime trade by 2047. The path forward requires concerted efforts from all stakeholders involved in this vital sector.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

[1.3] RBI's Rate Cut Dilemma

Syllabus: Indian Economy, [GS Paper - 3]

Context:

- India places economic growth at the top of its national priorities due to worldwide market disturbances. The government made recent modifications to income tax brackets to enhance available money that incentivizes consumers to spend more.
- People expect the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) to determine whether lowering interest rates will deliver the following stage of

economic recovery. The projected 25 basis point rate reduction remains uncertain as the solution for economic recovery.

Introduction to Monetary Policy and Its Role

- The Reserve Bank of India under its monetary policy leadership drives the development of India's economic expansion. The central bank uses interest rate adjustments to influence borrowing expenses for businesses together with individuals which then affects overall consumer spending and investment activity and market demand patterns. Market observers intensively monitor RBI decisions since these choices shape both inflation rates and currency values together with the business sales cycle operation.
- The economic indicators in India display conflicting signs in current times. Consumer prices experienced their fourth lowest increase of 5.22% during December 2017 as food costs showed significant decline. Core inflation levels excluding food and fuel prices stood at a stable level of 3.6%. The present circumstances create an opportunity for the RBI to think about interest rate reduction though external problems affect the decision-making process.

The Case for a Rate Cut

Lowering the benchmark interest rate functions as a stimulus to improve the slowdown of India's economy through cheaper financing options.

Several essential factors justify that the RBI should decrease its rates.

- The RBI seems less compelled to focus on price control because decreasing retail and core inflation reduces its priorities.
- The economy demands additional support according to high-frequency data indicators from credit expansion together with industrial production statistics.
- The Reserve Bank of India has taken steps to address liquidity problems by providing a total of ₹1.5 trillion to boost economic liquidity. The introduced measures could benefit from an additional rate cut.
- The RBI would benefit from shifting its emphasis from inflation control to growth support because economic studies project additional food inflation reductions during upcoming months.

Challenges Facing the RBI

Several obstacles confront the RBI leaders when deciding a rate reduction even though the evidence for reduction remains convincing.

- The US Federal Reserve has suspended its interest rate reduction cycle as the dollar value maintains its upward trend. The Indian Rupee reached its lowest value of 87 against the U.S. dollar as global currency factors continue to damage its purchasing strength.

- Female capital flows tend to increase due to investor interest in safer assets which creates more pressure on the Indian currency.
- The current wave of global trade tensions particularly between the United States and China generates economic uncertainties for India.
- The monetary policy environment becomes challenging due to these various factors affecting the Reserve Bank of India. The Rupee will likely weaken more if the Reserve Bank of India lowers interest rates prematurely even though delaying rate cuts could slow economic development.

D-Street's Divided Opinion

The D-Street stock market of India currently splits its opinions regarding a future rate cut.

- Experts put forward the view that the RBI might choose passive observation before taking any action. Yes Securities' Executive Director Amar Ambani indicates that the RBI will probably avoid lowering interest rates due to emerging global factors including trade-based retaliation and Federal Reserve sensitivity.
- Anand Rathi Brokerage among the optimistic analysts expects the RBI to deliver a 25 basis point reduction due to low inflation together with robust domestic investment and enhanced core sector performance. This economic measure is seen to speed up recovery from the current economic situation.
- The entire financial sector agrees that liquidity support in any shape remains indispensable for the economy.

Rupee Depreciation: A Double-Edged Sword

The discourse includes one significant element which is the decrease in value of the Indian Rupee. The decreased value of the Indian Rupee brings both hazards such as elevated import expenses and capital outflows and rewards of enhanced export competitiveness.

- Indian exports become more attractive for global buyers because of currency depreciation yet at manageable speeds.
- Businesses need gradual depreciations to avoid unexpected tax burdens which permits them to develop their adjustment strategies.
- Professional analysis confirms that handling Rupee devaluation should proceed with caution.

RBI's Possible Policy Stance

Analysts believe the Reserve Bank of India will implement an “accommodative” policy approach even though it may choose to avoid an immediate interest rate reduction. This could involve:

- The monetary authority plans to maintain additional funding programs which should enhance the access to credit.
- The federal institution must revise its policies to show backing for expansion without sudden interest rate modifications.
- The approaches would present encouraging signs to investors and strengthen market confidence levels.

Conclusion

- India relies heavily on the Reserve Bank of India's forthcoming monetary policy choice to determine its economic direction. The Indian economy needs reduced interest rates to face slowing growth along with consumption decline despite multiple global economic challenges. Analysts in the stock market differ about the possibility of rate cuts yet they unite in their call for more liquidity support.
- Despite external market risks which include trade conflicts and Rupee currency depreciation the Reserve Bank of India requires a careful decision-making approach. The central bank's strategic activities which include rate cuts and other policy instruments will be decisive in guiding India toward economic recovery. Upcoming months will show how well the RBI handles the difficult environment they face.

Source: Outlook Business

[1.4] Enhancing Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability

Syllabus: Indian Economy, [GS Paper - 3]

Context:

- Today Indian agriculture faces multiple serious obstacles. The majority of India's working population (46.1%) works in agriculture despite the sector generating only 17.7% of the country's GDP.
- The present farming conditions indicate both reduced agricultural output and limited farmer earnings. For the year 2025-26 the government appropriated additional funds for agricultural development leading to a 4% increase in the sector budget which reached ₹1.49 trillion.
- These funds according to experts do not address the fundamental issues of the sector.

About:

- The transition from subsidizing Indian agriculture must happen to achieve sustainable and profitable agricultural development by focusing on investments.

- The implementation of technology alongside private company involvement and extended-term solutions takes priority over temporary bandages.

Current Advancements in Indian Agriculture

Indian authorities have implemented various strategies to advance the agricultural sector. These essential progress areas can be observed in the following sections:

Better Irrigation Facilities

- India's cotton production covers 55% of its agricultural lands which are currently under irrigation sources. Options exist to extend this irrigation network further across the country.
- The Indian government runs efficient water use and groundwater conservation programs through PM Krishi Sinchai Yojana (PMKSY) and Atal Bhujal Yojana.
- Indian agriculture uses solar-powered irrigation technology together with micro-irrigation systems to conserve both water and energy.

Climate-Smart Farming

- Farmers who apply climate-smart procedures gain capabilities to handle climate-related problems together with drought situations and deteriorating soil health.
- Under National Innovations in Climate Resilient Agriculture (NICRA) programs farmers learn to use water conservation plus agroforestry together with cultivation of drought-tolerant crops.
- A total of 109 crop varieties received official approval in 2024 specifically for their capability to withstand changing climatic conditions.

Digital Farming and Agri-Tech

- The agricultural industry improves its operation thanks to advanced technologies that include AI together with satellite image analysis and Internet of Things systems.
- The integration of e-NAM and AgriStack between farmers and markets enables better price information sharing and improves market connectivity for agricultural products.
- The current agri-tech startup market features over 3,000 companies that develop precision farming solutions whereas better irrigation systems remain among their priorities.

Financial Inclusion for Farmers

- Through the Kisan Credit Card (KCC) farmers now find it simpler to obtain loans.
- According to the budget plans for 2025-26 the Kisan Credit Card has received a ₹5 lakh boost in its loan limit.

- The PM Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) insurance program safeguards farmers from crop destruction caused by climate incidents.

Shift to High-Value Crops

- Farmers now select more environmentally beneficial pastures and profitable pulses and oilseeds and horticultural crops instead of rice and wheat.
- This farm diversity receives support through national missions including Atma Nirbhar Pulses Mission and Mission for Fruits and Vegetables.

Organic and Sustainable Farming

- Natural and organic farming experiences rapid growth under the Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY) along with (NMNF) programs.
- The organic agricultural land in India reaches 1.76 million hectares alongside growing exports of organic food items.

Challenges in Indian Agriculture

Several ongoing challenges exist to restrict further development of the Indian agriculture system

Small Landholdings

- Indian farms generally maintain tiny operations which impedes the employment of contemporary farming tools as well as effective practices.
- More than eighty six percent of Indian farmers cultivate less than two hectares of land.

Dependence on Monsoons

- Approximately 45 percent of Indian farmland operates based on rainwater but remains at risk during drought years.
- The water wasted by traditional irrigation systems prevents farmers from buying modern irrigation technology.

Soil Degradation

- Soil degradation results from farmers repeatedly using the same crop in addition to excessive use of fertilizers.
- The productivity decreases as soil experiences erosion and loses its nutrients.

Low Investment in Research

- The research investment level of 0.5% from the Indian agricultural GDP stands below global research standards.
- Farmer welfare suffers because agricultural enterprises fail to create and advertise new seed options together with state-of-the-art cultivation practices.

Inefficient Markets

- Throughout the supply chain farmers receive a maximum of 30-40% worth of the consumer price because they must pay middlemen and infrastructure costs.
- Every year India incurs post-harvest losses costing the nation ₹1.53 trillion.

Steps to Improve Agriculture

The following actions need to be implemented by India to solve its existing challenges.

- The government should promote cooperative programs for land consolidation to create bigger and more efficient agricultural operations.
- Irrigation improvements must include scaling up micro-irrigation systems together with solar-powered pump installation to lower water resource usage.
- Growing support for climate-robust agricultural research needs increased federal budget allocations through research and development programs.
- The government should ensure Kisan Credit Cards become easier to obtain and should also work on improving the crop insurance programs.
- The market efficiency can be improved through expansion of e-NAM platforms and storage and transportation investments to prevent post-harvest losses.
- Organic farming should be encouraged through linking carbon credits to natural farming practices.

Conclusion

- Further development in Indian agriculture continues despite ongoing challenges that remain.
- The goal of sustaining food security and raising farmers' revenue requires improved technological solutions and modernized infrastructure as well as stronger policies.
- The sector's maximum potential will develop through combining sustainable agricultural methods with private industry involvement and optimized market mechanisms. Indian agriculture will achieve sustained growth coupled with prosperity through enhanced investments in the mentioned areas.

Source: [The Financial Express](#)

[1.5] India's Thermal Power: Emission Regulation Challenges

Syllabus: Environment, [GS Paper - 3]

Context:

- To supply energy needs India substantially depends on thermal power technologies. The power plant sector contributes to 60% of all greenhouse gas emissions produced throughout India.
- The extensive coal usage in the power sector serves as the main source of pollution since it releases dangerous pollutants that include particulates as well as SO₂ and NO_x. Air quality deteriorates due to these pollutants while they cause climate change and create severe health damage to millions of people.

About in brief:

- The Ministry of Environment Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) established new emission regulations through its 2015 announcement.
- The emission controls intended to combat pollution through power plant thermal emissions regulations.
- The execution of these standards encounters prolonged delays together with widespread opposition from stakeholders and major implementation difficulties.

Different Implementation Barriers Exist for Emission Standards in the Field

Several factors prevent Indian thermal power plants from following intensified emission regulations.

Inadequate technology and infrastructure

- Advanced technology necessary to fulfill emission standards standards is absent from multiple plants.
- To enable cleaner technology integration into older facilities operators must undertake substantial infrastructure improvements especially when implementing flue gas desulfurization (FGD) systems.

High costs of compliance

- The implementation of pollution control systems leads to elevated production costs because of their associated financial expenses.
- Higher costs to finance pollution control technologies increase electricity rates until both businesses and end-users bear the financial burden.

Resistance from the thermal power industry

- The technology operators working at thermal power plants claim meeting environmental standards requires substantial economic effort.
- The implementation of pollution control standards creates technical obstacles which become more severe for existing plants that will discontinue operation soon.

Weak enforcement mechanisms

- The implementation standards remain uneven after their introduction.
- The plants persist with non-compliance operations using minimal punishment for their non-compliance.

Delays due to administrative hurdles

- The adoption of cleaner technologies has faced delays because of complex bureaucratic procedures which additionally result from ineffective coordination between different agencies.

Delays and Legal Interventions

- The Ministry of Environment Forests and Climate Change gave thermal power plants an initial deadline to follow the new standards which was set for December 2017. The original deadline for thermal power plants to achieve the new standards during December 2017 encountered numerous postponements and now stands at December 2022.
- The ongoing delay period has received criticism both from environmental groups and the judicial system. The Supreme Court of India ordered the MoEFCC to finish implementations by 2022 while levying penalties on facilities that violate the standards. The implemented progress shows insufficient speed because numerous factories fail to reach their mandatory standards.

Health and Environmental Impact

The delayed pace of regulatory implementation produces various crucial negative effects.

- High particulate matter concentrations together with harmful toxic gasses remain to damage air quality particularly around locations near thermal power plants.
- The public health crisis emerges when people encounter pollutants at these plants because it raises their susceptibility to respiratory diseases and cardiovascular health problems and multiple additional medical issues.
- The excessive dependence on coal power operations leads to worsening global warming effects thus opposing India's commitment to reducing carbon emissions worldwide.

Way Forward: What Needs to Be Done?

India requires a comprehensive approach using equal measures to satisfy energy needs and environmental conservation objectives.

Provide financial support

- Thermal power plants should benefit from official reimbursement through reduced taxes and government funding and financial assistance for their switch to better environmental technologies.
- Through public-private partnerships people and organizations can combine resources together to distribute environmental system transition costs.

Strengthen enforcement

- Proper enforcement systems must be established to monitor the compliance of emission standards.
- Penalties should be heavy for any plant that exceeds its scheduled deadlines.

Promote renewable energy

- The vital step requires decreasing our dependence on coal through additional funding for renewable energy methods which include solar power and wind power and hydropower.
- Organizations should implement policies for renewable energy accessibility and affordability to boost this transition.

Adopt a phased approach

- The upgrade of older and more polluted plants should be part of a planned method that starts with the oldest facilities first.
- The deadlines must have a realistic duration which enforcement occurs strictly.

Engage stakeholders

- Effective solutions emerge through cooperative efforts between state authorities, government departments and industries and environmental organizations that work with local communities.
- The public education about emission reductions benefits should generate stronger backing for toughened environmental regulations.

Conclusion

- Sustainable development requires India to implement strict regulations which control emission output from its thermal power sector. The implementation of financial backing and stricter enforcement alongside renewable energy priority will solve ongoing difficulties with high prices and poor implementation and industrial obstacles.

- India's success in controlling pollution will enhance both air quality maintenance and global climate agreements while protecting public health. Systematic implementation by the country will lead to a sustainable energy sector with both environmental benefits and economic sustainability and energy reliability.

Source: [*The Hindu*](#)



2. DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

[2.1] Revitalizing Demand for Industrial Growth

Syllabus: Economy [GS Paper-3]

Context

Reviving demand for industrial growth is crucial for enhancing economic development and achieving sustainable growth. In India, the manufacturing sector is at the forefront of this revival, driven by strategic government initiatives and market dynamics. This essay explores the current landscape of industrial growth in India, the challenges faced, and the opportunities that lie ahead.

Current State of Industrial Growth

- **Economic Indicators:** India's industrial sector is projected to grow at a rate of 6.2% for FY25, a decline from 9.5% in FY24, primarily due to a base effect and subdued performance in the first half of the fiscal year. However, there are signs of recovery as improved GST collections and capital expenditure signal potential growth in the latter half of the fiscal year. Notably, manufacturing output has shown resilience, with a 5.8% growth recorded in November 2024, indicating a broad-based expansion across various sectors.
- **Government Initiatives:** The Indian government has implemented several initiatives to stimulate industrial growth, including:
 - **Make in India:** Aimed at transforming India into a global manufacturing hub.
 - **Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme:** Designed to boost domestic manufacturing and attract foreign investment.
 - **National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP):** Focuses on improving infrastructure to support industrial activities.

These initiatives are expected to enhance the manufacturing sector's contribution to GDP from 17% currently to over 25% by 2030-31.

Challenges to Industrial Growth

- **Infrastructure Gaps:** The ongoing positive economic trends face numerous continuing obstacles. The current infrastructure gaps between production sites and logistics outlets create slowdowns in efficient measures. The creation of industrial corridors and clusters in coastal regions serves to eliminate current infrastructure gaps which will benefit industrial operations.
- **Skill Development:** The shortage of skilled personnel presents itself as a major obstacle to developing a competent workforce. The shift toward digital transformation creates a rising business need for workers who can perform advanced tasks effectively. Establishment of training excellence centers through Centres of Excellence will create lasting talent development opportunities.

- **Tariff Rationalization:** Manufacturers need tariff rationalization as an essential measure to increase their competitiveness on the market. Manufacturers obtain better competitiveness through reduced costs when customs tariffs for essential materials including aluminum and steel are decreased for global market penetration.

Opportunities for Revival

- **Digital Transformation:** The integration of digital technologies presents significant opportunities for industrial growth. Embracing advancements such as artificial intelligence (AI), edge computing, and predictive analytics can enhance operational efficiency and productivity. Companies that adapt to these technologies will be better positioned to thrive in an increasingly competitive landscape.
- **Sustainable Practices:** There is a growing emphasis on sustainability within the industrial sector. Implementing green practices not only meets regulatory requirements but also appeals to environmentally conscious consumers. This shift towards sustainability can open new markets and enhance brand loyalty among consumers.
- **Global Supply Chains:** India's strategic location offers an advantage in reshaping global supply chains. The ongoing geopolitical shifts necessitate diversification of supply sources, positioning India as an attractive alternative for multinational corporations looking to mitigate risks associated with over-reliance on specific countries.

