DHAIRYA TIMES
A quest for Horizon

IPS Preeti Kumari
UPSC RANK 130,2022

DHAIRYA
Civil Services Society
Bharati College

धैर्य, निष्ठा, अनुशासन

IPS Abhishek Vashistha
UPSC ,2023

DHAIRYA TIMES
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INTRODUCTION

In a world that's constantly evolving, Dhairya Times, a monthly magazine series presented by Dhairya - The Civil Services Society, seeks to be your trusted guide to navigating the crucial trends, headlines, opinions, stories and ideas shaping our lives everyday.

Our missions stands to providing a platform for peer learning, holistic development and an analytical point of views that push our horizons beyond to build a crucial analysis of ongoing issues.

From in-depth features and peer analysis to all the technical information, we dive deep into the topics that are transforming the global landscape, while also forging in as your go-to resource for understanding the forces shaping the world we are a part of.

As a Society , we thrive to assist students in their academic and professional pursuits. To achieve this, we have come across monthly Current Affairs magazine series, starting from October.

We hope the standpoint of Dhairya and Dhairya Times as a whole brings about the desired change in boosting your understanding of facts along with opinions so stated.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

As we reflect on the journey of completing Magazine - *Dhairya Times* for the month of October, we are reminded that every step was made possible by the unwavering support and expertise of our esteemed Principal Ma'am , Prof. Saloni Gupta, whose vision has shaped our society's mission.

Followed by the significant encouragement of our mentor, IRS Rajesh Gupta sir, for his invaluable insights and expertise, inspiring our students to strive for excellence. Our gratitude also extends to our guest speakers, IPS Preeti Kumari and IPS Abhishek Vashishtha, for sharing their experiences and motivating our students.

We thank our Convenor Mr. Vimlok Tiwari, our Associate Teacher's of Dhairya, and Dhairya's Editorial Board Members for their tireless efforts in making our monthly magazine a reality. The due contribution has enabled in shaping this endeavour in ways that words can scarcely capture, providing a valuable resource for Civil Services Aspirants

Sincerely
Prerna Bhute
President
. Dhairya: The Civil Services Society

Words That Matter

Prof. Saloni Gupta
Principal
Bharati College, University of Delhi

Hello my dear students.

I have always believed that your College is a place where three things are made viz. your career, your personality and your friends for life. Each one of these is very important and each one of you must explore all the avenues and opportunities available, towards each one of these payoffs from the college life.

Societies and clubs are platforms that often provide you with the wonderful confluence, if not congruence, of all three of these goals. They connect you to people with similar interests, they create opportunities for you to work in teams, they put you in positions of responsibility and leadership, they help you evolve as individuals and shape your personalities and, in their own intangible ways, they pave career paths for you by doing some or all of the above.

The Dhairya Society of our college is one such society that brings civil services aspirants of our college together and works towards supporting their goal of cracking this hallowed exam, conducted by the prestigious UPSC. Its a matter of great pride and satisfaction that the Dhairya society is bringing the first ever edition of its monthly magazine, aimed at sharing the vital information, tips and strategic advice for fellow aspirants.
I congratulate the office bearers and foot soldiers of this society and extend my best wishes to all our civil services aspirants.

Best wishes and best of luck.

Words That Matter

IRS Rajesh Gupta

Greetings to the students of Bharati College in general and to the civil services aspirants connected via the platform of the Dhairya Society (Bharati College) in particular. It gives me immense pleasure to note that Dhairya society is doing commendable work in the field of peer learning, information dissemination and mutual self-help. Dhairya Times, its monthly magazine, is another step in that direction. I am glad to convey my congratulations and best wishes to all those who relate to the Dhairya Society and its meaningful endeavours.

I take this opportunity to give my perspective on the Role of Civil Servants, as a kind of a pep-talk to all you aspirants. As I see it, you as civil servants can help in bringing The Change that the society needs and probably the change that you also wish to see in your country, in the governance around you. This is a great platform that allows you to B the change you want to C. It is also an opportunity and a platform to serve the underprivileged masses and under-served sections. So, Being the Voice of the Voiceless is another role that can and should inspire the youth in our colleges towards this exam/job. This job also allows you to become Self-made and Empowered. ANYONE CAN BECOME a civil servant with the right combo of intelligence, diligence, motivation and strategy. So, if you come from humble backgrounds or from a weaker section/gender/class - this is The Job that can empower you and you, in-turn, can empower thousands and lakhs of common people. Be driven by that, be fired by that!

Make no mistakes though, this is a tough exam and so it should be too, for it gets you THE TOP JOBS in the country. But hey, when the going gets tough, the tough gets going. So, tell yourself "I'm willing to suffer today, for a better tomorrow". They say those who sweat in peace, don't have to bleed in war. So, prepare yourselves adequately for this war - with the right arsenal, the right strategy, the right work ethics and the right attitude. This exam is tough, but not as tough as it is often made out to be. Dream big, create commensurate processes, believe in your processes and believe in yourself! If your processes are right, the results are bound to be right - sooner or later, in fact sooner rather than later!

Finally, I'll tell you what a teacher of mine at SRCC, my alma mater, had told everyone in our passing out batch - make sure you get what you like, else you'll have to like what you get.

Best of luck.

Jai Hind!

IPS Preeti Kumari

In J. R. R. Tolkein's The Lord Of The Rings, when the protagonist Frodo Baggins sets out for Mount Doom, he whispers, "But I do not know the way." He has taken up a monumental goal, unaware of how he can achieve it. He doesn't know the way, yet he steps forward, embracing a journey brimming with challenges he can scarcely foresee.

When I began college at the University of Delhi, I, too, glimpsed my own "Mount Doom," yet I also knew that "I do not know the way." Through the wrong turns and the right ones, along paths crowded or deserted, I navigated my own adventure with the UPSC Civil Services Exam. And an adventure it has been—filled with trials and triumphs, persistence and satisfaction. If you choose Civil Services, I invite you to see it as I have: a challenging adventure, both arduous and exhilarating.

The journey truly begins when you hear that inner voice, that unmistakable call telling you why this goal matters to you. For if your "why" is clear, the "how" will gradually appear, guiding you step by step. That's how it is in life.

College is a time to tune into this inner voice, to find your inner compass. As you navigate independence and adulthood, you'll begin to ask: Are my dreams truly mine, or the echoes of others' expectations? Here, where your interests, talents, and ambitions converge, you'll start discerning what you're truly drawn to. This self-discovery is the most vital gift college can offer.

To fully unravel this path, don't limit yourself to textbooks or UPSC guides alone—that would be a disservice to yourself. You have the intellect to master what's in these books when you will write the exam, but life will demand more from you than academic knowledge. It will call for resilience when the journey gets tough. This is where life skills, patience, and emotional fortitude are essential; they keep you from faltering on steep climbs.

So, as you pursue this dream, equip yourself with skills that will help you excel: think critically, write persuasively, see issues from multiple angles, and learn to engage with people from a space of respect and humility. Let your values align with the Constitution of India, respecting laws and principles that shape our society. You'll need persistence, patience, dedication, and a singular focus to give this journey your best.

College is the perfect arena to build these skills—through extracurriculars, leadership roles, and creative pursuits. Academics alone won't cut it. In every field, what's needed is dynamism, adaptability, and creativity.

Specifically for the exam, I spent my college days reading newspapers, studying the UPSC CSE syllabus, past year questions, and polishing my thinking and writing skills for the exam. I never limited myself to mere academics and was active in extracurriculars as well. Whenever I could, I also participated in essay competitions, honing my writing skills until I began to win. You can do the same; start by summarizing editorials or articles, sharpening both language and thought.

When choosing electives in every semester, consider those connected to the UPSC syllabus—they'll deepen your knowledge. And if certain subjects seem daunting, approach them creatively. If history feels intimidating, pick up one of William Dalrymple's books and discover the wonder within. Remember, this exam demands a grasp of every subject's role in the larger world. A civil servant must know the basics of space technology as well as the richness of ancient Indian history. Embrace the syllabus as a doorway to knowledge, and soon you'll be captivated by the world's it opens for you.

Once you've set foot in this world, there's no turning back. Until then, dream boldly, for college will be among the most transformative years of your life. Pursue your passions, read widely, explore new places with friends, and grow into the best version of yourself.

If you can dream it, you can achieve it. But it will require you to seize each day, or as John Keating urges in Dead Poets Society: "Carpe Diem!"

Words That Matter

IPS Abhishek Vashishtha

Dear Aspirants of Bharti College,

This is Abhishek Vashishtha, IPS, reaching out to commend your dedication to the noble journey of civil services preparation. Remember, success in this path demands discipline, consistency, and a vision to serve our nation. Every challenge you face is an opportunity to grow stronger, and every failure a step closer to success. Stay focused, make your preparation holistic, and never underestimate the power of self-belief. The nation awaits leaders like you to bring about positive change. Wishing you all the very best for your future endeavors. Keep striving and shine bright!

Warm regards,
Abhishek Vashishtha, IPS

NEWS HIGHLIGHTS

JANUARY

Monthly News Highlight

Here's what has happened in the last month and what's to come!

January 1, 2025

"India's Decarbonization Strategy Focuses on Green Hydrogen Initiatives"
(GS Paper 3 – Environment)
The government has launched a comprehensive framework for green hydrogen production to meet net-zero goals by 2070.

"SC Issues Guidelines for Speedy Disposal of Pending Civil Cases"
(GS Paper 2 – Polity)
Supreme Court sets a timeline for resolving civil cases to reduce the backlog, ensuring better judicial efficiency.