Conclusion

Reviving demand for industrial growth in India requires a multifaceted approach that addresses existing challenges while leveraging emerging opportunities. With strategic government initiatives and a focus on skill development, infrastructure improvement, and digital transformation, India can enhance its manufacturing capabilities and contribute significantly to economic growth. The path forward lies in fostering innovation, embracing sustainability, and building resilient supply chains that can withstand future disruptions.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q. Discuss the factors influencing industrial demand in India. How do government policies and global economic trends impact industrial demand? Suggest measures to enhance sustainable industrial growth in the country. (250 words)

[2.2] Study finds microplastics in city's groundwater

Syllabus: Environment Pollution [GS Paper-3]

Context

A significant environmental concern has emerged in Delhi as a recent study commissioned by the Delhi government has detected [microplastics](#) in groundwater samples across the Capital. This first-of-its-kind research highlights the pervasive issue of plastic pollution, which poses serious risks to public health and the environment.

Overview of the Study

Objectives and Methodology

The research examined microplastics distribution in groundwater throughout all eleven districts of Delhi as its central investigation objective. The study operated under The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) and used extensive sampling strategies and analysis methods. Groundwater investigators acquired samples from different borewell locations and collected river water from the Yamuna River for understanding pollution origins. The methodology included:

- **Sampling Techniques:** Grab sampling from designated boreholes and surface water bodies.
- **Laboratory Analysis:** Comprehensive physicochemical analysis to identify microplastic characteristics using advanced techniques like Fourier Transform Infrared (FTIR) for polymer identification.

Key Findings

The interim report, submitted last November but not yet made public, revealed alarming results:

- **Microplastics in Groundwater:** Almost all districts in Delhi showed contamination with microplastics.
- **Contamination from Yamuna River:** The presence of [microplastics](#) in river water and soil samples indicates a leaching effect from the river into groundwater sources.

Implications of Microplastic Contamination

[Microplastics](#), defined as plastic particles smaller than 5 mm, are associated with various health risks. Research indicates that they can:

- **Absorb Harmful Chemicals:** Microplastics can carry toxic substances, increasing their potential harm to human health.
- **Impact Vulnerable Populations:** Women and children are particularly at risk, with potential implications for genetic, respiratory, and developmental health.

The contamination of groundwater and surface water bodies with microplastics poses significant threats to aquatic ecosystems. The degradation of water quality can lead to:

- **Loss of Biodiversity:** Aquatic organisms may be adversely affected by microplastic ingestion.
- **Food Chain Disruption:** Microplastics can enter the food chain, impacting both wildlife and human populations that rely on these resources.

Contextual Factors Contributing to Microplastic Pollution

Delhi's rapid urbanization has led to increased plastic production and waste generation. The population has surged from 13.85 million in 2001 to an estimated 26.6 million by 2036, exacerbating waste management challenges. This situation is compounded by:

- **Inadequate Waste Management Systems:** Mismanagement of solid waste contributes significantly to plastic pollution.
- **Pollution from Drains:** Discharged pollutants from drains like Najafgarh and Shahdara further deteriorate water quality in the Yamuna River.

Future Directions

Ongoing Research and Action Plans

The Delhi government has acknowledged the findings of this study and is proceeding with further research phases. The final report is expected later this year, which will likely include:

- **Identification of Contamination Sources:** Mapping potential sources of microplastic pollution across districts.
- **Development of an Action Plan:** Formulating strategies for reducing microplastic concentrations in both groundwater and the Yamuna River.

Importance of Public Awareness

Environmental experts emphasize the need for public awareness regarding plastic pollution. The release of study findings will be crucial for fostering informed discussions about mitigation strategies and encouraging community involvement in reducing plastic waste.

Conclusion

The detection of microplastics in Delhi's groundwater marks a critical juncture in addressing environmental pollution. As urbanization continues to escalate, it is imperative that effective measures are implemented to safeguard public health and preserve natural resources. The forthcoming final report will provide essential insights into tackling this pressing issue, underscoring the need for coordinated efforts among government agencies, researchers, and the community at large.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q. Microplastic contamination in food products has emerged as a significant health and environmental concern. Discuss the sources and impact of microplastics in the food chain and critically evaluate the role of regulatory bodies like FSSAI in addressing this issue. Suggest measures to mitigate the problem.

[2.3] Issues Behind the India-Bangladesh Border Barrier

Syllabus: International Relations [GS Paper-2]

Context

The ongoing border fencing dispute between India and Bangladesh has escalated tensions between the two countries, particularly following recent incidents along their shared 4,096.7-kilometer border. This issue stems from India's construction of barbed wire fencing intended to curb cross-border crimes, such as smuggling and human trafficking, which both nations view as a significant security concern. However, Bangladesh has raised objections, claiming that these actions violate bilateral agreements and infringe upon its sovereignty.

Historical Context

India started building barriers along its frontier with Bangladesh in 1986 because of increasing undocumented immigration into its northeastern states. According to the 1975 Joint India-Bangladesh Guidelines for Border Authorities every defense structure must stay at least 150 yards away from the international boundary. The single-row fencing (SRF) deployed by India remains without defense structure status according to Indian officials but Bangladesh considers it to be a breach of the agreed guidelines.

Recent Developments

During January 2025 Bangladesh's diplomatic confrontation against India's High Commissioner arose from Indian border security practices which included unauthorized fencing activities. Indian officials declared full compliance with every border management protocol and contractual agreement. The existing situation worsens because civilians from both sides continue to engage in violent confrontations.

Specific Incidents

- Border Guards Bangladesh made an attempt to prevent fencing construction in Malda when they intervened during early January within West Bengal. The border confrontation played out on recorded video footage which displayed increasing border area tension.
- During the Cooch Behar Incident local villagers together with Border Security Force (BSF) support constructed fences that prompted Border Guards Bangladesh (BGB) to intervene.

Arguments from Both Sides

India's Perspective

India maintains that border fencing is crucial for national security and is primarily aimed at preventing cross-border crimes. The BSF argues that fencing helps control animal movement and curtail illegal activities. They assert that SRF is not a defense structure but rather a necessary measure for effective border management.

Bangladesh's Concerns

- Bangladesh's objections are twofold:
 1. **Violation of Agreements:** The government contends that India's fencing efforts breach the 1975 agreement prohibiting construction within 150 yards of the border.
 2. **Infringement on Sovereignty:** There are fears that India's "smart fencing," equipped with surveillance technology, could be used for monitoring Bangladeshi territory.
- **Impact on Local Residents:** The border fencing has significant implications for local communities living along the India-Bangladesh border. Many villages are situated close to the international boundary, making adherence to the 150-yard rule challenging. Residents often face restrictions on their movement and daily activities due to the ongoing construction efforts. Gates installed in the fences are intended to facilitate movement but can still create inconvenience during operational hours.
- **Diplomatic Implications:** The current dispute occurs against a backdrop of deteriorating relations between India and Bangladesh following political changes in Dhaka. The interim government led by Mohammad Yunus has expressed dissatisfaction with previous agreements perceived as favoring India disproportionately. This shift has led to heightened anti-India sentiment within Bangladesh, complicating diplomatic negotiations regarding border management and security measures.

Conclusion

The row over border fencing between India and Bangladesh encapsulates broader issues of national security, sovereignty, and historical grievances. As both nations navigate this complex situation, it is essential for diplomatic channels to remain open to address concerns while balancing security needs with respect for bilateral agreements. Continued dialogue will be crucial in mitigating tensions and fostering cooperation along this contentious border.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q. Examine the reasons behind the ongoing India-Bangladesh border fencing dispute. Discuss its implications on bilateral relations and suggest possible solutions to resolve the issue. (250 words)

[2.4] Challenges of AI-Driven Genetic Testing

Syllabus: Science and Technology [GS Paper-3]

Context

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is rapidly transforming the field of genetics, particularly in genetic testing. By analyzing vast amounts of genetic data, AI enhances diagnostics and personalized medicine. However, this technological advancement comes with significant challenges that need to be addressed to ensure ethical and effective application.

Ethical Concerns

- **Data Privacy and Security:** The most pressing issue regarding AI-driven genetic testing is how to protect personal genetic information along with securing its data privacy. The nature of genetic information makes it extremely personal because it reveals existing health condition susceptibilities to individuals. Personal genetic data exposed through data security breaches at companies like 23andMe subjects patients to both identity theft dangers along with discriminatory treatment based on their genetic profiles. Intensive data protection frameworks must exist because public trust in genetic testing depends on their maintenance.
- **Informed Consent:** People face challenges in comprehending complete terms of the consent during genetic testing because of AI algorithm intricacies. Medical patients frequently lack knowledge about the processing of their data information along with the unpredictable consequences that could emerge from unexpected findings. The ethical standards and patient autonomy depend on explaining clearly how AI operates in genetic testing methods to appropriate patients.

Accuracy and Reliability

- **Algorithmic Bias:** AI systems can perpetuate biases present in their training data, leading to inaccurate predictions and disparities in healthcare outcomes. For instance, if a genetic testing algorithm is trained predominantly on data from one demographic group, it may perform poorly for individuals outside that group. This raises concerns about equity in healthcare access and outcomes, particularly for underrepresented populations.
- **Uncertain Diagnostic Value:** Many genetic variations identified through testing fall into a "grey zone" where their clinical significance is unclear. This uncertainty can complicate decision-making for patients and healthcare providers alike. For example, while certain genes are linked to diseases like Alzheimer's, carrying these genes does not guarantee disease development. This ambiguity can lead to unnecessary anxiety or misinformed health choices.

Accessibility Issues

- **Cost and Availability:** AI-driven genetic testing can be prohibitively expensive, limiting access for many individuals. Wealthier populations or those in developed countries may benefit disproportionately from these advancements, exacerbating existing health disparities. Ensuring equitable access to AI-driven genetic testing is a critical challenge that policymakers must address.
- **Healthcare Infrastructure:** The integration of AI technologies into existing healthcare systems requires significant investment in infrastructure, training, and resources. Many healthcare providers, especially in low-resource settings, may struggle to implement these advanced technologies effectively. This disparity can hinder the widespread adoption of beneficial AI applications in genetics.

Technical Challenges

- **Data Quality and Standardization:** AI algorithms rely on high-quality data for accurate predictions. However, inconsistencies in how genetic data is collected and reported across

different institutions can lead to challenges in standardization. Without unified protocols for data collection and sharing, the effectiveness of AI-driven solutions may be compromised.

- **Interoperability Issues:** The ability to share and integrate data across various electronic health record systems remains a significant hurdle. Disparate systems often lack compatibility, making it challenging for AI tools to access comprehensive patient information necessary for accurate analysis. Addressing these interoperability issues is vital for maximizing the potential of AI in genetics.
- **Future Directions:** Despite these challenges, the future of AI in genetic testing holds great promise. Ongoing research aims to refine algorithms for better accuracy and reduce biases by incorporating diverse datasets. Additionally, regulatory frameworks are evolving to ensure ethical practices surrounding AI applications in healthcare.

Conclusion

AI-driven genetic testing represents a significant leap forward in personalized medicine but is fraught with challenges that must be navigated carefully. Addressing ethical concerns, accuracy issues, accessibility barriers, and technical hurdles will be crucial as we move towards a future where AI plays an integral role in genomics and healthcare. By fostering equitable access and ensuring robust protections for sensitive data, we can harness the full potential of AI while safeguarding individual rights and promoting health equity.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Q. With reference to 'genome sequencing', consider the following statements:

1. SARS-CoV-2 genome was sequenced in India only after the WHO declared it a pandemic.
2. Genome sequencing can be used to assess the risk of genetic disorders.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: (b) 2 only

[2.5] Budget 2025 Fails to Address Joblessness

Syllabus: Indian Economy, [GS Paper - 3]

Context:

- Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman introduced the Union Budget 2025 which received widespread disapproval from both economists and industry specialists and general citizens.
- The government's statements about India's economic strength fail to address the nation's main national challenge which is unemployment despite budgetary claims.
- Economic indicators show no signs of problems yet the actual situation presents millions of Indians without secure employment positions. This budget does not have enough substantial actions to handle the current employment crisis.

Brief insight into it:

- India faces an employment problem which goes beyond job scarcity because workers fail to find suitable positions in different industry fields. The noteworthy issue arises when we compare the job allocation with actual industry output. As the main economic growth driver the service sector does not produce enough new positions even though its employment potential does not align with the available workforce capabilities especially for those with low skill levels. The manufacturing sector possesses major opportunities to employ unskilled and semi-skilled labor yet has not picked up the necessary speed to keep up with employment demand increase. The structural economic problem existing in Budget 2025 receives minimal direct focus from the budgetary plan.
- Budget 2025 stands out for its mid-term tax policies which benefit the middle class through the higher tax exemption threshold reaching ₹12 lakhs. The budgetary change to increase disposable income along with consumer spending provides no direct benefit for employment growth. The budgetary provision for increased consumer spending probably creates immediate economic benefits but dismisses targeted investments to generate employment which leaves future job market growth doubtful.

Key Challenges in Addressing Joblessness

- **Skill Mismatch**

It stands as a core problem for India's employment market because skill deficiencies continue to grow. A substantial portion of working individuals fail to maintain the needed competencies which are required to succeed during modern global economic transformations. Current funding levels for skill development and vocational training from the budget remain inadequate to close the current knowledge shortage. India faces the danger of creating an unskilled workforce because insufficient policy support occurs in education and workforce training.

- **Stagnant Manufacturing Sector Growth**

The manufacturing sector of developing economies held a significant role as an employment source during past development stages. The Indian manufacturing industry remains static so it fails to produce jobs in sufficient proportions. Service sector incentives maintained in the budget prevent meaningful expansion of employment opportunities because manufacturing sector development remains unsupported. The manufacturing sector needs policies which will advance domestic industry growth through enhanced business facilitation measures and export promotion initiatives.

- **Challenges in the Informal Sector**

The Indian workforce spends most of their time in the informal sector but job stability along with social welfare advantages and equitable income do not exist within this sector. The recently introduced budget fails to establish specific working condition improvements or social security provision for employees working in informal economic sectors. This necessitates policy measures including upgraded labor laws and credit sources for small businesses and improved welfare program structures to resolve this problem.

Conclusion

- Budget 2025 failed to create solutions for the worsening employment situation within India. Short-term economic respite for the middle class from government tax incentives does not address the fundamental issue which requires job creation.
- A significant impact demands that the government advances both manufacturing sector development and skill education programs and implements social safety measures for unregulated workers. India will face enduring joblessness issues unless it implements essential reforms which block the path of economic development and social inclusion goals.

Source: [*The Economics Times*](#)

UPSC Mains Practice Question:

Q: The Union Budget 2025 has been criticized for failing to address the employment crisis in India." Critically analyze the measures taken in the budget to tackle joblessness and suggest alternative policy measures to enhance employment generation.

[2.6] Illegal Immigration Disrupts Delhi's Economy: JNU

Syllabus: Governance [GS Paper - 2]

Context:

- The Centre for Study of Social Systems at JNU generated new research that triggered debates regarding unauthorized immigration effects on both economic and social aspects of Delhi. The Delhi population's statistics underwent substantial changes because of large-scale migration from Bangladesh and Myanmar according to "Demographic Change and Identity Politics in Delhi."
- The research findings indicate that unauthorized migration from other foreign nations entered India throughout the 1980s period. The Muslim population of Delhi expanded from 11.7 percent in 1991 to 12.9 percent in 2001 and then reached 13.4 percent in 2011 at an accelerated growth rate compared to all other population groups. Experts confirm the present population trend continues to be active despite the absence of revised census data.

Key Findings of the Report

- The research documents indicate that 3 lakh individuals from Bangladesh and Myanmar chose Delhi for their residence while Seelampur, Okhla and Kalyanpuri house most of these immigrants. The fast-growing populations in these districts migrated at a faster pace than urban development leading to severe urban congestion.
- Immigration brings substantial population change to Delhi because the immigrant communities exhibit more rapid demographic expansion than Delhi's existing residents. This demographic change has made resource distribution along with urban development strategies for population growth needs into essential topics.
- Public services such as healthcare and education systems and sanitary services experience social strain from increasing immigration rates that affect both native citizens and foreign immigrants across the nation. The growing number of immigrants has overburdened government facilities such as healthcare centers and educational institutions by exceeding their existing capacity to serve students.
- Numerous illegal immigrants choose to reside in residential areas without standard utilities including clean drinking water and normal sanitation and electrical infrastructure. The creation of new residential buildings has turned public areas into their possession and resulted in environmental damage.