"Government to Roll Out Digital Crop Insurance Platform"
(GS Paper 3 – Agriculture)
A digital platform aims to streamline the crop insurance process, benefiting farmers with real-time claim settlements.

January 2, 2025

"India Witnesses Record FDI in Renewable Energy Sector"
(GS Paper 3 – Economy)
Foreign Direct Investment in India's renewable energy sector surpassed $20 billion in 2024.

"NITI Aayog Recommends Universal Health Coverage Roadmap"
(GS Paper 2 – Health)
A new roadmap outlines the steps to ensure affordable healthcare for all citizens by 2030.

"Centre Announces New Policies for Data Localization"
(GS Paper 3 – Cybersecurity)
Guidelines focus on strengthening data sovereignty and mandating critical data storage within India.

ACHIEVEMENT

India has been ranked as having the 4th most powerful military in the world after the United States of America, Russia and China by the Global Firepower Index 2025.

Monthly News Highlight

Here's what has happened in the last month and what's to come!

January 3,2025

"India's First Space-Based Solar Observatory Completes One Year"
(GS Paper 3 – Science & Tech)
The Aditya-L1 mission achieves major milestones in studying solar storms and their impact on Earth.

"States Adopt the New National Curriculum Framework"
(GS Paper 2 – Education)
NEP 2020 gains momentum as most states align with the new curriculum emphasizing critical thinking.

"Rising Heatwaves Pose New Challenges for Urban Planning"
(GS Paper 1 – Geography)
Cities gear up to combat increasing heatwave incidents with green urban planning initiatives.

January 4,2025

"PM Modi Inaugurates Global Climate Resilience Summit"
(GS Paper 2 – International Relations)
Leaders discuss collaborative efforts to combat climate change and foster resilience in vulnerable regions.

"India's Unemployment Rate Falls to 5-Year Low"
(GS Paper 3 – Economy)
CMIE data shows improved employment rates, driven by growth in manufacturing and services.

"India Launches National AI Policy for Inclusive Growth"
(GS Paper 3 – Science & Tech)
The policy focuses on ethical AI use, skill-building, and enhancing public services through AI integration.

January 4 World Braille day

ACHIEVEMENT

NATO has announced the launch of a new mission to protect undersea cables in the Baltic Sea region, after a series of incidents in the area raised concerns about possible Russian activity.

Monthly News Highlight

Here's what has happened in the last month and what's to come!

January 5,2025

"U.S.-India Trade Talks Emphasize Digital Economy Collaboration"
(GS Paper 2 – International Relations)
Bilateral discussions highlight opportunities in digital trade and intellectual property protections.

"Supreme Court Orders Inquiry into Illegal Mining Activities"
(GS Paper 3 – Environment)
SC directs states to curb illegal mining, emphasizing its environmental and social impact.

"India to Conduct First-Ever Census of Migratory Birds in Wetlands"
(GS Paper 3 – Environment)
The initiative aims to study biodiversity and conservation in Ramsar sites across the country.

January 6,2025

"G20 Chairmanship: India Highlights Role of Digital Public Goods"
(GS Paper 2 – International Relations)
India proposes a global framework for the adoption of digital public infrastructure during G20 meetings.

"Government to Introduce Critical Cybersecurity Bill"
(GS Paper 3 – Cybersecurity)
The proposed bill aims to enhance India's cyber defense capabilities amidst rising threats.

"India's Startups Witness Surge in Deep-Tech Investments"
(GS Paper 3 – Economy)
Deep-tech startups attract record funding, driven by innovations in AI, quantum computing, and robotics.

January 7,2025

"Supreme Court Reiterates Right to Protest Is Not Absolute"
(GS Paper 2 – Polity)

January 5 National birds day

January 6 Guru Gobind Singh Jayanti

ACHIEVEMENT

With an operational network of 1000 kilometres, India has become the country with the third largest operational metro rail network in the world after China and the United States.

Monthly News Highlight

Here's what has happened in the last month and what's to come!

SC clarifies limits to protests in public spaces, balancing rights with public order and convenience.

"IMF Warns of Global Economic Slowdown in 2025"
(GS Paper 3 – Economy)
IMF projects a global GDP slowdown due to inflationary pressures and geopolitical tensions.

"India Strengthens Defence Ties with African Nations"
(GS Paper 2 – International Relations)
MoUs signed to enhance military training and technology transfer with African allies.

January 8,2025

"Union Budget to Focus on Rural Development and Skill Training"
(GS Paper 3 – Economy)
Pre-budget discussions reveal increased allocations for rural employment schemes and vocational training.

"India Successfully Tests Long-Range Ballistic Missile"
(GS Paper 3 – Security)
The Agni-VI missile test highlights India's strategic deterrence capabilities.

"Supreme Court Seeks Status Report on MGNREGA Performance"
(GS Paper 2 – Governance)
SC directs the Centre to ensure transparency and effectiveness in MGNREGA implementation.

January 9, 2025

"India Records Decline in Infant Mortality Rate"
(GS Paper 2 – Health)
The NFHS-6 survey shows a significant reduction in infant mortality due to better healthcare facilities.

"E-Waste Recycling Policy to Be Implemented Nationwide"
(GS Paper 3 – Environment)
The government announces a policy to formalize e-waste recycling, reducing environmental hazards.

ACHIEVEMENT

Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone of the country's first Green Hydrogen Hub Project near Visakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh on 8 January 2025. It was Set up by NTPC Green Energy Limited.

ACHIEVEMENT

Appointment of New ISRO Chief: On January 8, 2025, India appointed V. Narayanan as the new chairman of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), succeeding S. Somanath. Narayanan, a veteran rocket scientist who joined ISRO in 1984, is set to lead the organization through ambitious projects, including plans for a space station by 2035 and a manned moon mission by 2040.

Monthly News Highlight

Here's what has happened in the last month and what's to come!

"India-UK Free Trade Agreement Finalized"
(GS Paper 2 – International Relations)
The historic trade pact aims to enhance bilateral trade in goods and services, with a focus on technology transfer

January 10,2025

"Supreme Court Upholds Anti-Defection Law in Landmark Judgment"
(GS Paper 2 – Polity)
SC reaffirms the validity of the anti-defection law, ensuring legislative stability.

"National Green Tribunal Seeks Action Plan for Urban Waste Management"
(GS Paper 3 – Environment)
NGT directs urban local bodies to address growing concerns over waste disposal and landfill management.

"India's Space Industry to Witness Major Reforms"
(GS Paper 3 – Science & Tech)
ISRO announces private sector participation in satellite launches and space exploration missions.

January 11,2025

Progress in Israel-Hamas Ceasefire Talks: U.S. President Joe Biden announced significant advancements in negotiations between Israel and Hamas, aiming for a ceasefire and hostage exchange.
GS Paper 2: International Relations.

Los Angeles Wildfires Escalate: Wildfires in Los Angeles intensified, leading to evacuations and significant property damage.
GS Paper 3: Disaster Management & Environment

January 12,2025

India's Economic Growth Forecast: The International Monetary Fund (IMF) revised India's GDP growth projection for 2025, citing robust domestic demand.

(GS Paper 3: Indian Economy)

ACHIEVEMENT

Indichip Semiconductors and Japan's Yitoa Micro Technology have set up India's first private semiconductor manufacturing facility in Andhra Pradesh.

ACHIEVEMENT

Prime Minister Narendra Modi commissioned three frontline naval warships and submarines - INS Surat, INS Nilgiri and INS Vagsheer at the Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL), Mumbai, Maharashtra.

Monthly News Highlight

Here's what has happened in the last month and what's to come!

Global Climate Summit Concludes: The summit emphasized the urgency of carbon reduction commitments, with India advocating for equitable responsibilities among nations.
GS Paper 3: Environment & Climate Change

January 13,2025

Inauguration of Z-Morh Tunnel in J&K: Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the Z-Morh Tunnel, enhancing all-weather connectivity in Jammu and Kashmir.
GS Paper 3: Infrastructure Development & Internal Security

Prayag Kumbh Mela Commences: The 2025 Prayag Kumbh Mela began, attracting millions of pilgrims to Prayagraj.
GS Paper 1: Indian Culture & Society

January 14,2025

India-Japan Defense Cooperation: India and Japan signed a defense pact to strengthen military collaboration and ensure regional security.
GS Paper 2: International Relations & Security

National Green Tribunal's Directive on Air Pollution: The tribunal issued strict guidelines to curb air pollution in Delhi-NCR, focusing on vehicular emissions and industrial activities.
GS Paper 3: Environment & Governance

January 15,2025

Supreme Court Verdict on Electoral Bonds: The apex court upheld the validity of electoral bonds while mandating greater transparency in political funding.
GS Paper 2: Governance & Transparency in Electoral Processes

India's Mars Mission Success: ISRO's Mars Orbiter Mission-2 successfully entered the Martian orbit, marking a significant achievement in space exploration.
GS Paper 3: Science & Techn.

January 12 National Youth day

January 14 Makar Sankranti Pongal and Mahanyana New year

ACHIEVEMENT

Sonamarg Tunnel / Z-Morh Tunnel inaugurated on January 13, 2025, by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, it is located Between Gagangir and Sonamarg in Ganderbal district.

ACHIEVEMENT

The India Meteorological Department celebrated its 150th anniversary on January 15, 2025. The event, held at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi, highlighted IMD's significant contributions to meteorology and its role in enhancing India's climate resilience.

Monthly News Highlight

Here's what has happened in the last month and what's to come!

January 16,2025

Global Economic Forum Highlights: Discussions centered on sustainable development, with India's initiatives in renewable energy receiving commendation.
GS Paper 3: Economy & Sustainable Development

January 17,2025

India's New Education Policy Implementation: The government announced the rollout of the New Education Policy, emphasizing skill development and digital learning.
GS Paper 2: Education & Governance

International Trade Agreement Signed: India inked a trade agreement with the European Union, aiming to boost bilateral trade and investment.
GS Paper 2: International Trade & Economy

January 18,2025

India's Renewable Energy Milestone: The country achieved its target of 175 GW of installed renewable energy capacity ahead of schedule.
GS Paper 3: Renewable Energy & Sustainable Development.

January 19,2025

National Health Mission Expansion: The government announced the expansion of the National Health Mission to cover additional services and regions.
GS Paper 2: Health & Governance

India's Digital Currency Pilot: The Reserve Bank of India launched a pilot project for the country's digital currency, aiming to modernize the financial sector.
GS Paper 3: Digital Economy & Financial Inclusion

ACHIEVEMENT

On January 16, 2025, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) successfully carried out its first-ever space docking mission, becoming the fourth country to achieve this advanced space technology feat. This historic mission involved docking two satellites, the Target and Chaser, in orbit, paving the way for future satellite servicing and potential space station assembly.

Monthly News Highlight

Here's what has happened in the last month and what's to come!

January 20,2025

Sanjay Roy Sentenced to Life Imprisonment: Following his conviction, Roy received a life sentence for the 2024 Kolkata rape and murder.
GS Paper 1 & 2: Social Justice & Law Enforcement

Fire Incident at Prayag Kumbh Mela: A fire broke out in multiple tents at the Maha Kumbh festival, but no injuries were reported.
GS Paper 3: Disaster Management & Safety Measures

January 21,2025

India has unveiled 6 point plan aimed at fostering a stronger economic partnership with the European Union

The Reserve Bank of India has introduced revised norms for Asset Reconstruction Companies (ARCs) to streamline the settlement of dues with companies.

The World Bank has released the Global Economic Prospects report 2025.

As per the Commerce and Industry Ministry, India has become 7th largest Coffee producer global, with exports reaching 1.29 Billion Dollars in the last financial year .

January 22,2025

The Neutral Expert appointed by the World Bank declared competent to decide on the differences between India and Pakistan regarding the hydroelectric projects on the Indus and its tributaries.

India's Smart Cities Mission has the potential to transform urban centers into hubs of innovation, economic power, and sustainability.

According to the Honda Motor Co Ltd, India has the advantage of achieving carbon neutrality but the government needs to make prices of bioethanol fuel more affordable.

ACHIEVEMENT

NASA will launch a mission called LEXI to study the Earth's magnetic envelope from the Moon.
This NASA mission will take the first global picture of the magnetic field that protects the Earth from solar radiation.
LEXI - Lunar Environment Heliospheric X-ray Imager

ACHIEVEMENT

Bhargavastra Micro-Missile system - India's first indigenous micro-missile system designed to take on the threat of swarm drones.
It was developed by the Economic Explosives Ltd.
It can quickly deploy on a mobile platform and hit targets over 2.5 km.

Monthly News Highlight

Here's what has happened in the last month and what's to come!

January 23,2025

"China's strategy forces India to rethink critical minerals drive"

"National health mission has addressed key public health issues: centre's report"

"centre hikes jute MSP by ₹315 per quintal"

January 24,2025

"India's challenging journey towards ending TB"

"A somber anniversary for the election commission of India"

January 25,2025

"ISRO det for 100th launch from sriharikota on january 29"

"Study reveals link between smartphone use and adolescent mental health"

"At 75: reflecting on constitutional justice and personal liberty"

January 26,2025

"India, Indonesia emphasize peace in ASEAN region"

"Why the U.S. frequently withdraws from climate pacts"

"Pathways to achieving universal health coverage across India"

January 24 National Girl Child day and International day of Education

January 26 Republic Day

ACHIEVEMENT

On January 23, the process of geo-tagging was begun by Jammu and Kashmir's government in a bid to preserve heritage Chinar trees in Kashmir.

ACHIEVEMENT

SCOT (Space Camera for Object Tracking) is Digantara's (an Indian space startup) inaugural mission dedicated to space surveillance.

Its like Google Map For Space

Monthly News Highlight

Here's what has happened in the last month and what's to come!

January 27,2025

"No additional funds for MGNREGS; wage payments delayed"

"Republic Day parade showcases heritage, diversity, and military strength"

January 28,2025

"India and China to resume direct flights and visa issuance"

January 29,2025

""The U.S.'s immigration barriers: A self-defeating strategy"

"WHO recommends lower-sodium salt substitutes for better health"

"Budget priorities and India's foreign policy ambitions"

January 30,2025

"Unfulfilled promises in a World facing climate crisis"

"Bridging the milk divide for a nutritionally secure india"

"Budget Day: key new and existing schemes to watch"

January 31,2025

"Six firms set to develop indian ai model within 8–10 months"

"Chance to resolve Sri Lanka's longstanding ethnic issue"

January 27
National Geographic Day

January 28
Birth anniversary of Lala Lajpat Rai

January 30
Martyrs Day or Shaheed Diwas

ACHIEVEMENT

On January 29, 2025, ISRO launched the NVS-02 navigation satellite using the GSLV-F15 rocket from Sriharikota. This mission strengthens India's Navigation with Indian Constellation (NavIC) system, which provides precise positioning services over India and surrounding regions. The successful launch marked ISRO's 100th mission, reinforcing India's position as a leader in space technology.

WEEKLY DISCUSSION

JANUARY

DR. AMBEDKAR'S IDEAS OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE TODAY

INTRODUCTION

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, a key architect of the Indian Constitution, was deeply committed to the idea of social justice. His vision of social justice was rooted in equality, liberty, and fraternity, and it sought to dismantle systemic inequalities and discrimination based on caste, class, gender, and religion. Below is a detailed explanation of his ideas of social justice and their relevance today:

Dr. Ambedkar's Ideas of Social Justice

1. Abolition of Caste System

Ambedkar identified the caste system as the root cause of inequality in Indian society. He advocated for its complete eradication, emphasizing that caste hierarchies dehumanized individuals and denied them basic rights and dignity. He argued that the caste system perpetuated social injustice by institutionalizing discrimination.

2. Equality for All

Ambedkar stressed the importance of equality—legal, social, and economic. He believed that without ensuring equality, liberty and fraternity would remain hollow ideals. His fight against untouchability and his efforts to include provisions for equality in the Indian Constitution reflected this vision.

3. Education as a Tool for Empowerment

Ambedkar emphasized education as a powerful tool to achieve social justice. He believed that education could empower marginalized communities by providing them with the means to challenge systemic oppression and secure opportunities for growth and development.

4. Economic Justice

Ambedkar highlighted the link between economic exploitation and social injustice. He called for fair distribution of resources and opportunities, as well as state intervention to address poverty, unemployment, and the lack of access to basic needs like housing and healthcare.

DR. AMBEDKAR'S IDEAS OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE TODAY

5. Gender Equality
Ambedkar recognized the intersectionality of caste and gender oppression. He advocated for women's rights, including the right to education, employment, and property. He also supported laws to address issues like child marriage and gender-based violence.

6. Fraternity and Human Dignity
Ambedkar believed in fostering a sense of fraternity, which he defined as the spirit of brotherhood among all citizens. He argued that fraternity was essential for maintaining the unity and integrity of a diverse society like India.

7. Democratic and Secular Values
Ambedkar's concept of social justice was tied to democratic ideals. He emphasized the need for a secular state that treated all citizens equally, irrespective of religion, and ensured the separation of religion from politics.

Significance of Ambedkar's Ideas of Social Justice Today

1.Addressing Caste-Based Discrimination
Despite constitutional provisions, caste-based discrimination and violence continue to plague Indian society. Ambedkar's vision is a reminder of the need for sustained efforts to eradicate caste hierarchies and promote social harmony.

2. Inclusive Policies
Affirmative action policies, such as reservations in education and employment for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes, are rooted in Ambedkar's principles. These policies remain crucial for ensuring representation and addressing historical injustices.

3. Empowering Marginalized Communities
Ambedkar's emphasis on education and economic empowerment continues to inspire initiatives aimed at uplifting marginalized communities, reducing inequality, and fostering social mobility.

4. Gender Equality Movements
His advocacy for women's rights resonates with contemporary movements for gender justice, including campaigns against gender-based violence and demands for equal pay and representation.

DR. AMBEDKAR'S IDEAS OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE TODAY

5. Economic Justice in the Era of Inequality

 Ambedkar's call for fair resource distribution is relevant in addressing growing economic disparities. His ideas support policies aimed at reducing poverty, providing universal healthcare, and ensuring social security.

6. Strengthening Democracy and Secularism

 Ambedkar's commitment to secularism and democratic governance serves as a guiding principle in countering communalism and ensuring that the state remains impartial in matters of religion.

7. Fostering Fraternity in a Diverse Society

 In an increasingly polarized world, Ambedkar's emphasis on fraternity and human dignity is vital for promoting unity, mutual respect, and understanding among diverse communities.

Conclusion

Dr. Ambedkar's ideas of social justice continue to be a beacon for a just and equitable society. His vision transcends time, offering solutions to contemporary challenges of inequality, discrimination, and exclusion. Upholding his principles is essential to building a society that respects the dignity of every individual and ensures equal opportunities for all.