Concerns Over National Security

- Security analysts in the report confirmed illegal immigration poses a threat to Indian national security thus generating widespread national security worries.
- The authorities encounter problems tracking immigrant activities because a significant percentage of immigrants failed to register with official authorities as reported by the source.
- National authorities face security risks because they cannot monitor undocumented immigrants properly so this reduces their border control abilities along with law enforcement capabilities.

- The assessment of expert professionals demonstrates that extremist groups can exploit unregulated immigration access to their advantage. To ensure immigrant integration under legal standards the experts call for improved monitoring systems and official procedures together with local community engagement to minimize security risks.

Way Forward

- The JNU report shows that it is imperative to develop an all-encompassing policy that addresses illegal immigration throughout Delhi.
- Delhi now manifests significant economic changes alongside modified infrastructure and population distribution because of the large number of Bangladesh and Myanmar immigrants.
- Development of an effective border management system and strengthened immigrant enrollment practices should form part of a public service delivery program that benefits all Delhi residents.

Conclusion

- A successful method of implementation requires integration between defense requirements and humanitarian needs.
- A government policy should normalize undocumented immigrants already present in the nation while stopping unlawful migration and work to advance infrastructure development in affected regions.
- Delhi can mitigate illegal immigration difficulties through social inclusion programming with vocational training and enhanced urban development for creating economic security and social peace among citizens.

Source: [The Print](#)

UPSC Mains Practice Questions:

Q. Discuss the impact of unauthorized migration on the demographic composition of Indian cities, with a special focus on Delhi. What measures can the government take to address the associated challenges?

[2.7] Overview of Yamuna Pollution in Delhi

Syllabus: Environmental Pollution [GS Paper-3]

Context

The Yamuna River, once revered for its pristine waters, has become one of the most polluted rivers in India, particularly as it flows through Delhi. This pollution crisis has garnered significant attention, especially as it relates to public health and environmental sustainability. The river's degradation is primarily attributed to untreated sewage, industrial waste, and other pollutants entering the waterway.

Current State of Pollution

Water Quality Reports

Recent reports from the Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) highlight alarming levels of pollution in the Yamuna. The faecal coliform count, a key indicator of sewage contamination, reached a staggering 7.9 million MPN (most probable number) per 100 milliliters at Asgarpur, marking some of the highest levels recorded since December 2020. This is significantly above the permissible limit set by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), which is 2,500 units per 100 milliliters. Such high levels indicate severe contamination from domestic and industrial sources.

Key Pollutants

The primary pollutants affecting the Yamuna include:

- **Faecal Coliform Bacteria:** Indicative of sewage contamination, these bacteria thrive in environments with high organic waste.
- **Biochemical Oxygen Demand (BOD):** This measures the amount of oxygen that microorganisms will consume while decomposing organic matter. BOD levels at Asgarpur were reported at 85 mg/l, far exceeding the acceptable limit of 3 mg/l.
- **Dissolved Oxygen (DO):** Essential for aquatic life, DO levels were found to be zero at several monitoring points downstream, indicating a lack of oxygen necessary to support fish and other aquatic organisms.

Sources of Pollution

- The vast majority of 90% of unprocessed sewage produced from residential areas in Delhi empties directly into the Yamuna river. The mixture of household chemicals with detergents and organic substances found in wastewater leads to a worsening condition of the river.
- The Yamuna receives heavy pollution from industrial plants through their untreated discharged waste. Manufacturing facilities which operate along the river drain their untreated industrial discharges into the water channel thus worsening the pollution levels.
- When heavy rain occurs during the monsoon the flow of polluted water from cities accumulates inside storm drains into the river. Surtly when Rainfall increases it dilutes some pollutants but sustained pollution remains present thus additional contamination occurs during heavy rainfall.
- The present environmental crisis creates serious problems which endanger the health of both ecosystems and human beings. Insufficient dissolved oxygen has killed most aquatic life in big sections of the river through its deadly impact. People who use the Yamuna for drinking water and irrigation face severe health hazards due to its contaminated state.

Efforts for Restoration

- The city of Delhi currently implements various programs to advance its sewage treatment infrastructure. The Delhi Jal Board (DJB) operates 712 million gallons per day (MGD) installed sewage treatment operations in the city. Only 650 MGD out of the available sewage treatment capacity results in a substantial portion of untreated sewage that enters the river. The plans were established to increase treatment capacity which will become available by March 2026.
- The health restoration of Yamuna requires both heightened public knowledge about pollution origins plus active community engagement with environmental preservation programs. Residents can learn about correct waste management methods and water body protection through educational campaigns.
- Specialists promote carrying out ecological restoration projects within the Yamuna floodplain area. Establishing natural wetlands serves two purposes by acting as pollution filters that enhance water quality. The initiatives improve both biological diversity and create recreational areas where people from the local area can enjoy.

Conclusion

The pollution crisis facing the Yamuna River is a complex issue requiring immediate and sustained action from various stakeholders. Comprehensive strategies involving improved sewage treatment, public engagement, and ecological restoration are essential to revive this vital waterway. Without concerted efforts to address these challenges, the Yamuna will continue to suffer from severe pollution that threatens both its ecosystem and human health.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q. Which of the following factors significantly contributes to the pollution of the Yamuna River?

1. Untreated Sewage Discharge
2. Industrial Effluents
3. Agricultural Runoff
4. Cultural Practices

Select the correct answer using the code below:

- A) 1 and 2 only
B) 1, 2, and 3 only
C) 1, 2, 3, and 4
D) 2 and 4 only

Answer: C)

[2.8] SC Upholds Forest Conservation in Linear Projects

Syllabus: Governance [GS Paper-2]

Context

The recent ruling by the Supreme Court of India has significant implications for forest conservation in the context of linear projects. This decision emphasizes the necessity of maintaining forest land and ensuring compensatory afforestation before any reduction in forest area can occur.

Background on Forest Conservation in India

- **Importance of Forests:** Forests play a crucial role in maintaining ecological balance, supporting biodiversity, and providing livelihoods to millions. They are vital for carbon sequestration, water conservation, and soil preservation. Recognizing their importance, India has established various laws and policies aimed at conserving forest land.
- **The Forest Conservation Act:** The Forest Conservation Act (FCA) of 1980 was enacted to regulate the diversion of forest land for non-forest purposes. This legislation has been pivotal in protecting India's forests from unchecked development. Amendments to this act have raised concerns about potential loopholes that could facilitate the exploitation of forest resources for commercial gains.

The Supreme Court Ruling

- **Key Directives:** On February 4, 2025, the Supreme Court ruled that no forest land can be utilized for linear projects—such as highways, railways, and pipelines—unless an equivalent area is allocated for compensatory afforestation. The court stated unequivocally, "We will not permit anything which leads to reduction of forest area". This directive aims to ensure that any loss of forest cover is offset by an equal or greater area being restored or preserved elsewhere.
- **Context of the Ruling:** This ruling arose during hearings concerning petitions challenging the amendments made to the FCA in 2023. These amendments were perceived as attempts to weaken protections for forests and facilitate their conversion for development projects under various pretexts, including national security. The Supreme Court's decision reinforces the need to adhere to established definitions and protections as defined in previous legal precedents, particularly the landmark judgment in *T.N. Godavarman Thirumalpad v. Union of India*.

Implications of the Ruling

- The judgment strengthens Indian forest protection by protecting forests from unregulated size reductions during developmental projects. Compensatory afforestation becomes obligatory under this ruling as it aims to counteract destructive effects on biodiversity together with forest ecosystem services.
- The implementation of this ruling will confront both official and legal difficulties despite its favorable impact on environmental preservation. The court ordered states together with Union Territories to identify forest lands according to previous judgments yet the level of implementation has been unsatisfactory. The Ministry of Environment Forest and Climate Change has received the responsibility to digitise these forest records with reported delays.
- The Supreme Court demands states to maintain full transparency through their forest management responsibilities by holding their departments accountable to their duties. The court demands full documentation of forest identification records coupled with periodic assessments about compliance performance to achieve better forest resource transparency.

Future Directions

- **Need for Comprehensive Policies:** Moving forward, it is essential for policymakers to develop comprehensive strategies that align development needs with environmental sustainability. This includes revisiting existing policies related to land use and ensuring that they incorporate robust mechanisms for environmental protection.
- **Engaging Stakeholders:** Engaging local communities, environmentalists, and other stakeholders in discussions about land use can foster a more inclusive approach to forest conservation. Their insights can help balance developmental aspirations with ecological integrity.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Establishing effective monitoring systems will be crucial in assessing the impact of compensatory afforestation initiatives. Regular evaluations can ensure that afforestation efforts are successful and contribute positively to restoring degraded landscapes.

Conclusion

The Supreme Court's ruling against the reduction of forest land without compensatory measures marks a significant milestone in India's ongoing struggle for environmental conservation. By reinforcing existing legal frameworks and emphasizing accountability, this decision aims to safeguard India's invaluable forest resources while balancing developmental needs. It sets a precedent that could influence future policies related to land use and environmental protection across the country.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Q. The recent Supreme Court ruling on forest conservation in linear projects underscores the need for maintaining forest land and ensuring compensatory afforestation. Discuss the implications of this judgment for environmental governance and infrastructure development in India. (250 words)

[2.9] Rajasthan's Anti-Conversion Bill

Syllabus: Governance [GS Paper-2]

Context

The Rajasthan Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Bill, 2025 received its first reading in the current Rajasthan Legislative Assembly Budget Session. The new legislation targets illegal religious conversions which happen through coercion or come after deception or through offer of incentives. Through this bill the state demonstrates its dedication to protect people's rights while working to preserve community peace through conversion legislation.

Objectives of the Bill

The primary objectives of the bill are:

- The legislation aims to stop cases of illegal conversion which happen because of deceptive practices or coercion or force or threat or fraud or undue influence or allurement.
- The legislation aims to protect minors together with women and citizens who belong to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes from being forced to change their religious affiliation.
- The bill requires voluntary conversion procedures to be transparent by establishing mandatory advance notification.

Key Provisions

The bill incorporates several significant provisions aimed at curbing unlawful religious conversions:

1. **Cognizable and Non-Bailable Offences:** The offences under this bill are classified as cognizable and non-bailable, meaning that they can be prosecuted without a warrant and are subject to strict penalties.
2. **Imprisonment and Fines:**
 - General Violations: Offenders can face imprisonment ranging from one to five years along with fines up to ₹15,000.
 - Serious Violations: For violations involving minors or individuals from Scheduled Castes or Scheduled Tribes, the punishment increases to two to ten years of imprisonment and fines up to ₹25,000.
 - Mass Conversions: Those involved in mass conversions may face three to ten years in prison and fines up to ₹50,000.
3. **Mandatory Notification:** People interested in religious conversion must provide an official declaration to District Magistrates about their intent at least 60 days before making the conversion.
4. **Burden of Proof:** Proof of lawful conversion rests with those who arranged the conversion process as per law.
5. **Compensation for Victims:** Under this bill victim compensation is established at ₹5 lakh which victims of unlawful conversion can receive through court decisions.

6. **Double Punishment for Repeat Offenders:** The bill maintains a policy of double punishment toward those who commit multiple unlawful conversion offenses.

Rationale Behind the Bill

- Religious freedom integrity forms the foundation for initiating this legislation in India. The government has presented details about people who were tricked into changing their religion through fraudulent means. Rajasthan established this law because the state did not have existing legislation which protected people from unlawful religious conversions.
- The legislation intends to respect religious freedom rules from the constitution by addressing new challenges related to forced conversions. The bill states that freedom to switch religions exists but only when conversion comes without pressure or false information.

Criticism and Opposition

Despite its stated objectives, the bill has faced criticism from various quarters:

- **Concerns Over Implementation:** Several detractors oppose the bill because its inclusive definitions risk leading to abuse which threatens genuine voluntary conversion.
- **Political Motivations:** Members of the opposition party believe the government implements this legislation because it favors political objectives instead of resolving the genuine problems in forced conversions.
- **Focus on Religious Propaganda:** There are concerns that instead of tackling pressing social issues, the government is prioritizing religious matters which may distract from more urgent needs.

Conclusion

The Rajasthan Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Bill, 2025 represents a significant step towards regulating religious conversions within the state. While it aims to protect individuals from coercive practices and uphold their rights, it also raises important questions about implementation and potential misuse. As discussions continue within the legislative assembly, it remains crucial for stakeholders to balance the protection of religious freedom with safeguarding against unlawful practices. The outcome of this bill will likely influence similar legislative efforts across other states in India as they navigate the complex interplay between religion, law, and individual rights.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q. Discuss the key provisions of Rajasthan's Anti-Conversion Bill and analyze its implications on religious freedom, constitutional rights, and social harmony in India. (250 words)

[2.10] SC: High Courts to Hear UAPA Amendment Pleas

Syllabus: Governance [GS Paper-2]

Context

The Supreme Court of India has instructed High Courts to prioritize hearing petitions that challenge the 2019 amendments made to the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA). This directive was issued by a bench comprising Chief Justice of India (CJI) Sanjiv Khanna and Justices Sanjay Kumar and K.V. Viswanathan. The Supreme Court emphasized that it should not be the primary venue for these cases, except in exceptional circumstances.

Background of the UAPA Amendment Challenge

Since 2019, a number of petitions challenging the UAPA provisions have been pending before the Supreme Court. These petitions contest the validity of sections 35 and 36 of the UAPA, as amended in 2019. The core contention of the petitioners is that the Act grants the central government excessive power, including the authority to designate individuals as "terrorists," which they argue violates fundamental rights guaranteed under Articles 14, 19, and 21 of the Constitution.

Reasons for Directing High Courts to Hear the Pleas

- High Courts must serve as the legal body that deals with challenges against UAPA provisions according to the Supreme Court. According to the Supreme Court the matters needed assessment since it issued a notice in 2019 because legal questions in these cases tend to be complex in nature. According to the Court these cases should be sent to High Courts for their initial evaluation.
- The Supreme Court cannot exercise its powers as the initial arbitration panel in matters of this kind according to CJI Sanjiv Khanna. According to his assessment there would be logistical difficulties in handling these cases directly which required a reference to benches with more members when possible.

Petitioners' Arguments and Concerns

- The petitioning parties who oppose the UAPA Amendment Act, 2019 have underscored multiple concerns about central government powers in their submissions. Under this legislation the government possesses the power to classify any person as a "terrorist" thus enabling their entry into Schedule 4 of the Act. The petitioners assert that such discretionary powers conflict with Article 14 of the Constitution of India because they exist without clear bounds.
- The petitioners maintain that being tagged as a "terrorist" results in permanent social disgrace that violates the constitutional rights protected under Articles 14, 19 and 21 which ensure the right to equality with freedom of speech and expression as well as the right to life and liberty. Under the pretense of fighting terrorism the UAPA exercises an indirect hindrance to dissent rights.

Supreme Court's Directives and Observations

The Supreme Court confirmed that High Courts should proceed with petitions which question the UAPA legal provisions. The High Courts must conduct an initial review of these challenging cases according to the Supreme Court due to complex legal problems.

Implications of the Supreme Court's Decision

- The proceeding timeline becomes faster because the Supreme Court now requires High Courts to take charge of petition review activities. The decision creates a timely mechanism to address the issues raised by petitioners.

- Through this decision the Supreme Court has implemented adjudication decentralization by granting different High Courts authority to conduct independent assessments of the challenges. Such a strategy delivers expanded insights into constitutional matters and legal questions through separate High Court examination.
- The Supreme Court stresses fundamental rights protection through its direction of High Courts to lead such cases. Through its direction of these cases to the High Courts the Supreme Court strengthens judicial authority for protecting fundamental freedoms of the nation.

Key Issues and Arguments

Several critical issues have been raised in the challenges to the UAPA amendment:

- Whether the amendment restricts the right to dissent, thus violating the right to freedom of speech and expression under Article 19(1)(a).
- Whether categorizing someone as a terrorist without a trial and judicial application of mind goes against established criminal jurisprudence principles.
- Whether the executive's unilateral power under Section 35 of the Act to categorize an individual as a terrorist and include them in Schedule IV violates the rule of law, natural justice, and the fundamental right to reputation.
- Whether the 2019 amendment to the UAPA is manifestly arbitrary and violates Articles 14 and 21 of the Constitution.

Conclusion

The Supreme Court's decision to direct High Courts to hear the pleas challenging the 2019 UAPA amendment is a significant step towards addressing the constitutional and legal questions surrounding the Act. By decentralizing the adjudication process and emphasizing the role of High Courts, the Supreme Court aims to ensure a thorough and expedited examination of the issues. This move underscores the judiciary's commitment to safeguarding fundamental rights and upholding the principles of justice and the rule of law.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Q. The Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) Amendment Act, 2019 introduced which of the following major changes?