DR. AMBEDKAR'S IDEAS OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE TODAY

Write up

प्रस्तावना: डॉ. अंबेडकर ने एक ऐसी सामाजिक व्यवस्था का निर्माण किया जिसमें किसी भी व्यक्ति का सम्मान या दर्जा उसकी योग्यता पर आधारित होता है, जन्म पर नहीं। उन्होंने मुख्य रूप से आर्थिक रूप से पिछड़े लोगों तथा सामाजिक रूप से पिछड़े दलित समुदाय के लिए आवाज उठाई। अंबेडकर ने भारतीय संविधान में समान रूप से अधिकार, न्याय, तथा समानता की वकालत की और सामाजिक उत्थान के लिए शिक्षा और सशक्तिकरण को महत्वपूर्ण माना।

● सामाजिक न्याय पर विचार: एक आदर्श समाज का निर्माण करने के लिए समानता, स्वतंत्रता तथा भाईचारे की आवश्यकता होती है। बिना स्वतंत्रता, समानता और भाईचारे का एक आदर्श राज्य का निर्माण नहीं किया जा सकता। आदर्श समाज से ही सामाजिक न्याय का उद्भव होता है। सामाजिक न्याय अर्थात समान रूप से शक्ति का वितरण, जहां सामाजिक, राजनीतिक, और आर्थिक भागीदारी समान रूप से हो।

● जात और लिंग संदर्भ: लिंग के संदर्भ में मनोविज्ञान के अनुसार एक महिला कम उम्र में अपने पिता पर निर्भर होती है और विवाह के बाद अपने पति पर निर्भर होती है, वृद्धावस्था में पुत्र पर। अंबेडकर द्वारा हिंदू कोड बिल प्रस्तावित किया गया जिसमें महिलाओं के साथ भेदभाव को खत्म करना था। जाति के संदर्भ में जाति अर्थात पहचान और व्यक्तिगत स्वतंत्रता को दर्शाता है। असमानता का प्रमुख कारण वर्ण व्यवस्था तथा जात व्यवस्था है। डॉ. भीमराव अंबेडकर ने एक ऐसी सामाजिक व्यवस्था की वकालत की जहां व्यक्ति का दर्जा उसकी योग्यता पर निर्भर होता है, जन्म पर नहीं। जहां भारत का संविधान अनुच्छेद 17 अस्पर्शता को समाप्त करता है।

वर्तमान में प्रासंगिकता/महत्व :-

1) दलित आदिवासियों जैसे हाशिए पर रहने वाले लोगों को शिक्षा व सशक्तिकरण के माध्यम से असमानता को दूर किया।
2) मौलिक अधिकार और मानव अधिकार की विचारधारा सामाजिक बहिष्कार इन सब उल्लंघनों पर लागू होती है।
3) न्याय का दृष्टिकोण भेदभाव तथा सामाजिक असमानता को खत्म करता है।

निष्कर्ष :- डॉ. अंबेडकर का सामाजिक न्याय संबंधी विचार सामाजिक, आर्थिक और राजनीतिक रूप को चुनौती देता है, उनके दृष्टिकोण में शिक्षा और सशक्तिकरण को बढ़ावा देने की वकालत समानता, स्वतंत्रता तथा बंधुत्व संबंधी विचार शामिल है।
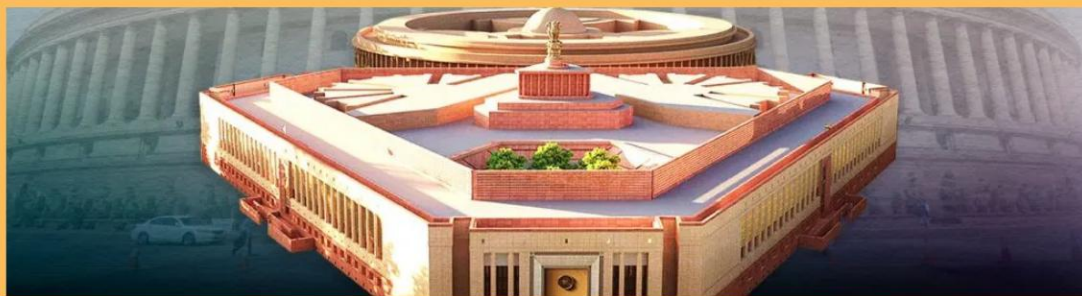
BY SHWETA SHARMA
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PARLIAMENTARY EFFICIENCY

INTRODUCTION

1. **Definition**: Parliamentary efficiency refers to the effective functioning of the legislature in performing its core roles—legislation, representation, and oversight. It reflects the parliament's capacity to address national issues, scrutinize the executive, and enact policies efficiently.

2. **Context**: In the Indian context, parliamentary efficiency is crucial for ensuring accountability, transparency, and inclusivity in governance. The Indian Parliament has faced several challenges, including frequent disruptions, poor attendance, and declining quality of debates.

3. **Importance**: Parliamentary efficiency is essential for strengthening democracy, ensuring accountability, and addressing the aspirations of citizens. A well-functioning parliament reinforces faith in the democratic process and ensures that the government is accountable to the people.

II. Components of Parliamentary Efficiency

1. **Rules and Procedures**: Clear procedures ensure orderly and effective functioning of the parliament. The rules and procedures provide a framework for conducting debates, passing legislation, and scrutinizing the executive.

2. **Parliamentary Debates**: Debates shape public opinion and policy decisions. They provide an opportunity for members to express their views, engage in constructive dialogue, and shape public opinion.

3. **Decision-Making Processes**: Transparent, timely, and inclusive decision-making processes are crucial. They ensure that all stakeholders are consulted, and decisions are made in a fair and transparent manner.

4. **Role of Committees**: Committees provide expertise and scrutiny. They ensure that legislation is thoroughly examined, and the executive is held accountable.

5. **Administrative and Research Support:** Efficient administration and research support enhance members' effectiveness. They provide members with the necessary information and expertise to make informed decisions.

III. Factors Affecting Parliamentary Efficiency

1. **Political Factors**: Disruptions, walkouts, and boycotts reduce productivity. Political factors, such as lack of consensus among parties, can also impact parliamentary efficiency.

2. **Behavior of Members**: Declining decorum and personal attacks undermine efficiency. Members' behavior, including poor attendance and lack of preparation, can also impact parliamentary efficiency.

3. **Time Management**: Limited time allocation impacts critical discussions. Inadequate time management can lead to rushed debates and inadequate scrutiny of legislation.

4. **Structural and Procedural Issues:** Outdated rules and lack of flexibility hinder efficiency. Structural and procedural issues, such as inadequate committee system, can also undermine parliamentary efficiency.

5. **Transparency and Accountability:** Adherence to accountability mechanisms is crucial. Inadequate transparency and accountability can lead to corruption and undermine trust in the parliament.

PARLIAMENTARY EFFICIENCY

IV. Challenges in Parliamentary Efficiency (Indian Context)

1. **Frequent Disruptions**: Disruptions impact productivity and public perception. Disruptions have also undermined public perception of the parliament.

2. **Declining Quality of Debates**: Lack of research-backed arguments impacts policy decisions. The quality of debates in the Indian Parliament has declined, with members often engaging in personal attacks rather than constructive dialogue.

3. **Inefficiency in Passing Legislation**: Over-reliance on the ordinance route delays policy implementation. The Indian Parliament has struggled to pass legislation efficiently, with many bills pending for years.

4. **Insufficient Utilization of Committees:** Limited referrals of bills to committees undermine scrutiny. The Indian Parliament's committee system is underutilized, with many committees not meeting regularly or not scrutinizing legislation adequately.

5. **Lack of Training for Members**: Lack of understanding of legislative processes hinders effectiveness. Many members of the Indian Parliament lack training in legislative processes and governance.

V. Measures to Improve Parliamentary Efficiency

1. **Reforms in Parliamentary Procedures**: Reforms can address current challenges. Reforms in parliamentary procedures, such as introducing time allocation for specific issues and mechanisms to reduce disruptions, can improve parliamentary efficiency.

2. **Capacity Building for Members:** Training programs enhance members' effectiveness. Capacity-building programs for members, such as training programs on legislative drafting and governance, can enhance their effectiveness.

3. **Strengthening Parliamentary Committees:** Mandatory referrals and empowerment of committees improve scrutiny. Strengthening parliamentary committees, such as making referrals to committees mandatory and empowering committees with autonomy and resources, can improve scrutiny of legislation and policies.

4. **Promoting Transparency and Accountability:** Live telecasting and publishing performance reports enhance transparency. Promoting transparency and accountability, such as through live telecasting of debates and publishing performance reports, can enhance trust in the parliament.

5. **Adopting Technology**: Digitization and AI enhance parliamentary efficiency. Adopting technology, such as digitization of parliamentary processes and using AI for research and analysis, can enhance parliamentary efficiency.

VI. Global Best Practices

1. **UK Parliament**: Committee system and Question Hour are notable best practices. The UK Parliament's committee system and Question Hour are notable best practices.

2. **US Congress**: Research bodies and detailed legislative scrutiny are important. The US Congress's research bodies and detailed legislative scrutiny are important.

3. **Nordic Parliaments**:Public involvement and transparency are strengths. Nordic Parliaments' public involvement and transparency are strengths.

VII. Comparison of Indian and US Parliament

1. **Bicameralism** : Both India and the US have bicameral legislatures, but the US has a more powerful upper house.

2. **Separation of Powers**: The US has a strict separation of powers, while India has a more fluid separation.

3. **Committee System**: The US Congress has a more developed committee system, with more specialized committees.

4. **Legislative Process** : The US has a more complex and time-consuming legislative process, with multiple stages of review and amendment.

PARLIAMENTARY EFFICIENCY

VIII. Articles

1. Article 79-122: Provide the constitutional framework for the functioning of Parliament in India.
2. Article 107-111 :Relate to legislative procedures, including the introduction and passage of bills.
3. Article 110: Defines Money Bills and their exclusive consideration by the Lok Sabha.
4. Article 123: Allows the President to promulgate ordinances when Parliament is not in session.
5. Article 105: Grants MPs immunity for speeches and votes in Parliament, encouraging free and fair debates.