- A) Allowed the government to designate an individual as a terrorist**
- B) Removed the requirement for prior approval before banning an organization**
- C) Reduced the detention period without charges from 180 days to 90 days**
- D) Abolished the National Investigation Agency's (NIA) jurisdiction over UAPA cases**

Answer: A)

[2.11] Economic Burden of Cancer Treatment in India

Syllabus: Health [GS Paper-2]

Context

Financial toxicity (FT) significantly burdens individuals undergoing cancer treatment, leading to emotional distress, social isolation, and financial burnout. In India, this issue is worsened by a growing number of cancer cases, a large population, insufficient government investment in public healthcare, inadequate insurance coverage, poor financial literacy, and a lack of comprehensive financial planning. The prevalence of FT in cancer care ranges from 30% to 90.1% and is influenced by various socio-demographic, disease, and healthcare-related factors.

Understanding Financial Toxicity

- **Definition and Scope:** Financial toxicity refers to the financial burden and distress experienced by patients and their families due to the costs associated with cancer treatment. These costs include diagnostics, therapies, and medications.
- **Sources of Financial Distress:** Patients often resort to using savings, selling assets, and borrowing money to cover expenses, which adds to their financial suffering. This financial strain can lead to feelings of powerlessness, hopelessness, disrupted family dynamics, loneliness, isolation, and abandonment.
- **Impact on Patients:** FT is associated with a poor quality of life, accumulation of debt, premature entry into the labor market, and non-compliance with therapy.

Factors Exacerbating Financial Toxicity in India

- **Rising Cancer Cases:** The projected number of cancer cases in India is expected to rise from 1.46 million in 2022 to 1.57 million in 2025, with lung and breast cancers being the most prevalent. The age-standardized incidence rate increases with age, particularly in the female reproductive age group (15–49 years).
- **Socio-economic Factors:** Determinants of financial toxicity include household income, the type of healthcare facility used, the stage of the disease, the area of residence, age at diagnosis, recurrent cancer, educational status, insurance coverage, and treatment modality.

Healthcare Infrastructure: Insufficient government investment in public healthcare and inadequate insurance coverage contribute to the financial difficulties faced by patients.

Addressing Financial Toxicity

- Indian philanthropic efforts hold great ability to reduce the economic stresses associated with cancer care. Through philanthropic support patients receive financial relief while research receives backing and programs about cancer prevention alongside early warning identification achieve wide circulation.
- CSR initiatives funded by corporations create substantial value for cancer patients because they support medical treatments while ensuring access to medicines and establishing palliative care programs. Companies should put their resources into establishing awareness programs combined with early cancer detection systems to help lessen cancer-related difficulties.
- Public healthcare suffers from an extreme financial challenge that government funding must address to ease cancer patient expenses. Comprehensive resources for cancer patients include constructing cancer treatment centers as well as offering drug subsidies and financial support programs.
- Non-profit organizations create support networks through which they deliver essential programs for cancer patients while providing them with financial counseling alongside

emotional support along with resource guidance. These organizations should work to support policies that decrease cancer treatment expenses and enhance treatment availability.

Prevention and Management Strategies

- **Financial Planning:** Comprehensive financial planning is crucial for preventing and managing financial toxicity. This includes assessing the potential costs of cancer treatment, exploring insurance options, and developing a budget to manage expenses.
- **Early Detection and Awareness:** Promoting early detection and awareness can reduce the stage at diagnosis and hence reduce the cost of treatment.
- **Policy Interventions:** Policy interventions such as price controls on essential medicines, subsidies for cancer treatment, and expansion of health insurance coverage can help reduce the financial burden on patients.
- **Support Systems:** Strengthening support systems for cancer patients and their families, including counseling services and peer support groups, can help them cope with the emotional and financial challenges of cancer.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Q. Which of the following statements about cancer is/are correct?

1. Cancer is caused by uncontrolled cell division due to genetic mutations.
2. All types of cancers are hereditary.
3. Carcinogens such as tobacco, radiation, and certain chemicals increase the risk of cancer.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 1 and 3 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2, and 3

Answer: (b) 1 and 3 only

[2.12] Beggar-Thy-Neighbor Policies and Global Trade

Syllabus: International Relations [GS Paper-2], World Economy [GS Paper-3]

Context

Beggar-thy-neighbor policies are protectionist measures that countries implement to bolster their domestic economies at the expense of other nations. These policies can disrupt global trade, potentially leading to a standstill in economic exchanges across countries.

The Concept of Beggar-Thy-Neighbor Policies

- **Definition:** Beggar-thy-neighbor policies aim to benefit a country's economy by imposing economic costs on others, often through trade barriers or currency devaluations.

- **Zero-Sum Game:** These policies assume that economics is a zero-sum game, where one country's gain is another's loss. However, most economists argue that international trade is not a zero-sum game because importing goods benefits both the exporting and importing countries.
- **Objective:** The idea behind these policies is to protect the domestic economy by reducing imports and increasing exports. This is typically achieved through trade barriers, like tariffs or quotas, or by competitive devaluation to lower export prices and increase import prices.

Examples of Beggar-Thy-Neighbor Policies

- National governments enforce trade barriers through import controls to defend home industries by generating trade advantages. The implementation of import tariffs by a nation will protect its domestic manufacturing capacity which decreases overseas purchases and stimulates domestic market demand for home-made products. Implementing these measures enables domestic jobs but causes deterioration in the exporting nations' position.
- Central banks lower their home currency value to achieve several economic benefits which include reducing export costs and limiting imports while advancing export revenue growth. A weakened exchange rate enables nations to achieve export price competitiveness thus capturing more international sales from foreign exporters.
- The reduction of corporation tax rates by countries initiates an investment attraction game with nations that have higher tax rates which results in artificial investment diversion through tax competition.

Supporters of Beggar-Thy-Neighbor Policies

- **Boosting Domestic Economy:** Proponents argue that protecting specific industries, especially new ones or those tied to national security, helps boost domestic employment and economic growth.
- **Currency Devaluation:** Central banks may support currency depreciation to make domestic exports more competitive globally, increasing demand for domestic goods. A weaker currency also makes imports more expensive, discouraging foreign purchases.
- **Trade Surplus Argument:** A trade surplus is seen as beneficial, indicating a stronger national economy due to higher exports and reduced imports.

Consequences and Mitigation

- **Trade Wars:** These policies can lead to trade wars, where countries retaliate with their own protectionist measures.
- **Prisoner's Dilemma:** Beggar-thy-neighbor policies can be seen as a prisoner's dilemma, where each country has an incentive to follow such a policy, ultimately making everyone worse off.
- **Reconciling the Dilemma:** Overcoming this dilemma involves recognizing that trade is not a zero-sum game and that the comparative advantage of each economy offers gains for all.
- **Net Economic Welfare Loss:** Tariff barriers lead to consumers paying higher prices, and only a small sector benefits. If one country places higher tariffs on imports, it generally leads to retaliation, resulting in only a temporary advantage.

Modern Relevance

- **Globalization:** Beggar-thy-neighbor policies fell out of favor with the rise of globalization in the 1990s but have recently resurfaced.
- **Protectionism:** Protectionist policies have been making a comeback, as seen with the 'America First' rhetoric.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q. Which of the following best describes a Beggar-Thy-Neighbor Policy?

- (a) A trade policy that promotes mutual economic growth among nations.
- (b) An economic policy that benefits one country at the expense of others.
- (c) A fiscal policy aimed at reducing domestic unemployment through social welfare programs.
- (d) A strategy where countries cooperate to stabilize global financial markets.

Answer: (b)

[2.13] TRAI on 'Revision of National Numbering Plan'

Syllabus: Governance, [GS Paper - 2]

Context:

- TRAI released modification recommendations for the National Numbering Plan under its oversight.
- The National Numbering Plan holds essential importance since telecommunication identifiers (TIs) distinguish each telecom user device service network within this sector.
- An increase in both technological advancements and device interconnectivity necessitates effective management of identifiers for creating dependable universal telecom services.

About

- TRAI received requests from the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) regarding issues concerning fixed-line numbering and shortcodes and signaling codes and mobile codes and M2M (Machine-to-Machine) numbering and other matters.
- TRAI issued its consultation paper on June 6 of 2024 after receiving such a request.
- The set of recommendations issued by TRAI stemmed from their discussions with stakeholders in October 2024 before the finalization process.

Key aspects of their recommendations:

Numbering Resources Usage

- TRAI does not suggest any costs or penalties regarding numbering resource usage during this phase.
- The government through the DoT should check funding of these resources on a yearly basis and recover unnecessary numbers.

Fixed-line Numbering System

- These changes are recommended to solve the shortage of fixed-line services numbering resources:
- The implementation should transition from SDCA-based short distance charging areas to an LSA-based 10-digit numbering system.

- Users need to initiate all fixed-line-to-fixed-line communications by dialing both the '0' prefix and then the STD code and subscriber number sequence. The dialing requirements between fixed-to-mobile calls and mobile-to-mobile calls stay unchanged while all other call patterns need to dial '0'.
- The current telephone number framework will stay intact while system deployment needs six months to complete.
- The country will implement a national 10-digit numbering system through Fixed-line Location Routing Numbers (FLRN) during the upcoming five years to establish mobile-like fixed-line number portability features.

Addresses the spam and protection of Caller ID from spoofing

- Mobile users should benefit from Calling Name Presentation (CNAP) services that display caller identities through their networks.
- Protect Caller Line Identification (CLI) from tampering by implementing ITU standards Q.3057 and Q.3062 framework.

Deactivation of Inactive Numbers

- Any telephone number including mobile or fixed-line types cannot undergo deactivation unless the owner fails to use it for three consecutive months.
- Mandatory deactivation of numbers after 365 additional days of non-usage beyond the 90-day period.

Machine-to-Machine (M2M) Communication

- Future Machine-to-Machine (M2M) requirements will be met by establishing a system of available 13-digit number resources.
- The migration of 10-digit SIM-based M2M connections to 13-digit format should happen according to past recommendations.

Level-1 Shortcodes

- The allocation of shortcodes remains free for all government bodies.
- The institution needs to perform annual reviews of shortcodes to retrieve codes which users no longer require.

Conclusion:

- The modifications target two key objectives: better distribution of numbering resources together with service enhancement alongside managing problems in spam calls and number portability challenges.
- These recommendations serve to fulfill India's developing requirements within digital and telecommunication sectors.

Source: [Press Information Bureau](#)

UPSC Mains Practice Question:

Q. Discuss the recent recommendations made by TRAI regarding the revision of the National Numbering Plan and analyze their significance in addressing current challenges like resource constraints, unsolicited communication, and number portability.

[2.14] Impact of Climate Change on Cultural Heritage Sites

Syllabus: Ecology & Environment, [GS Paper - 3]

Context:

- The global concern about climate change extends beyond natural ecosystems since it poses dangers to human-made cultural heritage sites also.
- The numerous historic sites along with cultural heritage properties in India risk severe threats from climate change through structural deterioration and damage as well as degradation and erosion.
- The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) remains dedicated to developing strategies which minimize risks facing these crucial heritage assets so they endure for upcoming generations.

Measures to Safeguard Heritage Sites

The Archaeological Survey of India has established numerous climate-adaptive procedures to safeguard cultural heritage sites against environmental threats including both climate shifts and pollution together with other environmental issues.

These measures include:

Scientific Treatment and Preservation

The ASI executes modern scientific techniques which allow them to preserve and protect historical monuments through periodic conservation work.

This includes:

- The process removes all pollutants that settle on constructed elements.
- Hazardous weather elements require strengthening the foundation along with wall structures.
- The preservation process depends on materials together with building techniques that stay faithful to the original construction methods.

Collaboration with ISRO for Weather Monitoring

With ISRO (Indian Space Research Organisation) support, the ASI deployed Automated Weather Stations (AWS) across different heritage sites.

These stations monitor:

- Wind speed and direction.
- Rainfall and atmospheric pressure.
- Temperature fluctuations.
- The real-time data systems help heritage sites identify initial signs of damage that adverse weather causes so appropriate responses can be taken before further damage occurs.

Monitoring Air Pollution

- The degradation of heritage sites mostly occurs due to pollution factors. The setup of Air Pollution Laboratories near prominent monuments serves as a solution to the pollution problems.
- The pollution levels of suspended particulate matter at Taj Mahal in Agra must be evaluated to understand their role in causing discoloration and erosion of structures.
- The air quality monitoring at Bibi ka Maqbara in Aurangabad serves to create conservation plans.
- Through these laboratories experts gain better comprehension of air pollution impacts on monuments while creating effective conservation strategies.

Disaster Management Strategies

The ASI works with NDMA and UNESCO together with other agencies as it prepares for natural disasters and climate-related threats.

Recent initiatives include:

- Experienced professionals at the International Consultative Workshop on Disaster Management of Cultural Heritage Sites delivered insights about risk management methods.
- The development process of National Disaster Management Guidelines directs its focus towards Cultural Heritage Sites through their entire lifecycle from:
 - Risk assessment and reduction.
 - Emergency response planning.
 - Post-disaster recovery strategies.

Community and Inter-Agency Coordination

- The preservation strategies remain effective through the scheduled meetings between government institutions and stakeholders from the local community.
- Participation from communities serves dual purposes of raising public conservation awareness and developing joint action plans.

Conclusion

- Cultural heritage in India stands as an invaluable resource which the Archaeological Survey of India diligently safeguards through climate change protection measures.
- The ASI uses modern technologies to observe environmental conditions in conjunction with national and international agencies to maintain long-term safety and sustainability of these cultural sites.
- India's heritage needs sustained dedication from the public as well as ongoing support to protect it for future generations.

Source: [Press Information Bureau](#)

UPSC Mains Practice Question:

Q. Discuss the challenges faced by heritage sites due to climate change and evaluate the measures taken by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) to mitigate these impacts. How can community involvement and inter-agency coordination further strengthen these efforts?

[2.15] The PM-DevINE by Government of India

Syllabus: Governance, [GS Paper - 2]

Context:

- The Government of India introduced PM-DevINE as an initiative to tackle development obstacles present in the North Eastern Region (NER).
- The scheme works to eliminate infrastructure defects and empower the youth and women population of the North Eastern Region through social development initiatives.

What is PM-DevINE?

- During the Union Budget 2022-23 the government implemented the Central Sector Scheme known as PM-DevINE.
- The entire funding for this scheme originates from the Central Government allowing direct resource flow into development projects of the region.
- The Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) executes PM-DevINE through official approval which occurred on October 12th 2022.

Objectives of PM-DevINE:

The scheme focuses on:

Infrastructure Development:

- The infrastructure development projects under PM GatiShakti ensure improved bridge construction as well as road networks and transport systems.
- The NER and the rest of India maintain an unbroken connection as a top priority of this scheme.

Social Development Projects:

- Addresses critical issues like health, education, and social welfare through focused initiatives.
- The program works to enhance regional life quality standards across the territory.

Youth and Women Empowerment:

- The development initiative creates specialized employment activities for both women and youth groups to participate actively in the transformation process.

Financial Allocation:

- The budget of Union Budget 2022-23 included an initial funding of ₹1,500 crore.
- The outlay during the 15th Finance Commission period (2022-23 to 2025-26) amounts to ₹6,600 crore through this scheme.
- The region receives funding at both state-specific and project-specific levels thus meeting the unique requirements of its various regions.

Other Major Initiatives for NER

Through PM-DevINE and other complementary programs the government works to achieve regional all-around development in the northeast.

- **North East Industrial Development Scheme (NEIDS):** Industrial development and employment opportunities arise within this region as part of its strategy.
- **North Eastern Council (NEC):** Functions as a policy advisory body for the socio-economic development of the NER.
- **North East Road Sector Development Scheme:** The initiative works towards building better road infrastructure to connect different areas.
- **Major Connectivity Projects:** The Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Project creates enhanced transportation capabilities between India and Myanmar for better commercial exchanges.
- **Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (BCIM) Corridor:** Promotes regional trade and cooperation.
- **Bharatmala Pariyojana:** Under this national highway development program the organization progresses 5,301 kilometers of roadway infrastructure in the NER.
- **Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS-UDAN):** The NER has become the focus of priority development which delivers affordable flight costs to make air services more available throughout the region.

Conclusion

- The PM-DevINE initiative plays an essential role in closing the development gap which exists in the North Eastern Region.
- The initiative focuses on infrastructure improvement and social development and vulnerable group empowerment as its primary channels to achieve sustainable development across the region.
- Together with additional government projects PM-DevINE will evolve the NER into a prosperous well-connected region which will deliver significant advancement for India's nation.

Source: [Press Information Bureau](#)

UPSC Mains practice Question

Q. Examine the objectives and significance of the Prime Minister's Development Initiative for the North Eastern Region (PM-DevINE). How does it complement other government initiatives aimed at the development of the North Eastern Region

[2.16] Aga Khan IV: A Visionary Leader of the Nizari Ismaili Muslims

Syllabus: International Relation, [GS Paper - 2]

Context:

- Prince Karim al-Husseini is known as Aga Khan IV while holding the position of the 49th Imam of the Nizari Ismaili Muslims who passed away in Lisbon at the age of 88.
- This Islamic community belongs to the Shia branch with an established rich tapestry of spiritual and cultural traditions.
- Prince Karim Al-Husseini became the Imam of Nizari Ismaili Muslims in 1957 after his grandfather Aga Khan III when he was born on December 13, 1936 in Geneva Switzerland.
- Since his appointment as the leader he has advanced the Nizari Ismaili community through important guidance that has earned him the status of visionary leader.

Who are the Nizari Ismailis?

Within Shia Islam the Nizari Ismailis exist as one of the most significant faith communities that go back to 11th century foundations. Ismailis represent only one of their various names along with Seveners which describe this community.

Their identity and all aspects of life in this community are influenced by distinct traditions and core values:

- Nizari Ismailis highly esteem the Imam's religious leadership since he guides members toward spiritual development through his guidance.
- Education stands at the center of communal values because the community emphasizes scholarly development supported by traditional educational study in philosophy and science and education.
- Social justice together with compassion forms fundamental principles because the community emphasizes helping others and ensuring fair treatment of all. The community members show deep commitment to assist the disadvantaged and vulnerable people and those in need.
- The Nizari Ismailis cherish cultural diversity and maintain active efforts to build understanding along with harmony between people from different ethnic backgrounds.

Aga Khan IV's Visionary Leadership

The Nizari Ismaili community experienced significant expansion and evolution under the management of Aga Khan IV. Under his leadership he demonstrates dedication to serving as a spiritual guide while simultaneously working for social development and international partnerships.

The most significant elements of his leadership consist of:

- Aga Khan IV leads the community to adopt contemporary thinking through supporting their core traditional beliefs. The current fast-paced world becomes accessible through his approach which combines modern with traditional values.

- Aga Khan IV established several development strategies through which he seeks to enhance lives both inside and outside the Nizari Ismaili community boundaries. The implemented projects consist of schools along with hospitals and economic development programs that target developing Asian and African nations specifically.
- Aga Khan IV creates alliances for pluralistic coexistence by advocating dialogue and peace between international groups with diverse religious and ethnic backgrounds. According to Khan understanding must be developed because it forms the basis for creating global harmony.
- Through constant effort he has strived to enable inter-community cultural interaction between the Ismailis and other world groups. The involvement of diverse groups leads to more collaborations which strengthens both appreciation and knowledge sharing between participants.

Conclusion

- Through his transformative leadership Aga Khan IV has inspired the Nizari Ismaili community to develop flexible approaches to change and educational priorities and social improvement activities.
- His focus on compassion achieved alongside diversity and knowledge has not only elevated his community while simultaneously building global development toward societal harmony.
- Through his leadership Aga Khan IV demonstrates that spiritual guidance working with practical vision produces meaningful transformations in the world.

Source: [The Indian Express](#)

UPSC Mains Practice Question:

Q. Discuss how his efforts have contributed to the progress of the Nizari Ismaili community and the broader global society.

[2.17] India's Changing Approach to the Climate Crisis

Syllabus: Ecology & Environment, [GS paper - 3]

Context:

- Prior to recent times India has gained a reputation for delaying active participation in international climate change dialogues.
- The nation maintained economic expansion as its main concern alongside its efforts to decrease poverty during many years while disputing the necessity to focus on environmental matters for the increasing population and developing needs.
- During recent years India exhibited significant alterations in its stance regarding the climate crisis response. Sustainable development and climate action began to merge as an integrated concept because of evolving understanding across nations.

India's Commitments at COP26

India showed its commitment to tackle climate change through its strong announcements at the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26). The main commitments entail the following items:

- India vowed to reach net-zero emissions status by 2070 according to their commitment. India seeks emission balance by combining greenhouse gas reductions with procedures that support carbon absorption such as tree planting and technical carbon capture.
- The energy capacity of India will reach 50% non-fossil fuel origin by 2030 through the utilization of solar power and wind power together with hydropower.
- India aims to reduce its carbon emissions intensity by 45% until 2030 which will lower the amount of carbon dioxide released per economic output unit.
- The government of India has established ambitious targets that represent a complete transformation from previous strategies to demonstrate its strong commitment in the fight against climate change.

Reasons Behind India's Shift

A combination of different elements led to India's changing attitude regarding the climate emergency:

- The increase in public understanding about climate impacts has surfaced since India encountered dangerous heat waves as well as destructive flooding and destructive periods of dryness. The worsened climate disasters strengthened public understanding about the immediate necessity of addressing climate change.
- India understands that moving toward renewable power sources through green energy will result in multiple job additions and increased economic strength while reducing domestic dependence on drilling imports of traditional oil fuels. Indian energy sector transitions because of climate objectives facilitate developments of new industrial sectors such as electric vehicle manufacturing alongside solar panel manufacturing.
- Through its participation in worldwide climate agreements India demonstrates leadership by fostering the International Solar Alliance as well as other worldwide environmental initiatives. The nation seeks recognition as a dependable active member within the global community through its sustainable development initiatives.

Implications of India's Climate Action

India's powerful leadership both inside its borders and across world communities leads to extensive impacts:

- The emphasis on renewable energy sources drives the attraction of new investments across both domestic and international markets for renewable power projects.
- Climate resilience enhances when communities accept climate action since this enables them to better handle higher temperatures along with floods and droughts which reduces their long-term impact.
- Worldwide position leadership mainly depends on India's dedication to achieve comprehensive climate targets which produce stronger international alliances. The approach will generate increased exchange of technology combined with monetary assistance and international working relationships.

Conclusion

- India has adopted new climate policies because the country recognizes both the rising risks from global warming and the business potential of sustainable development.
- The country follows a strategy that unites environmental protection and development targets to establish sustainable economic expansion.
- The economic advantages and strengthened international climate change initiatives derive from this transformation in India.
- India holds great potential as a leading actor in creating a sustainable planet by restricting its environmental deterioration and becoming resilient against climate change.

Source: [*The Indian Express*](#)

UPSC Mains Practice Question:

Q. Critically analyze India's commitments and their implications for its economy, environment, and international relations.

[2.18] The Forgotten 'Pravasi': India's Marginalized Migrants

Syllabus: International Relations, [GS Paper - 2]

Context:

- People who migrate abroad from India usually are referred to as pravasis although many choose to start new lives in the United States and Canada as well as the United Kingdom.
- The professionals and entrepreneurs play a major role in positively influencing global views and economic power of India.
- Another group of Indian pravasis remains hidden from view because they are faced with deportation after the collapse of their hopes for a better future abroad. The marginalized people in this situation require both our interest and backing.

About in brief

- The United States issues deportations to Indians numbering more than a thousand each year. Indian migrants who experience deportation usually hold low-skilled positions since they relocated from their home country because of poverty, unemployment or additional unbearable difficulties.
- When presented with few choices they choose either to enter illegally or to stay with temporary visas as they seek better financial prospects in the United States.
- Indian migrants experience a critical descent in their situation after encountering US immigration authorities which leads to detention in harsh facilities before they must return back to India.
- Being deported causes severe psychological trauma to those who face this fate. The individuals experience homelessness upon their India arrival because they lack both protection and significant aid.
- When deportation brings the stigma it causes additional emotional suffering that makes these individuals become more vulnerable while marginalizing their place in India.

Challenges Faced by Deported Indians

- Indians who have been deported must overcome various challenges when they return to India. Deported Indians usually struggle to create a new life because of multiple severe obstacles they encounter.
- People deported from abroad generally return to India while lacking both money and institutional support and personal connections. It becomes hard for them to begin again with their lives.
- Deportation imposes more than legal consequences since it involves severe humiliation along with psychological pain. Those who return face social rejection and mental health challenges, such as anxiety, depression, or even post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).
- Deported people face financial instability because they lack skills and qualifications that match Indian job requirements.
- These citizens receive minimal support from the Indian government because of its insufficient aid initiatives. Currently there exist no complete programs that can assist deported citizens to successfully rejoin society while providing them reliable economic stability.

Need for Comprehensive Policy

A complete set of policies should be established by the Indian government to tackle these challenges.

This framework should include:

- Indian society should develop two-part programs which combine structured social support initiatives with financial aid resources for deported individuals.
- The policy needs to combine learning programs that match current labor market requirements combined with employment placement initiatives for deported individuals.
- Establish both counseling services together with mental health initiatives to assist people handling deportation trauma.
- A nationwide awareness movement should target social stigma reduction as well as spread information about deported citizens' problems.

Conclusion

- Migration experts need to recognize how deportation experiences of Indians reveal essential problems in current approaches to support vulnerable migrant communities.
- The once-forgotten pravasis require helpful direct assistance to recover from their predicaments.
- The Indian government together with civil society and communities must collaborate for a successful societal reintegration of deported citizens.
- Our well-designed policy with support structures assists in restoring both dignity and hope to these individuals thus preventing any pravasi from being forgotten.

Source: [*The Indian Express*](#)

UPSC Mains Practice Question:

Q. Discuss the challenges faced by deported Indians and suggest measures to address their reintegration into Indian society.

[2.19] US to review the Sanctions Waiver granted to India

Syllabus - International Relations [GS Paper-2]

Context

The US government is presently reviewing the sanctions waiver granted to India for the Chabahar Port venture, which could affect India's connectivity plans with Central Asia.

Background

- The United States has imposed multiple rounds of sanctions on Iran, primarily focused on its nuclear program and monetary activities.
- **US Sanctions Waiver for Chabahar:** The US granted a waiver for India's involvement in Chabahar. The key aspects of the waiver consist of:
 - **First Waiver:** In 2018 America exempted India from sanctions related to Chabahar, acknowledging its humanitarian and local connectivity services.
 - **Renewed Waiver:** Further exemptions had been granted, ensuring continued Indian operations at the Shahid Beheshti Terminal and related connectivity projects.

Impact of US Sanctions on India

- **Potential Disruption in Development:** The new US directive restricts India's capability to preserve its operations at Chabahar port.
 - Despite US sanctions on Iran, India keeps importing oil from Russia amid developing international strain.
- **Effect on Trade and Connectivity:** Since 2018, the port has dealt with over ninety,000 TEUs (twenty-foot equivalent unit) of field site visitors and more than 8.4 million metric tons of shipment.
 - Any sanctions will avert further progress.
- **Declining Trade with Iran:** The in advance sanctions have led to a significant decline in India's trade with Iran.
 - In 2018-19, India's imports from Iran have been worth \$13 billion, broadly speaking crude oil. However, post-2019, imports fell to much less than \$1 billion annually.

Significance of Chabahar Port for India

- **Strategic Importance:** The Chabahar port gives India an immediate change direction to Afghanistan and Central Asia, bypassing Pakistan.
 - It strengthens India's nearby presence and offers an alternative to China's Belt and Road Initiative.
- **Economic Benefits:** The port facilitates trade through the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), reducing delivery prices and time.
 - The Economic Survey 2024-25 suggested a 43% boom in vessel visitors and a 34% rise in box traffic at the Shahid Beheshti Terminal.

- **India's Investment:** Under the 2024 agreement, India Ports Global Ltd (IPGL) has dedicated \$120 million to equip the port. Additionally, India has extended a \$250 million credit facility for infrastructure development linked to Chabahar.

Way Ahead

- India has balanced its strategic relation with both the US and Iran, but the capacity revocation of the Chabahar waiver poses a diplomatic venture.
- Due to its regional importance, India's persisted funding in Chabahar is vital for its long-term connectivity and financial interests in Central Asia and Afghanistan.
- The development of Chabahar port remains crucial for India's foreign policy and local outreach, requiring cautious diplomatic negotiations with both the USA and Iran.

Source: The Hindu

Mains PYQ

1. How will the melting of Himalayan glaciers have a far-reaching impact on the water resources of India? (2020)

- The US government is presently reviewing the sanctions waiver granted to India for the Chabahar Port venture, which could affect India's connectivity plans with Central Asia.
- The United States has imposed multiple rounds of sanctions on Iran, primarily focused on its nuclear program and monetary activities.
- **US Sanctions Waiver for Chabahar:** The US granted a waiver for India's involvement in Chabahar. The key aspects of the waiver consist of:
 - **First Waiver:** In 2018 America exempted India from sanctions related to Chabahar, acknowledging its humanitarian and local connectivity services.
 - **Renewed Waiver:** Further exemptions had been granted, ensuring continued Indian operations at the Shahid Beheshti Terminal and related connectivity projects.

[2.20] Rajasthan to Prevent Religious Conversions

Syllabus - Governance [GS Paper-2]

Context

Recently, the Rajasthan Government added a Bill to prevent religious conversions achieved by force, fraud or inducement.

About

- Rajasthan's first attempt to introduce an anti-conversion law was in 2006 but faced opposition and was returned by the President.
- In 2017, Rajasthan High Court issued hints to prevent forcible conversions within the absence of a regulation.
- The new Bill follows the strains of anti-conversion legal guidelines already present in states like Madhya Pradesh and Uttarakhand.

Key Provisions

- **Unlawful conversion:** It includes conversion through coercion, pressure, allurement (coins, benefits, etc.), or fraud.
- **Burden of proof:** The accused character has to prove that the conversion was not performed unlawfully.
- **Filing of FIR:** Blood household (parents, siblings, and many others.) of the aggrieved can file an FIR in suspected cases.

Punishments

- **General illegal conversion:** 1 to 5 years in prison, fine of Rs 15,000.
- **Conversion of children, woman, or SC/ST:** 2 to 10 years in prison, fine of Rs 25,000.
- **Mass conversions:** 3 to 10 years in prison, fine of Rs 50,000.
 - Repeat offenders face double the punishment for every offence.
 - All offences are cognizable and non-bailable.
- **Voluntary Conversion Process:** Converts need to fill a statement form and publish it to the District Magistrate (DM) 60 days in advance.
 - A month's advance notice must take delivery of to the DM for the rite.
 - The individual acting the conversion rite has to also notify the DM 30 days before.
 - An officer will conduct an inquiry into the purpose and cause of the conversion.
 - A statement of the conversion must be filed with the DM, which includes details like the convert's identification, faith earlier than and after conversion, etc.
 - The convert should appear earlier than the DM within 21 days of the assertion for verification.
- **Need and Purpose of the Bill**
 - The government claims that many gullible individuals are being converted unlawfully.
 - The Bill aims to balance religious freedom with stopping fraudulent conversion.
 - It was aimed at stopping forcible conversions and conversions through coercion, pressure, allurement, or fraud.
- The Constituent Assembly discussed the inclusion of the right to propagate faith as a part of the essential rights.
- Some members have been concerned that the right to propagate should lead to forceful conversions and wanted to update the word "propagate" with "education privately".
- Article 25(1) grants all folks the freedom of moral sense and the right to profess, education, and propagate religion.
 - This guarantees equal religious freedom to everyone, but with certain limitations in the interest of public order, morality, and health.

Source: *The Hindu*

Mains Practice Question

1. Analyze the socio-political implications of anti-conversion laws on religious minorities in India. (150 words)

- Recently, the Rajasthan Government added a Bill to prevent religious conversions achieved by force, fraud or inducement.
- Rajasthan's first attempt to introduce an anti-conversion law was in 2006 but faced opposition and was returned by the President.

- In 2017, Rajasthan High Court issued hints to prevent forcible conversions within the absence of a regulation.
- The new Bill follows the strains of anti-conversion legal guidelines already present in states like Madhya Pradesh and Uttarakhand.

[2.21] Prohibition of Begging in Bhopal

Syllabus - Social Issue [GS Paper-1]

Context

The Bhopal district management has prohibited all kinds of begging, giving alms, and buying goods from beggars, invoking Section 163 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), 2023.

About

- As per the Census 2011, there are 4.13 lakh beggars and vagrants in India.
- Many cities have again and again undertaken comparable actions before main activities. In 2017, Hyderabad banned begging before the Global Entrepreneurship Summit, when in 2010, Delhi removed beggars beforehand of the Commonwealth Games. These measures have drawn grievance for targeting the most prone sections of society without addressing the base reasons.

Need for Criminalising Begging

- **Public Nuisance and Beautification:** It is regularly claimed that beggars create a negative photograph for vacationers and buyers, particularly before high-profile events.
- **Traffic and Safety Concerns:** Many beggars perform at busy intersections, leading to injuries and disrupting visitors flow.
- **Organized Begging Syndicates:** Law enforcement organizations argue that many beggars are a part of large prepared networks that take advantage of individuals, which include children and disabled person.
- **Public Health Risks:** Some states cite health and hygiene concerns, specially in crowded urban areas, as motives for enforcing bans on begging.

Legal Framework for Begging in India

- **European Vagrancy Act, 1869:** Enacted by using the British to preserve racial superiority by preventing negative Europeans in India from resorting to begging.
- **Bombay Prevention of Begging Act, 1959:** Considered a version law, adopted with the aid of a couple of states which includes Gujarat, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, and Andhra Pradesh. It criminalizes begging and presents government power to detain and penalize beggars.
- **Bengal Vagrancy Act, 1943, and Madras Prevention of Begging Act, 1945:** These pre-independence laws aimed at criminalizing beggars and rehabilitating beggars in workhouses.
- **Vagrancy Laws beneath Concurrent List (Entry 15):** Both the Union and kingdom governments have the authority to legislate on vagrancy and destitution-related matters.
- **Article 23 of the Indian Constitution:** Prohibits visitors in people, begar (compelled exertions without charge), and different types of forced labor.