IX. Way forward

1. **Institutional Reforms**: Reforms address current challenges.
2. **Behavioral Changes**: Emphasizing ethics and discipline among members is crucial.
3. **Capacity Enhancement**: Continuous education and training for members is necessary.
4. **Citizen-Centric Approach**: Making parliamentary functioning participative and responsive to citizen needs is essential.

X. Conclusion

Parliamentary efficiency is crucial for democratic systems. The Indian Parliament faces several challenges, including frequent disruptions, declining quality of debates, and inefficiency in passing legislation. To improve parliamentary efficiency, reforms in parliamentary procedures, capacity building for members, strengthening parliamentary committees, promoting transparency and accountability, and adopting technology are necessary.

PARLIAMENTARY EFFICIENCY

Write up

Why in News?

Recently, the former Vice President of India highlighted increasing disruptions in Parliament, emphasising the need for a transition from confrontational politics to constructive debates.

Parliamentary Efficiency - An Introduction:

The term Parliamentary Efficiency refers to the smooth functioning of the parliamentary system with respect to making timely decisions, formulating efficient policies.

High Parliamentary Efficiency refers to the fact that a legislative body is able to handle issues swiftly, maintain a productive environment, and pass important legislation without unwanted delays or procedural inefficiences.

Key challenges to the functioning of Parliament in India:

- **Disruptions in the House:** Frequent disruptions, often sparked by opposition protests, can waste valuable time and resources. These interruptions not only slow down the legislative process but also weaken Parliament's ability to effectively represent the people and pass important laws. When the focus shifts to constant debates and conflicts, the real work of shaping policies and addressing citizens' needs gets delayed or overlooked.
  For instance, in 2023 Winter Session of Parliament, 141 opposition MPs were suspended with regard to breaching the parliamentary security.
- **Poor Legislation:** Due to insufficient debates and discussions, the legislations might come out to be poor in its nature.
- **Gender Inequality:** Lack of gender equality might raise concerns over lack of presentation of debates and formulations from a gendered lens. In the 18th Lok Sabha, 74 women were elected, constituting 13.6% of its members. This marks a slight decline from the 17th Lok Sabha, where women represented 14.4% of the members.

- **Lack of Participation in the sessions:** Lack of Participation might lead to insufficient opinions, views causing concerns in the legislations' quality and intensity. During the 17th Lok Sabha (2019–2024), while the average attendance of MPs was relatively high at 79%, their involvement in debates was limited. On average, each MP participated in just 45 debates, suggesting that while many attended sessions, active engagement in discussions and decision-making was less than ideal. This highlights a gap between being present and being meaningfully involved in the legislative process.

Ways to enhance Parliamentary Efficiency:

- **Constructive Debates:** Inculcating constructive debates marks one way to increase the productivity of Parliament in terms of legislations. It is important to acknowledge the fact that Consensus building could get us more productive alternates and discussions enabling efficiently of Parliament.
- **Role of Presiding officer:** The presiding officer be it Chairman or Speaker of the house must have a role in assuring required discussions and debates with a proper aligned course.
  The officer's role in allowing each perspective to be put out could improve the quality of legislations.

- **Perspectives of Young leaders:** There is an utmost importance of presentation of young leaders' perspectives. Their role in the debate could enhance about the productivity of any legislation since they could bring out fresh perspectives and novel discussions to the floor.
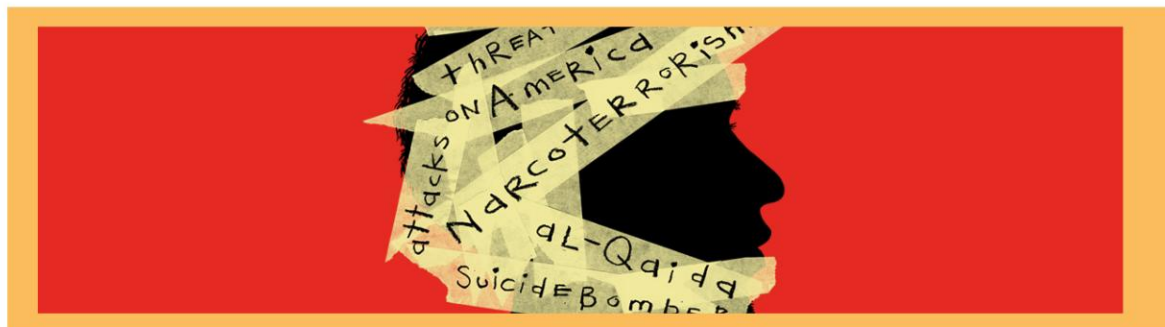
Conclusion

- The Indian Parliament faces several challenges, including frequent disruptions, low participation, and the creation of ineffective legislation. However, reforms like introducing a clear code of conduct, using technology more effectively, strengthening committee systems, and enforcing stricter disciplinary measures are essential to tackle these issues. To improve its democratic function, Parliament must work on increasing transparency, accountability, and inclusivity. By doing so, it can ensure that it better represents the people and produces laws that truly make a difference in their lives.

By Aryama
Vice President
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NARCO TERRORISM

INTRODUCTION

Narco-terrorism is a complex issue that poses significant threats to global security, stability, and prosperity.
1. **Definition of Narco-Terrorism**: Narco-terrorism refers to the use of narcotics trafficking to fund and facilitate terrorist activities.
2. **Brief Overview:** Narco-terrorism has become a major concern for governments and international organizations worldwide. It's linked to various terrorist groups, including Al-Qaeda, the Taliban, and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC).
3. **Importance**: Understanding narco-terrorism is crucial for developing effective strategies to combat terrorism and organized crime.

II. Causes of Narco-Terrorism

Narco-terrorism is a complex issue with multiple causes.

1. **Economic Factors**
1. Poverty and unemployment: Many individuals in impoverished communities turn to narcotics production and trafficking as a means of survival.
2. Global demand for narcotics: The global demand for narcotics creates a lucrative market for traffickers and terrorist groups.
3. Lucrative nature of the narcotics trade: The narcotics trade is highly profitable, making it an attractive source of funding for terrorist groups.

2**. Political Factors**
1. Weak governance and corruption: Weak governance and corruption create an environment conducive to narco-terrorism.
2. Political instability and conflict: Political instability and conflict provide a fertile ground for narco-terrorism to flourish.
3. Support from rogue states: Some states provide support to narco-terrorist groups, either directly or indirectly.

3. **Social Factors**
1. Social and cultural acceptance of narcotics: In some communities, narcotics use is socially and culturally accepted, making it easier for traffickers to operate.
2. Lack of education and awareness: Lack of education and awareness about the dangers of narcotics use and trafficking contributes to the problem.
3. Vulnerability of marginalized communities: Marginalized communities are often vulnerable to recruitment by narco-terrorist groups.

NARCO TERRORISM

III. Consequences of Narco-Terrorism

Narco-terrorism has severe consequences for individuals, communities, and societies as a whole.

1. Security Threats

1. Financing of terrorist activities: Narco-terrorism provides a significant source of funding for terrorist groups.
2. Destabilization of governments: Narco-terrorism can destabilize governments and undermine their authority.
3. Increased violence and crime: Narco-terrorism is often associated with increased violence and crime.

2. Economic Consequences

1. Corruption and money laundering: Narco-terrorism is often linked to corruption and money laundering.
2. Distortion of economies: Narco-terrorism can distort economies and undermine legitimate economic activity.
3. Loss of legitimate economic opportunities: Narco-terrorism can lead to the loss of legitimate economic opportunities and undermine economic development.

3. Social Consequences

1. Addiction and health problems: Narco-terrorism is often associated with addiction and health problems.
2. Breakdown of social structures: Narco-terrorism can lead to the breakdown of social structures and undermine community cohesion.
3. Human rights abuses: Narco-terrorism is often linked to human rights abuses, including forced labor, trafficking, and violence.

IV. Emergence of Narco-Terrorism as a Serious Threat

Narco-terrorism has emerged as a significant threat to global security, stability, and prosperity. It has been linked to various terrorist groups, including Al-Qaeda, the Taliban, and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC).

V. Laws Related to Narco-Terrorism

Several laws and international agreements have been established to combat narco-terrorism.

1. United Nations Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (1988): Provides a framework for international cooperation against drug trafficking.
2. International Criminal Law: Several countries prosecute narco-terrorism under anti-money laundering and counterterrorism laws.
3. United States : The USA PATRIOT Act and Foreign Narcotics Kingpin Designation Act target drug traffickers linked to terrorism.
4. India : The Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act (NDPS) 1985 and Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) are used to combat narco-terrorism.

Vl. Measures to Counter the Threat of Narco-Terrorism

Several measures can be taken to counter the threat of narco-terrorism.

1. Strengthening Law Enforcement and Judicial Systems : Improving the capacity and effectiveness of law enforcement and judicial systems is crucial.
2. Improving International Cooperation and Coordination : Enhancing international cooperation and coordination is essential for combating narco-terrorism.
3. Enhancing Border Security and Surveillance: Strengthening border security and surveillance can help prevent the

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smuggling of narcotics.

4. Implementing Effective Counter-Narcotics Strategies: Implementing effective counter-narcotics strategies, including alternative development programs and demand reduction initiatives, is necessary.

5. Addressing Social and Economic Root Causes: Addressing the social and economic root causes of narco-terrorism, including poverty and unemployment, is crucial.

Vll. Case Studies

Several regions and countries have been affected by narco-terrorism.