Why Begging Persists in India?

- **Poverty and Unemployment:** Economic disparities and lack of activity opportunities force many people into begging.

- **Lack of Social Security:** Inadequate access to food, healthcare, and refuge pushes marginalized people to seek alms.
- **Forced Begging and Trafficking:** Organized crime syndicates force children and disabled people into begging.
- **Migration and Urbanization:** Many rural people migrate to cities in search of work but fail to secure employment, finishing up as beggars.
- **Disability and Mental Illness:** Lack of proper healthcare services leaves disabled and mentally ill individuals with no preference but to beg.

Implications of Criminalizing Begging

- **Violation of Human Rights:** Penalizing begging disproportionately influences the poorest sections of society and contradicts constitutional guarantees of dignity and equality.
- **Arbitrary Detentions:** Many anti-begging legal guidelines empower the government to detain the beggars without due procedure of law.
- **Failure to Address Root Causes:** Simply banning begging does no longer provide a solution to poverty or homelessness.

Government Initiatives for Rehabilitation

- **SMILE Scheme (2021) :** Central Sector Scheme; “Support for Marginalized Individuals for Livelihood and Enterprise” makes a speciality of rehabilitating beggars and offering them with opportunity livelihood alternatives.
- **Persons in Destitution (Protection, Care and Rehabilitation) Model Bill, 2016:** Proposed by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment to offer complete care and rehabilitation for destitute people but was ultimately dropped.
- **Shelters and Skill Development Programs:** Several states have released temporary shelters, food distribution centers, and vocational education packages to assist reintegrate beggars into society.

Source: [The Indian Express](#)

Mains Practice Question

1. Begging in India is a reflection of socio-economic inequalities and policy failures. Discuss the possible solutions to address the issue of begging in India. (250 words)

- The Bhopal district management has prohibited all kinds of begging, giving alms, and buying goods from beggars, invoking Section 163 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), 2023.
- As per the Census 2011, there are 4.13 lakh beggars and vagrants in India.
- Many cities have again and again undertaken comparable actions before main activities. In 2017, Hyderabad banned begging before the Global Entrepreneurship Summit, when in 2010, Delhi removed beggars beforehand of the Commonwealth Games. These measures have drawn grievance for targeting the most prone sections of society without addressing the base reasons.

[2.22] Rapid Retreat of Glaciers in Himalayas

Syllabus - Environment [GS Paper-3]

Context

A recent study has found out that the eastern Himalayas of Arunachal Pradesh have lost 110 glaciers over a span of 32 years (1988-2020) and highlights the fast retreat of glaciers, which has significant implications for the place's hydrology and climate.

Key Findings of Study

- **Glacial Lakes:** The study found that the glaciers, masking a place of 309.85 square kilometers, retreated at a rate of 16.94 square kilometers per year.
 - It exposed bedrock and created glacial lakes, increasing the hazard of Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs).
 - The number of glaciers in the area reduced from 756 to 646 throughout the look at length.
- **Causes of Glacial Retreat:**
 - **Rise in Temperature:** The eastern Himalayas have been warming at a pace surpassing the global average, with temperature increases between 0.1°C and 0.8°C per decade.
 - It is expected to preserve, with capability temperature rises of 5-6°C and precipitation increases of 20-30% by the end of the century.
 - Over the past century, the region has seen an increase in temperature by about 1.6°C, with the eastern Himalayas warming at a rate surpassing the global average.
- **Implications:** For the place's freshwater supply, which helps over 1.3 billion people residing downstream.
 - The Himalayan glaciers, frequently known as the 'Third Pole' due to their great ice reserves, play a critical position in maintaining the location's hydrological stability and the global sea stage.
 - The retreat of glaciers additionally influences the region's biodiversity and agricultural practices. Additionally, the decreased glacial mass can result in changes in river flow patterns, affecting hydropower generation and irrigation structures.

Himalayan Glaciers in the India

- These are widely divided into 3 river basins, particularly Indus, Ganga and Brahmaputra. The higher altitudes (temperate climates) acquire heavy snow fall all through winters.
- **Indus River**
 - It originates in the Tibetan plateau close to Lake Mansarovar and Mount Kailash and flows westward, south of Karakoram Range and north of the Great Himalayas to Mt. Naga Parbat in which it turns sharply to the south flowing via Pakistan into the Arabian Sea near Karachi after touring for 2,880 kilometres.
- **Ganga River**
 - It originates from the Gangotri Glacier wherein it's known as Bhagirathi that's joined by Alaknanda at Devprayag and combined collectively it's called Ganga.
- **Brahmaputra River (Yalu Zangbu or Tsang Po)**
 - It rises inside the glacier of the Kailash range, only south of Lake Konggyu Tsho in Tibet.

- It ranks among the longest rivers of the region. It traverses its first 1,625 kilometres in Tibet, 918 kilometres in India and the closing 337 kilometres in Bangladesh earlier than it drains into the Bay of Bengal.

Importance of Snow Fields & Glaciers of the Himalaya

- **Earth's Radiation Balance:** Albedo from snow.
- **Attracting SW Monsoon:** The distinction in temperature among the Himalayan snow-fields and glaciers and the Indian Ocean pulls the South-West monsoon in the direction of the Indian landmass throughout summer.
- **Key Indicator of Climate Change:** Snow-fields and glaciers govern the climate system of the Indian landmass at regional and international scales.
 - Sensitivity of snow-fields and glaciers to variations in temperature makes them a key indicator of climate change.
- **Mitigation and Adaptation Strategies**
 - Addressing glacier retreat calls for a multi-faceted method, including lowering greenhouse gas emissions, improving climate resilience, and implementing sustainable water control practices.
 - International cooperation and local community involvement are important to mitigate the impacts and adapt to the converting environment.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Mains PYQ

1. How will the melting of Himalayan glaciers have a far-reaching impact on the water resources of India? (2020)

- A recent study has found out that the eastern Himalayas of Arunachal Pradesh have lost 110 glaciers over a span of 32 years (1988-2020) and highlights the fast retreat of glaciers, which has significant implications for the place's hydrology and climate.
- **Glacial Lakes:** The study found that the glaciers, masking a place of 309.85 square kilometers, retreated at a rate of 16.94 square kilometers per year.
 - It exposed bedrock and created glacial lakes, increasing the hazard of Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs).
 - The number of glaciers in the area reduced from 756 to 646 throughout the look at length.

[2.23] India as a leading Manufacturer of Small Modular Reactors (SMR)

Syllabus - Economy [GS Paper-3]

Context

India is advancing its entry into the global Small Modular Reactors (SMR) production value chain, receiving institutional help via three key policy enablers announced in the Union Budget.

Legislative Reforms to Boost Private Participation in Nuclear Energy

• New Vertical for Private Participation

- The government plans to establish a separate division within the Department of Atomic Energy to facilitate private sector involvement in India's nuclear industry.
- This reflects successful space sector reforms and goals to leverage private information for SMR layout, fabrication, and era switch negotiations with international players.

• Amendment to the Atomic Energy Act, 1962

- The proposed amendment seeks to amplify private sector participation beyond system supply, permitting private firms to operate nuclear power plants, together with Small Modular Reactors (SMRs).
- Currently, only NPCIL and its joint ventures with NTPC and NALCO have this authority.

• Revisions to Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act, 2010

- Changes are being taken into consideration to deal with foreign investment worries concerning liability.
- The current regulation assigns operator liability to device suppliers, discouraging worldwide companies like GE-Hitachi, Westinghouse, and Areva from making an investment in India's nuclear region.
- Revisions goal to make investment conditions more favorable.

Triggers for India's Small Modular Reactor (SMR) Push

• Need for Reliable Base-Load Power

- As India reduces the coal-fired power technology and will increase renewable energy potential, nuclear power is emerging as a stable and easy opportunity.
- Renewable sources like solar and wind face challenges because of intermittent energy technology and absence of feasible storage solutions.
- Nuclear energy gives a round-the-clock electricity source to stability grid demands and guide energy transition.

• India's Strategic Entry into SMR Manufacturing

- India aims to position itself as an aggressive participant in SMR layout and manufacturing, leveraging its many years of experience with small reactors and cost-effective manufacturing skills.
- The flow comes as China aggressively expands its SMR application, the usage of it as a diplomatic tool for the Global South.
- India seeks to counter China's dominance in this emerging sector and set up itself as a reputable alternative within the international SMR market.

SMRs: The Future of Nuclear Energy

- SMRs (30MWe to 300MWe per unit) are seen as a cost-powerful and bendy nuclear energy solution.
- India is specializing in SMRs for clean electricity transition and as a strategic foreign policy tool to extend its international influence.

Global SMR Developments

- Russia's Akademik Lomonosov (35 MWe x 2) – Floating SMR, operational from May 2020.
 - China's HTR-PM (grid-linked in 2021, operational in 2023).
- Western companies growing SMRs: Rolls-Royce (UK), NuScale's VOYGR (USA), Westinghouse's AP300 (USA), GE-Hitachi's BWRX-300 (USA), and Holtec's SMR-300.

Source: [The Indian Express](#)

Mains PYQ

1. With growing energy needs should India keep on expanding its nuclear energy programme? Discuss the facts and fears associated with nuclear energy. (2018)

- India is advancing its entry into the global Small Modular Reactors (SMR) production value chain, receiving institutional help via three key policy enablers announced in the Union Budget.
- The government plans to establish a separate division within the Department of Atomic Energy to facilitate private sector involvement in India's nuclear industry.
- This reflects successful space sector reforms and goals to leverage private information for SMR layout, fabrication, and era switch negotiations with international players.

[2.24] Illegal Indian Immigration Crackdown in US

Syllabus - Economy [GS Paper-3]

Context

Days before Prime Minister Narendra Modi's expected visit to the U.S., the Donald Trump management has started out the method of deporting unlawful Indian immigrants.

Background

- The US has intensified its immigration crackdown, with military planes deporting undocumented Indian migrants under President Donald Trump's management.
- With an estimated 7,25,000 undocumented Indians within the US, the flow affects lots of Indian nationals.
- India has agreed to take lower back unlawful migrants after verifying their citizenship, aiming to protect legal migration pathways for students and experts.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi's upcoming visit to the USA will see high-level discussions on immigration, bilateral trade, and diplomatic cooperation.

Mass Deportations under the Trump Administration

- The Trump administration is focused on undocumented migrants, leading to mass deportations.
- **Key Statistics:**
 - 20,407 undocumented Indians are underneath Trump's immigration radar.
 - 17,940 Indians are under the last elimination orders through US immigration courts.
 - 2,467 Indians are presently in detention centres under ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement).

Latest Deportation Flights

- A C-17 US military plane carried 205 Indian nationals from San Antonio, Texas, lower back to India.

- Most of these people are from Gujarat and Punjab.
- India has insisted on verifying nationality before accepting deported people.

Trump's Immigration Crackdown and Policy Changes

- Military aircraft are getting used for deportations, instead of commercial flights.
- ICE is coordinating with the FBI, DEA, and Border Patrol to locate and arrest undocumented migrants.
- Deportation arrests tripled in January, with over 1,000 people detained in a single week.

New Immigration Measures

- ICE has eliminated prison protections granted under Biden's administration.
- The CBP One cellular app, which allowed migrants to schedule border entry appointments, has been cracked down.
- Birthright citizenship for kids born to undocumented immigrants has been eliminated.
- Expansion of Detention Centers:
- Guantanamo Bay detention facility is being repurposed to house 30,000 migrants.
- The Buckley Space Force Base in Colorado is also being used for migrant detention.

India's Diplomatic Response and Concerns:

- India has agreed to simply accept undocumented Indians if nationality verification is confirmed.
- External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar conveyed India's stand to US Secretary of State Marco Rubio.
- India is towards unlawful immigration due to its links to organized crime and human trafficking.
- Over 1 million visas had been issued to Indian nationals in 2024, along with record numbers of student and business visas.
- 72% of H-1B visas issued within the last economic year went to Indian specialists.
- Trump has assured that the H-1B visa application will be maintained, even though a few reforms may be brought.

Trump's Economic Leverage on Immigration Policy

- Colombia refused to just accept a deportation flight—Trump retaliated with 25% tariffs on Colombian items.
- Canada and Mexico additionally confronted tariff threats, forcing them to ramp up border enforcement.
- The US Congress is considering sanctions on countries not cooperating with deportation orders.

How This Affects India

- While India has cooperated with the US, it remains careful of future trade restrictions.
- India's cognizance is on protecting its skilled team of workers migration and averting financial retaliation.
- **Impact on the Indian Community within the US:**
 - Many Indian undocumented people are averting public spaces because of elevated arrests.
 - Detentions at places of work and houses have prompted financial pressure in low-wage task sectors.

- The H-1B visa program remains uncertain, with possible modifications to sponsorship requirements.
- Many Indian college students are concerned about tough visa renewal regulations.

Source: [The Indian Express](#)

Mains PYQ

1. ‘What introduces friction into the ties between India and the United States is that Washington is still unable to find for India a position in its global strategy, which would satisfy India’s National self-esteem and ambitions’. Explain with suitable examples. (2019)

- Days before Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s expected visit to the U.S., the Donald Trump management has started out the method of deporting unlawful Indian immigrants.
- The US has intensified its immigration crackdown, with military planes deporting undocumented Indian migrants under President Donald Trump’s management.
- With an estimated 7,25,000 undocumented Indians within the US, the flow affects lots of Indian nationals.
- India has agreed to take lower back unlawful migrants after verifying their citizenship, aiming to protect legal migration pathways for students and experts.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s upcoming visit to the USA will see high-level discussions on immigration, bilateral trade, and diplomatic cooperation.

[2.25] India’s Nuclear Energy Roadmap

Syllabus - Economy [GS Paper-3]

Context

The government has set an ambitious goal of reaching 100 GW nuclear energy potential by 2047, aligning with the objectives of Viksit Bharat to ensure energy security, sustainability, and decreased dependency on fossil fuels.

Key Highlights of the Nuclear Energy Mission

- **Capacity Target:** a hundred GW by 2047 (Current ability: eight GW).
- **Small Modular Reactors (SMRs):** ₹20,000 crore allocation for R&D and indigenous SMR development.
- **Goal:** 5 operational SMRs by 2033.
- **Private Sector Participation:** Proposed amendments to key law:
 - **Atomic Energy Act, 1962** – Framework for nuclear energy improvement and regulation.
 - **Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act, 2010** – Ensuring reimbursement mechanisms for nuclear incidents.
- **Capacity Expansion:** 10 new reactors (totaling 8 GW) under creation throughout Gujarat, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Haryana, Karnataka, and Madhya Pradesh.
 - Approval for a 6×1208 MW nuclear plant in Andhra Pradesh in collaboration with the USA.

- **Nuclear Partnerships:** Collaboration with the personal area to expand Bharat Small Reactors (BSRs) and Bharat Small Modular Reactors (BSMRs).

Bharat Small Reactors (BSRs) & Bharat Small Modular Reactors (BSMRs)

- The government is advancing nuclear power enlargement through BSRs and BSMRs, ensuring a scalable and efficient electricity supply for industries and remote regions.
- **Bharat Small Reactors (BSRs)**
 - 220 MW Pressurized Heavy Water Reactors (PHWRs) with a strong security and operational track record.
 - Designed for reduced land necessities, making them suitable for business hubs (e.g., steel, aluminum, and metals) to be a useful resource in decarbonization efforts.
- **Public-Private Collaboration:**
 - The private sector presents land, cooling water, and capital.
 - Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited (NPCIL) manages design, first-class assurance, and operations.
- **Bharat Small Modular Reactors (BSMRs)**
 - **Definition:** Advanced nuclear reactors with an energy capability of up to 300 MW(e) per unit.
 - **Modular Construction:** Factory-fabricated additives for quicker deployment.
 - **Applications:**
 - Coal plant repurposing
 - Off-grid energy generation
 - Grid balance with renewables
 - Hydrogen co-generation (high-temperature gas-cooled reactors)

Government Initiatives for Nuclear Expansion

- India's nuclear roadmap includes a couple of initiatives to scale up nuclear capacity, enhance R&D, and integrate superior reactor technology.
- **Planned Expansion:** Increase nuclear potential from 8,180 MW to 22,480 MW by 2031-32.
- **New Projects:** 10 additional reactors in pre-undertaking levels, aiming for completion by 2031-32.
- **Fast Breeder Reactor (FBR) Development:** Prototype Fast Breeder Reactor (PFBR) – 500 MW completed important milestones in 2024, paving the way for India's closed nuclear fuel cycle strategy.
- **New Uranium Discovery:** Extended the life of Jaduguda Mines through 50+ years.
- **Public-Private Collaboration:** NPCIL & NTPC shaped the ASHVINI JV to broaden nuclear power plants under current regulatory frameworks.

Safety, Sustainability & Global Commitments

- **Safety Standards:** Indian nuclear energy plants adhere to stringent protection measures, with radiation degrees well under international benchmarks.
- **International Commitments:** India aligns with COP26 goals to obtain 500 GW non-fossil gasoline-based strength by 2030 and satisfy its Paris Agreement responsibilities.
- **Thorium Utilization:** R&D on Molten Salt Reactors to leverage India's abundant thorium reserves for long-term energy security.

Conclusion

- The Union Budget 2025-26 underscores India's dedication to a nuclear-powered future, decreasing carbon emissions and securing electricity reliability.
- The Nuclear Energy Mission for Viksit Bharat positions India as a global leader in superior nuclear technology, with a strategic push near indigenous innovation, public-private partnerships, and regulatory reforms.
- With robust coverage help and technological advancements, India's nuclear sector is poised for unparalleled increase, solidifying its function in a smooth energy-driven future.

Source: The PIB

Mains PYQ

1. With growing energy needs should India keep on expanding its nuclear energy programme? Discuss the facts and fears associated with nuclear energy. (2018)

- The government has set an ambitious goal of reaching 100 GW nuclear energy potential by 2047, aligning with the objectives of Viksit Bharat to ensure energy security, sustainability, and decreased dependency on fossil fuels.
- **Capacity Target:** a hundred GW by 2047 (Current ability: eight GW).
- **Small Modular Reactors (SMRs):** ₹20,000 crore allocation for R&D and indigenous SMR development.
- **Goal:** 5 operational SMRs by 2033.

[2.26] Insurance Sector to get 100% FDI

Syllabus - Economy [GS Paper-3]

Context

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced the withdrawal of the insurance sector to 100% foreign direct investment (FDI), up from the previous restriction of 74%, to reinforce the sector.

The Indian insurance sector

- It has gone through a huge transformation, evolving from being ruled by the Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) to a more varied industry with numerous players providing a wide range of products.
- The transformation has been pushed by Economic development, Technological advancements, Demographic modifications, Increased customer attention, specifically after the COVID-19 pandemic, concerning the significance of economic security through insurance.
- The insurance sector has performed a considerable position in the economic development of India.

Insurance Penetration in India

- Insurance penetration in India showed a moderate decline from 4% in FY23 to 3.7% in FY24, no matter a 7.7% growth in general charges, achieving Rs 11.2 lakh crore.
- Life insurance penetration decreased from 3% in FY23 to 2.8% in FY24.
- Non-life insurance penetration remained strong at 1%.

- Overall insurance penetration in India is 3.7%, that is under the global average of 7%, presenting a considerable gap and growth opportunity.

Impact of a 100% FDI on Insurance

- India's insurance sector has attracted Rs 82,847 crore in FDI since 2000, using increase and enhancing operations.
- The government expects the arena to develop at 7.1% yearly over the next 5 years, pushed by foreign funding and policy changes.
- 100% FDI ought to address the insurance under-penetration in India, accelerating the adoption of global best practices and introducing innovative services and products.
- It will make certain long-term capital, enhance technology, reinforce distribution, and growth competitiveness.

Benefits for Customers

- Increased foreign investment will introduce more players into the marketplace, intensifying opposition.
- Customers can anticipate better product, stepped forward service, and aggressive pricing, leading to better insurance penetration and narrowing the protection gap.
- Greater foreign participation is anticipated to enhance customer support standards and make a contribution to domestic monetary growth by investing rates in India.

Challenges

- Foreign insurers might also face challenges navigating India's complex distribution panorama, because the personal existence insurance sector is ruled by financial institution-led distribution, even as non-lifestyles insurance is based on corporation channels.
- **Adaptation Challenges:** Foreign insurers will want to adapt their business fashions to India-particular desires, which include the bancassurance-heavy model in existence insurance and business industry-led fashions for medical insurance.
 - Many foreign players are already in joint ventures (JVs), so restructuring might also take time.

Conclusion and Way Forward

- The insurance quarter in India has played an important function closer to the steadiness and increase of the Indian economy.
- Insurance is a capital-extensive industry, and a move to enhance capital access is useful.
- This could entice international insurers looking for greater manipulate at the Indian operations
- The commencement of the world to 100% FDI aligns with the goal of "Insurance for All" with the aid of 2047, requiring large capital inflows.
- The government is likewise thinking about revisions to FDI policies, which include changes associated with key management and board composition, to create a more favorable environment for foreign investment and area enlargement.
- The Economic Survey indicates insurers should target tier 2 and three towns, as well as rural sectors, where cognizance and accessibility are low, to growth penetration and stimulate growth.
- The use of progressive distribution models can help encompass underinsured clients, especially the ones already included by government schemes like Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana, [Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana](#), and [Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana](#).

Source: [The BS](#)

Mains PYQ

1. Public health system has limitations in providing universal health coverage. Do you think that private sector could help in bridging the gap? What other viable alternatives would you suggest? (2015)

- Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced the withdrawal of the insurance sector to 100% foreign direct investment (FDI), up from the previous restriction of 74%, to reinforce the sector.
- It has gone through a huge transformation, evolving from being ruled by the Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) to a more varied industry with numerous players providing a wide range of products.
- The transformation has been pushed by Economic development, Technological advancements, Demographic modifications, Increased customer attention, specifically after the COVID-19 pandemic, concerning the significance of economic security through insurance.
- The insurance sector has performed a considerable position in the economic development of India.

[2.27] PMJAY to cover Gig Workers

Syllabus - Economy [GS Paper-3]

Context

The Union Finance Minister has introduced that gig workers might be eligible for healthcare centers under the Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY) scheme.

About

- The total outlay for health in this year's budget has increased by over ₹9,000 crore.
- It will finance key programmes along with the undertaking to growth infrastructure, Ayushman Bharat, as well as allocation for All India Institute of Medical Sciences-Delhi.
- The Jan Arogya Yojana provides a cover of Rs 5 lakh in step with beneficiary families per year for secondary and tertiary care hospitalization across public and private empanelled hospitals in India.
- However, the details on whether the families of gig people can be protected or not are yet to be supplied.

Data on Health Insurance in India (NITI Aayog)

- Only around 10% of India's population have bought private medical health insurance, whilst nearly 60% are estimated to be covered by government-funded schemes.
- The ultimate 30% – more than 400 million people – still lack any form of medical insurance.

About Gig Workers

- Non-fashionable or gig work consists of income-earning activities outside of popular, long-term employer-employee relationships.

- It is predicated closely on temporary and part-time positions filled by unbiased contractors and freelancers rather than full-time permanent workers.
- The term is borrowed from the track world, wherein performers e-book “gigs” which might be single or quick-term engagements at diverse venues.
- The gig economic system uses digital structures to connect freelancers with clients to provide quick-term services or asset-sharing.
 - Examples encompass trip-hailing apps, food transport apps, and vacation condo apps.

India and Gig Economy

- In 2020, 7.7 million workers had been engaged inside the gig economic system.
- The gig team of workers is predicted to increase to 23.5 million workers or 4.1% of total workforce by 2029-30.
- At present about 47% of the gig work is in medium skilled jobs, about 22% in high skilled, and about 31% in low professional jobs.
- Its contribution to India’s gross domestic product (GDP) is expected to be big, with the capacity to contribute 1.25% to GDP by 2030, and create 90 million jobs within the long term.

Reasons for a rise in Gig Workers

- **Post Pandemic:** The trend multiplied during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, as gig workers brought requirements to domestic-bound customers, and people whose jobs had been removed turned to part-time and contract work for income.
- **Freedom to work from everywhere:** These kinds of positions facilitate unbiased contracting work, with lots of them not requiring a freelancer to come back into an office.
- **Rise of Technology and Internet:** Rise of fast net and smartphones have made it simpler to work from everywhere easily.
- **Convenient for Small Organisations:** Employers who can't afford to rent full-time workers to do all of the work will regularly rent part-time or transient workers to take care of busier times or particular initiatives.
- **Benefits Employers:** Employers do not need to offer related advantages, such as medical health insurance, Provident Fund, and yr-stop bonuses which make it a higher choice for them to pay only for work on a unit foundation.

Challenges

- **Work-existence balance:** For a few workers, the flexibility of running gigs can really disrupt the work-life balance, sleep patterns, and activities of daily life.
- **Can replace Full time personnel:** The number of full-time workers required by the agency can be reduced as freelance people take over the work.
- **No everyday activity advantages:** Many employers save cash by avoiding paying benefits including health insurance and paid vacation time.
 - There isn't any formal employment courting with the platform employer and there are normally no employee advantages in short-term contracts.

Steps Taken with the aid of Government of India for Gig Workers

- **Code of Social Security, 2020:** The Government has formulated the Code on Social Security, 2020 which envisages framing of suitable social security schemes for gig workers and platform workers on topics relating to lifestyles and incapacity cover, twist of fate insurance, health and maternity blessings, old age protection, and many others.
 - However, those provisions under the Code have not come into force.

- **E-Shram Portal:** The Government has also released e-Shram portal in 2021 for registration and advent of a Comprehensive National Database of Unorganized Workers along with gig workers and platform workers.
 - It lets a person register himself or herself at the portal on a self-statement foundation that unfolds throughout around 400 occupations.

Conclusion

- Not having the health insurance loved by many of those who are in conventional full-time employment, gig workers are especially liable to scientific charges. These charges can every now and then be catastrophic.
- As they frequently lack activity protection and related advantages of full-time employment, authorities-sponsored insurance ought to provide a critical safety net.

Source: [The Indian Express](#)

UPSC Mains Practice Question

1. Examine the role of 'Gig Economy' in the process of empowerment of women in India. (2021)

- The Union Finance Minister has introduced that gig workers might be eligible for healthcare centers under the Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY) scheme.
- The total outlay for health in this year's budget has increased by over ₹9,000 crore.
- It will finance key programmes along with the undertaking to growth infrastructure, Ayushman Bharat, as well as allocation for All India Institute of Medical Sciences-Delhi.
- The Jan Arogya Yojana provides a cover of Rs 5 lakh per beneficiary families per year for secondary and tertiary care hospitalization across public and private empanelled hospitals in India.
- However, the details on whether the families of gig people can be protected or not are yet to be supplied.

[2.28] Registration of Live-in Relationships Under UCC

Syllabus - Society [GS Paper-1]

Context

The newly applied Uniform Civil Code (UCC) in Uttarakhand has introduced a set of specified guidelines for registering live-in relationships, aiming to modify such relationships and ensure that they are diagnosed legally.

About

- The concept of live-in relationships, where couples cohabit without formal marriage, has gained prison and social recognition in India over the past two decades.
- **Historical Context:** Historically, Indian society has been rooted in traditional values, wherein marriage was the only identified form of a devoted relationship.
 - Live-in relationships were regularly stigmatized and faced societal disapproval.

- However, with the effect of globalization and publicity to Western subculture, the reputation of live-in relationships has grown.

Legal Recognition of Live-in Relationships in India

- Indian courts have recounted live-in relationships via numerous judgments, commonly invoking the Right to Life and Personal Liberty (Article 21) of the Constitution.
- **Various Judgements:**
 - **S. Khushboo v. Kanniammal (2010):** It dominated that live-in relationships fall under the right to personal liberty.
 - **Indra Sarma v. V.K.V. Sarma (2013):** It categorized live-in relationships into diverse sorts, recognizing people who resemble marriage under Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 (PWDVA).
 - **Protection Against Domestic Violence Act, 2005 (PWDVA):** It includes inside its ambit 'relationships inside the nature of marriage', thereby extending safety to women in live-in relationships who face home violence.
 - **In D. Velusamy v. D. Patchaiammal (2010),** the Court held that most effective relationships inside the nature of marriage would be eligible for legal safety beneath domestic violence legal guidelines.
 - **Inheritance and Maintenance Rights:** In cases in which the couple has children, the Supreme Court has held that children born out of live-in relationships are entitled to inheritance rights just like those born to legally married parents.

Rules For Registering Live-in Relationships Under UCC

- The Uttarakhand UCC mandates the registration of live-in relationships. It applies to both citizens of Uttarakhand and individuals living somewhere else in India.
- **Registration Requirements:** Under the UCC, couples getting into a live-in relation must register their relations both on the graduation and termination tiers.
- Supporting documents encompass Aadhaar-connected OTPs, a registration fee, and a certificate from a non secular leader putting forward the couple's eligibility for marriage in the event that they want to formalize their dating.
- **Prohibited Relationships:** The UCC Act specifies 74 prohibited relationships, with 37 every for males and females.
 - Couples falling within these degrees of prohibited relationships must gain approval from non secular leaders or community heads.
 - The registrar has the authority to reject registrations in the event that they conclude that the connection is towards public morality or customs.

Key Concerns and Impacts

- **Privacy Concern:** It is argued that it constitutes a gross violation of the right to privacy enshrined in Article 21 of the Constitution (Justice K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India), as expanded state surveillance over personal lives.
 - New regulations have raised concerns about the potential limitations they devise for interreligious and inter-caste relationships.
- **Rights of Women and Children:** Currently, girls in live-in relationships can claim upkeep under Section 125 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) and PWDVA, 2005, however those rights aren't absolute.
- **Protection Against Misuse:** Individuals may enter into such relationships without long-term commitment but later declare legal rights, leading to legal disputes.
- **Social and Cultural Challenges:** It challenges conventional notions of family and marriage, and increases questions on the ethical and moral implications of live-in relationships, specially in conservative groups.

Conclusion and Way Forward

- While the UCC in Uttarakhand aims to offer legal popularity and safety for live-in relationships, it also increases critical concerns about privacy and country intervention.
- The balance between regulating relationships and respecting man or woman autonomy might be crucial in ensuring that the new policies are implemented in a manner that promotes social harmony and protects the rights of individuals.
- If UCC replaces personal legal guidelines, there may be a want to attention on:
 - ensuring same rights for women in live-in relationships.
 - Offering inheritance and renovation rights similar to those in marriage.
 - Clarifying the criminal popularity of children born out of live-in relationships, particularly regarding legitimacy and inheritance rights.

Source: *The Indian Express*

Mains PYQ

1. Discuss the possible factors that inhibit India from enacting for its citizens a uniform civil code as provided for in the Directive Principles of State Policy. (2015)

- The newly applied Uniform Civil Code (UCC) in Uttarakhand has introduced a set of specified guidelines for registering live-in relationships, aiming to modify such relationships and ensure that they are diagnosed legally.
- The concept of live-in relationships, where couples cohabit without formal marriage, has gained prison and social recognition in India over the past two decades.
- **Historical Context:** Historically, Indian society has been rooted in traditional values, wherein marriage was the only identified form of a devoted relationship.
 - Live-in relationships were regularly stigmatized and faced societal disapproval.
 - However, with the effect of globalization and publicity to Western subculture, the reputation of live-in relationships has grown.

[2.29] Extension of Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) Till 2028

Syllabus - Governance [GS Paper-2]

Context

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced an extension of the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) till 2028, with an outlay of Rs 67,000 crore in the Union Budget 2025-26.

About

- The Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM), launched in 2019, aimed to offer Functional Household Tap Connections (FHTC), ensuring 55 litres per capita per day of secure drinking water to all rural families by 2024. However, because of implementation challenges, the cut-off date has now been extended to 2028.
- The cognizance now shifts to quality infrastructure, sustainable operation, and community-led control under the principle of “Jan Bhagidari” (people’s participation).

Key Features of JJM

- **Objectives & Implementation Strategy:**
 - **Universal Piped Water Access:** Ensuring each rural family receives tap water by 2028.
 - **Community Involvement:** Village Water & Sanitation Committees (VWSCs) or Pani Samitis play a key position, with 50% mandatory participation from women.
 - **State Participation:** States/UTs sign agreements to ensure sustainability and service quality.
- **Administrative Framework:**
 - **Nodal Ministry:** Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation, Ministry of Jal Shakti.
 - **Background:** JJM subsumed the National Rural Drinking Water Programme (NRDWP).
- **Funding Pattern:**
 - 90:10 for Himalayan and North-Eastern States.
 - 100% Central Funding for Union Territories.
 - 50:50 for different States.
- **Achievements Since 2019:**
 - 80% of rural families now have piped water access, up from 15% in 2019.
 - Over 12 crore households have won access to consuming water.
 - States with 100% Coverage: Arunachal Pradesh, Goa, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Gujarat, Punjab, Telangana, and Mizoram.
 - UTs with 100% Coverage: Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Dadra & Nagar Haveli & Daman & Diu, and Puducherry.

Challenges in Implementation

- **Infrastructure & Connectivity Issues:**
 - **Initial “Low-Hanging Fruit” Approach:** Coverage was fast expanded in regions with existing infrastructure, however expanding to remote villages has been established hard.
 - **Reservoir-to-Village Pipelines:** Many villages require water transportation from distant reservoirs, increasing prices and logistical complexity.
- **Cost Overruns Due to External Factors:**
 - **COVID-19 Impact:** Disruptions in supply chains and exertions availability.
 - **Russia-Ukraine War:** Equipment and material prices surged, straining budgets.
- **Implementation Bottlenecks:**
 - **Underutilization of Funds:** Despite finances allocations, ₹50,000 crore remained unspent in 2024-25, highlighting execution inefficiencies.