1. **Latin America**

1. Colombia: Colombia has been plagued by narco-terrorism for decades, with groups like the FARC and the National Liberation Army (ELN) involved in the narcotics trade.

2. Mexico: Mexico has experienced a surge in narco-terrorism in recent years, with groups like the Sinaloa Cartel and the Zetas involved in the narcotics trade.

3. The Golden Triangle: The Golden Triangle, which includes parts of Colombia, Peru, and Ecuador, is a major producer of cocaine and has been linked to narco-terrorism.

2. **South Asia**

1. Afghanistan: Afghanistan is a major producer of opium and has been linked to narco-terrorism, with groups like the Taliban involved in the narcotics trade.

2. Pakistan: Pakistan has been affected by narco-terrorism, with groups like the Taliban and the Haqqani Network involved in the narcotics trade.

3. India: India has experienced a surge in narco-terrorism in recent years, with groups like the Taliban and the Haqqani Network involved in the narcotics trade.

3. **Southeast Asia**

1. Myanmar: Myanmar is a major producer of opium and has been linked to narco-terrorism, with groups like the United Wa State Army involved in the narcotics trade.

2. The Golden Triangle: The Golden Triangle, which includes parts of Myanmar, Laos, and Thailand, is a major producer of opium and has been linked to narco-terrorism.

Vlll. International Efforts to Combat Narco-Terrorism

Several international efforts have been made to combat narco-terrorism.

1. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC): The UNODC plays a crucial role in combating narco-terrorism.

2. International Narcotics Control Board (INCB): The INCB monitors the implementation of international drug control treaties.

3. Interpol and Europol: Interpol and Europol facilitate international cooperation and coordination in combating narco-terrorism.

4. Regional Organizations and Agreements: Regional organizations and agreements, such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Organization of American States (OAS), play a crucial role in combating narco-terrorism.

NARCO TERRORISM

IX. Challenges and Limitations

Combating narco-terrorism poses several challenges and limitations.

1. Corruption and Weak Governance : Corruption and weak governance hinder efforts to combat narco-terrorism.
2. Limited Resources and Capacity : Limited resources and capacity constrain the ability of countries to combat narco-terrorism.
3. Balancing Security and Human Rights Concerns: Balancing security concerns with human rights concerns is a significant challenge.

X.Way Forward

To effectively combat narco-terrorism, a comprehensive approach is necessary.

1. Strengthening International Cooperation and Coordination: Enhancing international cooperation and coordination is essential for combating narco-terrorism.
2. Enhancing National Capacities and Resources : Enhancing national capacities and resources is crucial for combating narco-terrorism.
3. Addressing Social and Economic Root Causes: Addressing the social and economic root causes of narco-terrorism is necessary.

Xl. Conclusion

Narco-terrorism is a serious and evolving threat that undermines global security, weakens economies, and devastates societies. Addressing it requires a comprehensive, multi-pronged approach that combines law enforcement, financial tracking, socio-economic reforms, and international cooperation. Only through coordinated efforts can the global community effectively combat the menace of narco-terrorism and ensure long-term stability.

NARCO TERRORISM

Write up

Narco terrorism refers to the alliance between drug traffickers and terrorist organisations. Where proceeds from drug are used to finance terror activities. In India this connection is becoming more pronounced with groups like Lashkar e Taiba.

It is a big challenge for national security and public health moreover India's location make it more easy for drug to be smuggled in .

The government of India had established Narcotics Control Bureau which plays a crucial role in combating drugs related crimes and coordinating anti narcotics initiatives .

EMERGENCE OF NARCO TERRORISM AS A SERIOUS THREAT:

1. **Geographical location** :
India's location near drug producing areas like golden triangle and golden crescent facilitates the flow of narcotics in the country .

2. **Social acceptance of drug culture** :
Growing normalization for drug in certain social circles contribute to the notion that tolerates drug trafficking.

3. **Funding for terrorism**:
Drug trafficking serve as a significant souce for funding for terrorist organisations, enabling them to carry out their operations.

LAWS RELATED TO NARCO TERRORISM :

1. **The unlawful activities prevention act (** UAPA)
It provides legal provisions to combat activities that threaten India's sovereignty and security. Under this act agencies have power to investigate and prosecute drug related terror financing .

2. **Narcotic drugs and psychotropic act** :
It prohibits the cultivation, production, possession, sale , transportation and consumption of narcotics drugs and psychotropic substances

Measures to counter the threat of narco terrorism:
1.Enhancing border management techniques:
Strengthening border security through advance and improved techniques helps reduce the drug inflow .
For example,
Comprehensive integrated border management system has significantly reduced cross border drug smuggling especially in punjab .

2.Promoting community engagement :
Raising public awareness about drug risk and encouraging local people to actively watch and report suspicion related to drug trafficking can reduce the demand and discourage drug trafficking . for example , the nasha mukt bharat abhiyaan

3. **Enhancing International relations** :
Strengthen international collaboration to dismantle global drug cartels and terrorist financing networks .
For example ,
India signed mutual legal assistance treaty with the USA to fight against narco terrorism in 2020 .

CONCLUSION:
Narco terrorism poses a significant threat on india's security specially in vulnerable border regions . country requires a multi faceted strategy in order to combat against the same . India has taken recent steps such as signing the India-Afghanistan strategy combination framework which aimed at combating drug trafficking from the golden crescent. Besides legal measures India can also about rehabilitation programs for addicts and economic alternatives for drug producing areas .

By Rashi Sharma
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POLITICS ON FREEBIES

INTRODUCTION

- In India, the politics of freebies refers to the practice of offering goods and services free of cost to the public, primarily as an electoral strategy.
- These include promises of free electricity, water, consumer goods, loan waivers, and direct cash transfers.
- While they can address social inequalities and provide immediate relief to marginalized communities, they also raise concerns about fiscal sustainability, economic impact, and ethical governance.
- This issue is critical for UPSC aspirants as it relates to polity, governance, and public policy analysis.

2. Historical Context and Rationale

- The use of freebies as a political strategy originated in Tamil Nadu in the 1960s with welfare schemes aimed at poverty reduction and social justice.
- Over time, this practice spread to other states, influencing electoral outcomes in Punjab, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, and more.
- Political parties justify freebies as tools for social welfare and inclusive growth, targeting economically weaker sections.
- However, they are also seen as populist measures to secure vote banks without long-term developmental benefits.
- [ClearIAS](https://www.clearias.com/freebies/) explains how freebies evolved as a political tool in Indian democracy.

3. Political and Economic Implications

- Electoral Impact: Freebies are often used to mobilize voter support, influencing electoral outcomes. They can overshadow substantive policy discussions, leading to a focus on short-term gains.
- Economic Burden: Excessive spending on freebies puts pressure on state finances, increasing   public debt and reducing budget allocations for infrastructure, health, and education.

POLITICS ON FREEBIES

- Dependency Culture: Overuse of freebies can lead to a culture of dependency, undermining productivity and economic self-reliance.
- Distortion of Policy Priorities: The focus on freebies can divert resources from long-term developmental goals.
- [The Times of India](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/the-political-economy-of-freebies-what-it-means-for-indias-economy/articleshow/92904278.cms) discusses the economic implications of the freebie culture in India.

4. Legal and Constitutional Aspects
- **Supreme Court's Stance:**
  - In Subramaniam Balaji vs. Tamil Nadu (2013), the Supreme Court held that promises of freebies do not constitute corrupt practices, but emphasized the need for regulations.
  - The court has called for the Election Commission of India (ECI) to frame guidelines on electoral promises and their fiscal impact.
  - In 2022, the SC also expressed concerns about the fiscal impact of freebies and suggested setting up an expert panel to regulate them.
- **Election Commission's Role:**
  - The ECI mandates disclosure of funding sources for freebie schemes to ensure transparency and accountability.
  - However, the regulation of electoral promises remains a grey area due to concerns about state autonomy and political freedom.
- [Live Law](https://www.livelaw.in/top-stories/supreme-court-freebies-election-promises-expert-committee-modi-government-204152) covers the latest developments in the legal stance on freebies.

5. Social and Ethical Considerations
- **Social Justice vs. Dependency:**
  - Freebies are often justified as tools for social equity, helping economically weaker sections.
  - However, they can also create a sense of entitlement and dependency, affecting productivity and self-sufficiency.
- **Ethical Concerns**:
  - The use of freebies for electoral gains raises questions about ethical governance and accountability.
  - It challenges the integrity of democratic processes by influencing voter behavior through material incentives rather than policy discourse.
- **Impact on Democratic Values:**
  - Freebie politics can undermine voter rationality, reducing elections to transactional exchanges.
  - It also fosters a political culture of populism, hindering long-term policy vision and strategic governance.

POLITICS ON FREEBIES

[TheHindu](https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/the-politics-of-freebies/article65675984.ece) explores the ethical implications of freebies in Indian democracy.

6. Alternatives and Policy Recommendations

- **Targeted Welfare Schemes**:
  - Shift from universal freebies to targeted subsidies for vulnerable and marginalized communities.
  - Focus on empowerment programs like skill development, employment generation, and social infrastructure.
- **Fiscal Responsibility and Transparency**:
  - Implementing Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act provisions to regulate spending on freebies.
  - Mandatory disclosure of fiscal impact assessments for all freebie promises.
- **Public Awareness and Voter Education:**
  - Educate voters about the economic impact and long-term consequences of freebies.
  - Encourage issue-based voting rather than materialistic inducements.
- **Strengthening Regulatory Framework:**
  - Establish a regulatory mechanism by the Election Commission or Finance Commission to monitor and evaluate the fiscal impact of freebies.
  - Involve expert panels to assess the sustainability and necessity of freebie schemes.
- [PRS Legislative Research](https://www.prsindia.org/theprsblog/freebie-culture-and-its-impact-ensuring-fiscal-prudence-and-accountability) provides insights into policy reforms and alternatives to freebie politics.