Way Ahead

- **Strengthening Last-Mile Connectivity:** Prioritizing infrastructure expansion in faraway areas.
 - Upgrading reservoir pumping structures and ensuring adequate groundwater resources.
- **Improving Budget Utilization:** Enhancing country-level execution capacity to ensure well timed use of allotted funds.
 - Flexible funding mechanisms to house fee fluctuations.
- **Ensuring Transparency & Accountability:** Implementing impartial verification mechanisms to validate actual water supply in rural families.
 - Leveraging generation (IoT- based tracking, GIS mapping) for actual-time tracking.

- **State & Centre Coordination:** Ensuring states fulfill their funding obligations to keep away from delays.
 - Stronger agreements between the Centre and states for clean implementation.
- **Community Engagement & Women's Participation:** Expanding "Jan Bhagidari" (people's participation) to ensure local ownership of water control.
 - Increasing girls's management roles in Pani Samitis.

Source: The Indian Express

Mains PYQ

1. What is water stress? How and why does it differ regionally in India? (2019)

- Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced an extension of the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) till 2028, with an outlay of Rs 67,000 crore in the Union Budget 2025-26.
- The Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM), launched in 2019, aimed to offer Functional Household Tap Connections (FHTC), ensuring 55 litres per capita per day of secure drinking water to all rural families by 2024. However, because of implementation challenges, the cut-off date has now been extended to 2028.
- The cognizance now shifts to quality infrastructure, sustainable operation, and community-led control under the principle of "Jan Bhagidari" (people's participation).

[2.30] Legal Protection of Domestic Workers

Syllabus - Governance [GS Paper-2]

Context

In a landmark move, the Supreme Court of India has directed the Union government to study the need for a specific law for domestic workers.

Current Situation of Domestic Workers

- The Court has ordered the formation of an inter-ministerial committee to evaluate and propose a legal framework for their benefit, protection, and law of rights.
- Despite their important function in millions of families, domestic people lack legal safety under many labour legal guidelines, including the Minimum Wages Act and the Equal Remuneration Act.
- While a few states have delivered laws, there is no national-level law ensuring their rights.

Vulnerability and Exploitation

- Domestic work is a feminized career, with a big percentage of workers being women from marginalized groups.
- Workers face low wages, job lack of confidence, and extended workloads without extra pay.
- Social safety features are almost non-existent, leaving workers prone to monetary crises.
- Domestic work is socially undervalued and perceived as an inherent skill all women should possess, contributing to its invisibility and absence of popularity.

Challenges and Judicial Interventions

- **ILO Convention 189:** India has not ratified this international widespread on home workers' rights, which mandates honest wages, social security, and protection against abuse.
- **Judicial Orders on Placement Agencies:** The Supreme Court has previously directed the registration of placement organizations, but enforcement stays susceptible, leaving workers unprotected.
- **Complex Employment Structures:** Domestic work exists in more than one form—element-time, full-time, making it tough to implement standardized protections.

Need for Inclusive Legislation

- **Proof of Employment:** Enforcing legal protections demands formal documentation of employment, which is presently hard for workers to acquire.
- **Employer Resistance:** Many employers do not apprehend themselves as “employers” or consider their homes as formal offices.
- **Power Imbalance:** The uneven company-worker relation—where the organisation’s personal space is the worker’s office—limits oversight and law.

Opportunities and Challenges in Implementation

- **Ensuring Core Entitlements:** A well-based law can set up minimum wages, adjust working hours, and provide social security, extensively improving conditions for domestic workers.
- **Redefining Power Hierarchies:** Legal protections will challenge the present power dynamics and apprehend the value of housework and care work.
- **Regional Considerations:** States like Kerala and Delhi have implemented measures for domestic workers, which can serve as models for national legislation.
- **Challenges in Enforcement:** Even with a brand new law, effective implementation remains a key assignment, requiring robust monitoring mechanisms and employer responsibility.

Conclusion

- The Supreme Court’s directive provides an essential opportunity to recommend a national law shielding home people. While legislation alone may not right away rework working conditions, it's a necessary first step toward recognizing their rights, ensuring truthful wages, and supplying social protection. The real effect will depend upon the suggestions of the committee and the Union government’s dedication to imposing significant reforms.

Source: [The Indian Express](#)

Mains PYQ

1. Distinguish between ‘care economy’ and ‘monetized economy’. How can the care economy be brought into a monetized economy through women empowerment? (2023)

- In a landmark move, the Supreme Court of India has directed the Union government to study the need for a specific law for domestic workers.
- The Court has ordered the formation of an inter-ministerial committee to evaluate and propose a legal framework for their benefit, protection, and law of rights.
- Despite their important function in millions of families, domestic people lack legal safety under many labour legal guidelines, including the Minimum Wages Act and the Equal Remuneration Act.
- While a few states have delivered laws, there is no national-level law ensuring their rights.

[2.31] India's Debt Market

Syllabus - Economy [GS Paper-3]

Context

The Economic Survey 2024-25 highlighted that India's debt market remains undercapitalised, and risky borrowers are unable to access it.

About the Debt Market

- Debt Market is the market in which fixed income securities of various types and capabilities are issued and traded.
- These are issued by the Central and State Governments, Municipal Corporations, Govt. Bodies and business entities, like Financial Institutions, Banks, Public Sector Units, Public Ltd. Groups and also based finance instruments.
- Government bonds, additionally called Government Securities (G-Secs), are issued by the Central and State governments to finance their monetary desires.
- Corporate bonds are issued through corporations to raise the price range for their operations and enlargement projects.
- Instruments Traded in Money Market: Treasury Bills, Certificates of Deposits (CDs), Commercial Paper (CPs), Bills of Exchange and other such instruments of short-time period maturities (i.e., not those exceeding 1 year with regard to the authentic maturity).

India's Debt Market: Challenges and Constraints

- **Undercapitalisation and Limited Access:** The Economic Survey 2024-25 reveals that the company bond market in India is only 18% of the country's GDP, compared to 80% in South Korea and 36% in China.
 - This undercapitalisation is a chief hurdle for smaller gamers and risky debtors who locate it hard to tap into the market.
- **Private Placements Dominance:** Private placements account for 99.1% of the overall assets mobilised through the bond market, deterring the participation of retail buyers.
- **Barriers to Public Issuance:** Public issuance of company bonds has declined from 12% of general issuances in 2014 to 2% in 2024.
 - In FY24, the general public placement of company bonds stood at ₹19,000 crore, while personal placements amounted to around ₹8.38 lakh crore.
- **Regulatory Challenges:** Most of the borrowing inside the bond market is completed by corporations with the highest credit scores (AAA, AA+, and AA), leaving out many smaller companies and non-banking financial companies (NBFCs).
- **Liquidity In Debt Market:** High access costs, statistics asymmetry, and the absence of a secondary market for company bonds are foremost hurdles.
 - These elements make it difficult for unstable borrowers to steady investment through corporate bonds.
- **Debt Recovery Challenges:** Inefficiencies in debt healing frameworks, which include the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) and Debt Recovery Tribunals (DRTs), hinder creditor self assurance.
 - The advent of out-of-court restructuring frameworks, modeled after systems in South Korea, ought to expedite recoveries and decrease judicial burdens.

Opportunities for India's Bond Market

- **Infrastructure and Green Bonds:** The National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP) with \$1.4 trillion capital geared toward accelerating India's infrastructure improvement.
 - India is pushing inexperienced finance with \$10 billion really worth of inexperienced bonds in 2024, assisting weather-friendly tasks.
- **Reforming FPI Norms to Boost Liquidity:**
 - Allocation limits beneath the Voluntary Retention Route (VRR);
- **Unified Market Operations for Seamless Functioning:** To reduce transaction fees, and beautify investor self belief.
 - Strengthening Debt Recovery Mechanisms inspired by models in South Korea and the Philippines.

Recommendations for Improvement

- Reducing access rates, improving records transparency, and organising a secondary market for company bonds should enhance liquidity and accessibility.
- Additionally, enjoyable regulations to allow coverage and pension budget to put money into lower-rated bonds ought to help small gamers and volatile debtors access the market.

Source: *The Indian Express*

Mains PYQ

1. Public expenditure management is a challenge to the Government of India in the context of budget-making during the post-liberalization period. Clarify it. (2019)

- The Economic Survey 2024-25 highlighted that India's debt market remains undercapitalised, and risky borrowers are unable to access it.
- Debt Market is the market in which fixed income securities of various types and capabilities are issued and traded.
- These are issued by the Central and State Governments, Municipal Corporations, Govt. Bodies and business entities, like Financial Institutions, Banks, Public Sector Units, Public Ltd. Groups and also based finance instruments.
- Government bonds, additionally called Government Securities (G-Secs), are issued by the Central and State governments to finance their monetary desires.
- Corporate bonds are issued through corporations to raise the price range for their operations and enlargement projects.

[2.32] Mental Health and the Country's Economic Future

Syllabus - Health [GS Paper-2]

Context

The Economic Survey 2024-25 highlights the connection between mental health and the country's economic future, emphasizing its effect on productiveness, economic growth, and common well-being.

Understanding Mental Wellbeing

- The survey highlights how mental well-being influences workplace performance, way of life decisions, and national economic progress.
- The survey defines mental properly-being as a multidimensional idea that includes:
 - **Emotional health:** Managing pressure and emotions correctly.
 - **Social health:** Building healthful relationships and a supportive community.
 - **Cognitive health:** Enhancing awareness, decision-making, and hassle-solving skills.
 - **Physical health:** Maintaining universal health via a wholesome life-style.

Rise in Mental Health Issues Among Youth

- **Excessive internet & social media use:** Leads to tension, sleep issues, and interest issues.
- **Lack of circle of relatives engagement:** Weak social assistance systems negatively impact emotional properly-being.
- **Hostile offices & lengthy working hours:** Cause burnout, strain, and decreased productivity.
- **Unhealthy life-style picks:** Ultra-processed foods and shortage of physical activity get worse mental and physical health.

Mental Health and Economic Growth

- Hostile work cultures and excessive hours spent operating on the table can adversely have an effect on mental well-being and in the long run put the brakes on the pace of monetary increase.
- The **World Health Organisation (WHO)** estimated that mental health issues ought to result in an economic loss of \$1.03 trillion for India between 2012 and 2030.
- India's demographic dividend is driving on skill, education, physical health and, specifically, mental health of its teenagers.

Suggestions

- A high-quality work environment can improve mental health.
- It requires interventions at both school and circle of relatives tiers to encourage more healthy lifestyles.
- Promoting outdoor activities, building friendships, and strengthening circle of relatives relationships can assist lessen internet overuse and improve mental well-being.

India's Mental Health Landscape

- For the first time ever, the Economic Survey 2023-24 pointed out mental health, its importance and implications on coverage suggestions.
- As per the National Mental Health Survey (NMHS) 2015-16, 10.6% adults in India suffered from mental problems even as treatment gap for mental disorders ranged between 70% and 92%.
 - The prevalence of mental morbidity became higher in urban metro regions (13.5%) in comparison to rural areas (6.9%).
- **Lack of Psychiatrists in India:** The World Health Organization's recommendations state that there have to be as a minimum 3 training psychiatrists according to one lakh population.
 - As per the present day National Mental Health Survey (NMHS) 2015 and 2016, India has only 0.75 psychiatrists per 1 lakh population.

Conclusion

- Mental health is important for each non-public and societal improvement.
- Governments, employers, and agencies have to keep efforts to enhance mental health care access and lower stigma.
- India is making strides in mental health with regulations and packages to deal with challenges and bridge treatment gaps.

Source: The Indian Express

Mains PYQ

1. In order to enhance the prospects of social development, sound and adequate health care policies are needed particularly in the fields of geriatric and maternal health care. Discuss. (2020)

- The Economic Survey 2024-25 highlights the connection between mental health and the country's economic future, emphasizing its effect on productiveness, economic growth, and common well-being.
- The survey highlights how mental well-being influences workplace performance, way of life decisions, and national economic progress.
- The survey defines mental properly-being as a multidimensional idea that includes:
 - **Emotional health:** Managing pressure and emotions correctly.
 - **Social health:** Building healthful relationships and a supportive community.
 - **Cognitive health:** Enhancing awareness, decision-making, and hassle-solving skills.
 - **Physical health:** Maintaining universal health via a wholesome life-style.

[2.33] Dignified Death for the Terminally ill

Syllabus - Governance [GS Paper-2]

Context

In a historic move, the Karnataka Health Department issued an order to put into effect the Supreme Court's ruling allowing terminally ill patients to die with dignity.

Background and Rationale

- Karnataka is the second state after Kerala to implement the directive.
- Euthanasia is the intentional act of ending someone's life to alleviate struggling because of a painful, incurable disorder or disorder.

Supreme Court's Directives on Passive Euthanasia

- **Legal Recognition (2018 & 2023 Rulings):** The Supreme Court legalized passive euthanasia in 2018, recognizing the right to die with dignity under Article 21 of the Constitution.
 - In 2023, the court simplified procedures for withdrawing life assist, ensuring a based and ethical technique.

- **Conditions for Passive Euthanasia:** Applicable to terminally ill patients without a hope of healing.
 - Allowed whilst the affected person is in a chronic vegetative state or prolonged laid low with an incurable circumstance.
- **Advance Medical Directive (AMD) or ‘Living Will’:** Any equipped grownup can create an AMD specifying their scientific treatment possibilities in case they lose choice-making capability.
 - The AMD can nominate two representatives to make decisions on the affected person’s behalf.
- **Approval Process for Life Support Withdrawal:** Hospitals ought to set up Primary and Secondary Medical Boards (each with three senior medical doctors).
 - The District Health Officer must be concerned in the decision.
 - Final decision requires Judicial Magistrate of the First Class (JMFC) approval and reporting to the High Court Registrar.

What is Passive Euthanasia?

- It is withholding or withdrawing life-maintaining treatment (LST), allowing a terminally ill patient to certainly die.
- Legal in India (as per Supreme Court rulings in 2018 & 2023) under strict medical and legal approaches.
- The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) has released draft hints titled “Guidelines for Withdrawal of Life Support in Terminally Ill Patients.”

Ethical Considerations of Euthanasia

- **Autonomy and the Right to Die:**
 - **Pro-Euthanasia:** Argue that people have the right to pick out how they live and die. A competent person has to be allowed to make choices concerning their life, consisting of opting for euthanasia.
 - **Anti-Euthanasia:** Opponents accept as true that allowing euthanasia undermines the intrinsic fee of life and will set a risky precedent for determining while life is well worth living.
- **Beneficence and Compassion:**
 - **Pro:** Physicians take an oath to lessen struggling. For terminally sick patients in insufferable pain, euthanasia may be a compassionate act that gives comfort.
 - **Anti:** Opponents argue that palliative care and pain control need to be prioritized instead of ending a patient’s life.
- **Slippery Slope Argument:**
 - Pro: Some agree that euthanasia can be regulated with strict hints to prevent misuse.
 - Anti: Others argue that legalizing euthanasia may want to result in involuntary euthanasia or stress on vulnerable people (elderly, disabled) to end their lives to lessen the load on households or society.
- **Sanctity of Life vs. Quality of Life:**
 - **Sanctity of Life:** Many non secular and moral perspectives argue that life is sacred and have to not be taken, no matter suffering.
 - **Quality of Life:** Others contend that once someone’s quality of life is irreversibly faded, euthanasia is a humane choice.
- **Legal and Social Implications:**
 - **Legalization Issues:** Countries like the Netherlands, Belgium, and Canada allow euthanasia beneath strict situations, but legalizing it globally remains contentious.

- **Potential Abuse:** There are concerns that euthanasia laws can be abused, leading to non-consensual deaths or prioritizing euthanasia over enhancing healthcare.

Source: [The Indian Express](#)

Prelims PYQ

1. Right to Privacy is protected as an intrinsic part of Right to Life and Personal Liberty. Which of the following in the Constitution of India correctly and appropriately imply the above statement? (2018)

(a) Article 14 and the provisions under the 42nd Amendment to the Constitution.

(b) Article 17 and the Directive Principles of State Policy in Part IV.

(c) Article 21 and the freedoms guaranteed in Part III.

(d) Article 24 and the provisions under the 44th Amendment to the Constitution.

Ans: (c)

- In a historic move, the Karnataka Health Department issued an order to put into effect the Supreme Court's ruling allowing terminally ill patients to die with dignity.
- Karnataka is the second state after Kerala to implement the directive.
- Euthanasia is the intentional act of ending someone's life to alleviate struggling because of a painful, incurable disorder or disorder.
- The Supreme Court legalized passive euthanasia in 2018, recognizing the right to die with dignity under Article 21 of the Constitution.