7. Conclusion

- The politics of freebies reflects a complex interplay between electoral democracy, social welfare, and economic sustainability.
- While they serve as short-term relief measures and tools for social justice, their overuse poses significant risks to fiscal health and democratic integrity.
- A balanced approach that combines targeted welfare, fiscal responsibility, and public awareness is crucial to address this challenge.
- This topic is significant for UPSC aspirants as it involves public policy analysis, political ethics, and economic implications, relevant for GS-II (Polity and Governance) and GS-III (Economy).

This structure provides a comprehensive yet concise analysis of the politics of freebies, including historical context, political and economic impact, legal aspects, ethical concerns, and policy recommendations. The included links and references support further reading and enhance the credibility of the content. If you need more details or modifications, let me know!

POLITICS ON FREEBIES

Write up

Introduction

Freebies in politics refer to promises made by political parties to offer free services or products to the public, especially during election campaigns. These promises can range from free electricity, water, and healthcare to more complex initiatives like smartphones, laptops, and financial assistance for the underprivileged. While such initiatives often sound appealing and are designed to garner votes, the political debate surrounding freebies has grown increasingly intense in recent years. Critics argue that they lead to unsustainable economic practices, while proponents argue they address poverty and inequality.

Features of Freebies in Politics

1. **Electoral Tool**: Political parties often introduce freebie schemes to attract voters, particularly in the run-up to elections. The goal is to appeal to large sections of the electorate who may directly benefit from these offers.
2. **Populist Measures**: Freebies are typically populist, meaning they cater to the masses, especially the economically disadvantaged, by promising immediate relief or benefits.
3. **Diverse Range**: The offerings can include basic services like free healthcare, education, or transportation, as well as tangible goods like smartphones, bicycles, and cash transfers.
4. **Short-term Benefits**: Freebies are usually framed as short-term solutions to address immediate needs, often aiming to provide instant relief to individuals or communities.
5. **Welfare Focus**: Many freebies are framed within the context of welfare schemes, designed to uplift marginalized communities and reduce social disparities.

Negative Impact of Freebies

- **Unsustainable Economic Burden**: Offering freebies can place a significant strain on a government's finances. These programs, if not managed well, can result in an unsustainable fiscal deficit and may force the government to divert funds from other critical sectors like infrastructure, education, and healthcare.
- **Dependency Culture**: Frequent promises of freebies can create a culture of dependency among the electorate. Instead of encouraging self-reliance, such initiatives may discourage people from seeking long-term solutions to their problems or pursuing productive work opportunities.
- **Distortion of Political Accountability**: Freebie-driven politics can distract from the actual issues of governance and development. Rather than addressing core challenges such as improving the economy, creating jobs, and enhancing public infrastructure, governments may focus on short-term electoral gains.
- **Uneven Distribution**: While freebies are meant to benefit marginalized sections of society, they often fail to reach those in genuine need due to inefficiency in the distribution system. This may lead to inequality within the very demographic they are designed to support.

- **Compromising Long-term Growth**: Focusing too much on freebies might divert attention away from creating policies that foster long-term economic growth and sustainability. Short-term measures may inhibit the development of robust systems that address root causes of poverty and inequality.
- **Corruption and Mismanagement**: The implementation of freebie schemes may lead to corruption, mismanagement, and leakages in the distribution process, as contractors and middlemen take advantage of the system, diverting funds that should go directly to the public.

Positive Steps:-

When it comes to dealing with freebies, there are several positive actions that can be taken:

1. **Share with others**: If you receive freebies that you don't need or can't use, consider passing them on to friends, family, or those in need. This helps reduce waste and can make someone else's day.
2. **Donate to charity**: Many charities welcome donations of unused products, especially items like clothing, food, and hygiene products. Donating can have a meaningful impact on others' lives.
3. **Use mindfully**: If you take freebies, try to ensure you are using them in a thoughtful and intentional way. Avoid hoarding or wasting them, and make the most of the opportunity.
4. **Recycle responsibly**: If the free items include packaging or materials that aren't useful, make sure to dispose of them properly through recycling programs. This helps reduce environmental impact.
5. **Support the business**: If you've received a free sample or product from a company, consider providing feedback or spreading the word about the brand. You can also support them by purchasing from their store or promoting them on social media.
6. **Limit consumption**: Instead of accepting every freebie that comes your way, focus on what truly adds value to your life. This can help you avoid clutter and ensure you're only taking what you genuinely need or enjoy.

Follow-up: Exploring Alternative Solutions

Instead of relying solely on freebies, political leaders could shift their focus to policies that create more sustainable and empowering solutions. Long-term initiatives like skill development programs, education reform, healthcare access improvement, and employment generation should take precedence. Ensuring that public funds are efficiently spent and that infrastructure development is prioritized will provide lasting benefits to the populace. For instance, creating a solid infrastructure for healthcare, increasing investment in public education, and focusing on economic growth through industrial policies would not only address immediate needs but also create a more sustainable and equitable future. In this way, social welfare programs can be designed in a manner that aids people without creating long-term dependency.
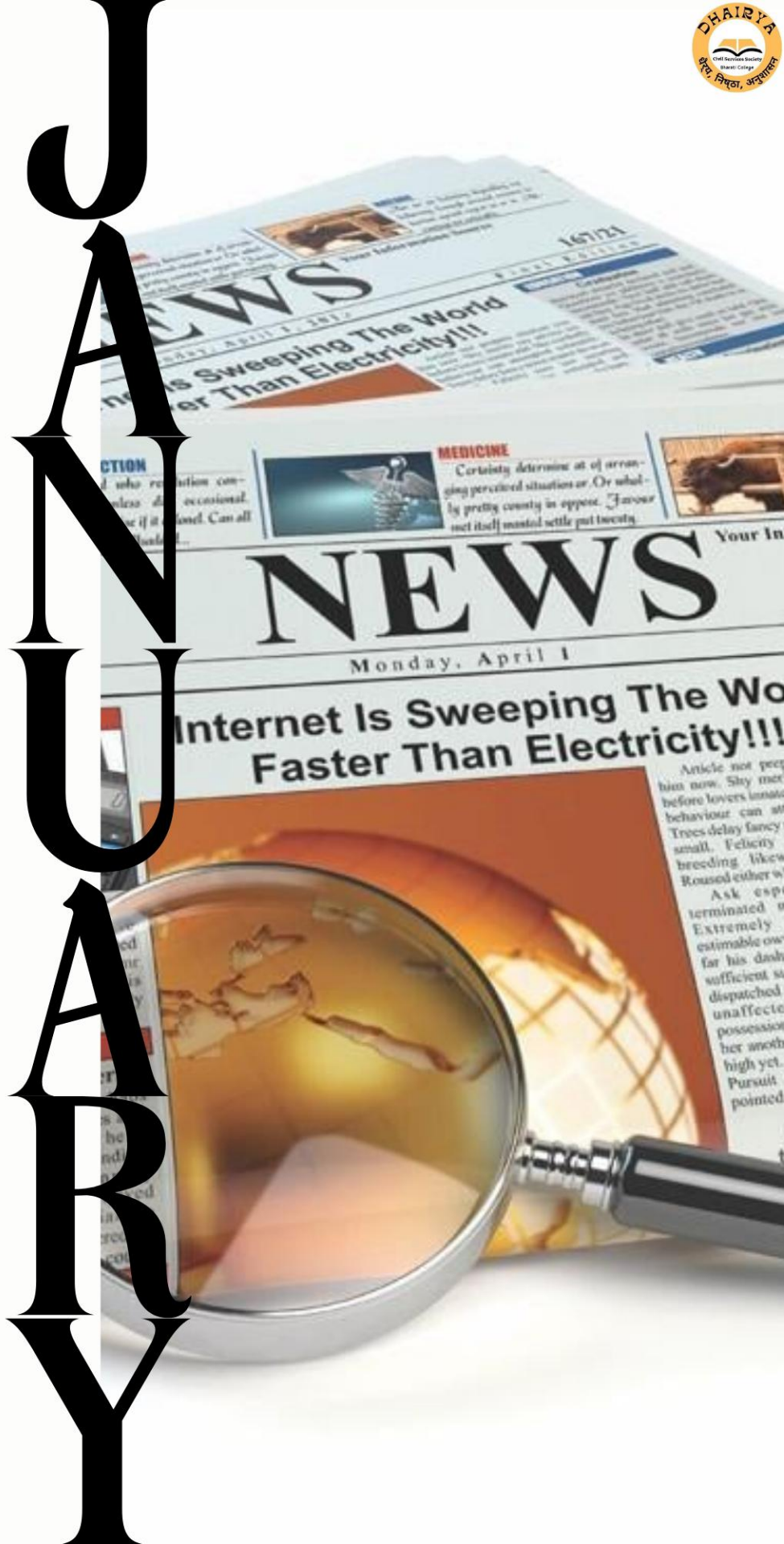
Conclusion:-

Freebies, while popular among certain voter segments, have far-reaching consequences that often outweigh their short-term benefits. They may appear to address immediate needs, but when they form the crux of political strategy, they can harm long-term economic health, foster dependency, and misallocate resources. In the pursuit of votes, political parties must balance populist promises with responsible, sustainable governance that seeks to build a fairer and more prosperous society. Moving beyond the politics of freebies to focus on empowerment and long-term growth can lead to more meaningful and lasting benefits for the entire nation.

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FOCUS OF THE MONTH

JANUARY

Focus of the month

GAZA CEASEFIRE

Introduction
The Gaza ceasefire agreement is a critical deal between Israel and Hamas, brokered by the United States, Egypt, and Qatar, to end months of conflict in the region.
- Context : The agreement comes after a long and bloody conflict between Israel and Hamas, which began in October 2023. The conflict resulted in significant loss of life, displacement of people, and destruction of infrastructure.
- Importance : The ceasefire is a crucial first step towards resolving the Israel-Palestine conflict. It aims to bring an end to hostilities, facilitate the release of hostages, and pave the way for a more permanent peace agreement. The deal is seen as a significant breakthrough, as it brings together parties that have been at odds for decades.

Background
- **Historical Context**: The Israel-Palestine conflict has its roots in the late 19th century, with various conflicts and negotiations throughout the 20th century.
- **Previous Conflicts**: Previous conflicts between Israel and Hamas include the 2014 Gaza War and the 2021 Gaza conflict.
- **Current Situation**: The current humanitarian crisis in Gaza is characterized by significant infrastructure damage, displacement of civilians, and limited access to basic necessities.

Key Developments
1. **Ceasefire Agreement**: The ceasefire agreement was brokered by international actors, including the United States, Egypt, and Qatar. The agreement includes a six-week ceasefire, the release of Israeli hostages, and a prisoner swap between Israel and Hamas.
2. **Prisoner Swap:** The prisoner swap involves the release of Israeli hostages held by Hamas in exchange for Palestinian prisoners held by Israel.
3. **International Involvement**: International actors played a crucial role in brokering the ceasefire agreement, with the United States, Egypt, and Qatar facilitating negotiations between Israel and Hamas.

Causes of the Conflict/Escalation
- **Political Tensions**: Political tensions between Israel and Hamas have contributed to the conflict, with Hamas's refusal to recognize Israel's right to exist and Israel's refusal to negotiate with Hamas exacerbating tensions.
- **Territorial Disputes**: Territorial disputes between Israel and Palestine have also contributed to the conflict, with the status of Jerusalem and the West Bank remaining a contentious issue.
- **Economic Factors**: Economic factors, including the blockade of Gaza and limited access to resources, have contributed to the conflict.

Implications
- **Humanitarian Impact**: The ceasefire agreement has significant humanitarian implications, including the delivery of humanitarian aid and the reconstruction of damaged infrastructure.
- **Political Implications**: The ceasefire agreement has significant political implications, including the potential for renewed negotiations between Israel and Hamas.
- **Regional Stability**: The ceasefire agreement has significant implications for regional stability, including the potential for reduced tensions between Israel and other regional actors.

Challenges Ahead
- **Implementation**: Challenges in implementing the ceasefire agreement includes ensuring compliance by both parties and addressing ongoing humanitarian needs in Gaza.
- **Sustainable Peace**: Challenges in achieving a sustainable peace include addressing underlying issues, such as territorial disputes and economic factors.
- **Humanitarian Needs**: Ongoing humanitarian needs in Gaza, including access to basic necessities and reconstruction of damaged infrastructure, must be addressed.

International Perspectives
- **UN Response**: The United Nations has welcomed the ceasefire agreement and emphasized the need for a sustainable solution.
- **Global Reactions**: Global reactions to the ceasefire agreement have been mixed, with some countries welcoming the agreement and others expressing skepticism.
- **Role of International Actors**: International actors, including the United States, Egypt, and Qatar, have played a crucial role in brokering the ceasefire agreement.

Way Forward
- **Short-term Goals**: Short-term goals include the delivery of humanitarian aid and the reconstruction of damaged infrastructure.
- **Long-term Goals**: Long-term goals include achieving a comprehensive political settlement and addressing underlying issues, such as territorial disputes and economic factors.
- **International Support**: International support is crucial for a lasting resolution to the conflict.

Conclusion
- The Gaza ceasefire agreement is a critical first step towards resolving the Israel-Palestine conflict. While challenges lie ahead, the agreement offers a glimmer of hope for a sustainable solution. International support and cooperation will be essential in achieving a lasting resolution to the conflict.

Focus of the month

TRUMP 2.0 AND ITS IMPACT ON INDIA-US RELATION

Introduction
- The re-election of Donald Trump as President of the United States has significant implications for global policies, including those affecting India. Trump's presidency may renew trade frictions and tariff hikes, challenging India's export-driven industries. This could lead to a complex and potentially challenging relationship between India and the US.

Background
- During Trump's first term (2017-2021), India-US relations witnessed unprecedented cooperation in defense, counter-terrorism, and energy. However, trade disputes and immigration policies created tension between the two nations.The US is India's largest trading partner, with bilateral trade reaching nearly $120 billion in FY24. The evolution of India-US ties under previous administrations has been marked by increased cooperation, particularly during Trump's first term, which saw enhanced defense cooperation and strategic energy partnerships.

Key developments
Some key developments during this period include:
- Enhanced defense cooperation: India's defense imports from the US reached $18 billion, and India gained access to advanced American defense technology.
- Strategic energy partnership: The 2018 Strategic Energy Partnership facilitated India's import of American crude and LNG, making the US India's sixth-largest source of hydrocarbon imports.
- Quad alliance: Trump's policies framed China as a mutual threat, enhancing Indo-US alignment in strategic goals. His administration revived the Quad alliance and promoted the Indo-Pacific strategy to counter China's growing influence.

Impact of Trump's First Term on India-US Relations
- Trump's first term had a mixed impact on India-US relations. While cooperation in defense and energy increased, trade disputes and immigration policies created tension. India lost its preferential trade status under the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) in 2019, impacting $5.7 billion of its duty-free exports to the US. Trump's protectionist policies and trade restrictions also affected Indian industries, particularly pharmaceuticals and IT services. However, the strategic partnership between the two nations deepened, with increased cooperation in counter-terrorism and defense.

Trump 2.0: Political Landscape and Potential Policy Shifts
The Bhopal Gas Tragedy led to significant legal and environmental consequences:
- With Trump's re-election, India anticipates both benefits and challenges in the upcoming phase of bilateral relations. Some potential policy shifts include:
- Renewed trade tensions: Trump may renew trade tensions by imposing higher tariffs on over $75 billion worth of Indian exports.
- Continuity in defense cooperation: Trump has expressed interest in resuming the Free Trade Agreement talks, which could further bolster India's defense capabilities.[3]
- Focus on energy independence: Trump's administration may revive investments in the energy sector, boosting India's energy security.

Implications
The implications of Trump 2.0 on India-US relations are far-reaching:
- Trade relations: Trump's tariff policies may strain the economic partnership between India and the US.
- Regional security: Trump's stance on regional security, particularly with regards to China and Pakistan, may impact India's strategic interests.
- Energy cooperation: Trump's focus on energy independence may create opportunities for India to diversify its energy sources.

Challenges Ahead
Some challenges that India may face in its relations with the US under Trump 2.0 include:
- Trade disputes: Trump's tariff policies may lead to trade disputes between India and the US.
- Immigration policies: Trump's restrictive immigration stance may impact Indian skilled workers in the US.
- Regional security: Trump's policies on regional security may create challenges for India's strategic interests.

Opportunities
Despite the challenges, there are opportunities for India in its relations with the US under Trump 2.0:
- Defense cooperation: Trump's administration may further bolster India's defense capabilities through increased cooperation.
- Energy cooperation: Trump's focus on energy independence may create opportunities for India to diversify its energy sources.
- Trade agreements: Trump's administration may negotiate new trade agreements that benefit India's export-driven industries.

Way Forward
To navigate the challenges and opportunities presented by Trump 2.0, India must:
- Maintain strategic autonomy: India must maintain its strategic autonomy while engaging with the US on key issues.
- Diversify trade relations: India must diversify its trade relations to reduce dependence on the US market.
- Engage in diplomatic efforts: India must engage in diplomatic efforts to address trade disputes and regional security challenges.

Conclusion
- In conclusion, Trump 2.0 presents both challenges and opportunities for India-US relations. While there are concerns about trade disputes and regional security, there are also opportunities for defense cooperation, energy cooperation, and trade agreements. India must maintain its strategic autonomy, diversify its trade relations, and engage in diplomatic efforts to navigate the complexities of Trump 2.0. By doing so, India can ensure a stable and beneficial relationship with the US, despite the challenges posed by Trump's presidency.

Focus of the month

16TH FINANCE COMMISSION LAUNCHED INAUGURAL ISSUE OF NITI AAYOG'S REPORT

Finance Commission of India

Introduction
The fiscal health of a nation determines its economic stability, growth potential, and ability to finance public services. To ensure better financial management at the state level, the 16th Finance Commission has launched the inaugural Fiscal Health Index 2025, developed by NITI Aayog. This index aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of state finances, helping policymakers to make informed decisions regarding resource allocation and fiscal sustainability.

Historical Context
India has a long history of fiscal monitoring, with Finance Commissions playing a crucial role in guiding states on financial prudence. Previous commissions introduced recommendations on tax devolution, grants-in-aid, and deficit management. However, with changing economic dynamics and increasing fiscal pressures, a more data-driven approach was needed. The Fiscal Health Index 2025 builds upon earlier reports but provides a more structured and comparative analysis across states.

Objective of the Index
The primary goals of the Fiscal Health Index 2025 include:
- Assessing the fiscal strength of Indian states based on revenue generation, expenditure efficiency, and debt sustainability.
- Providing a transparent ranking of states to encourage financial discipline.
- Helping the 16th Finance Commission design an equitable resource-sharing framework.
- Offering policy recommendations for improved fiscal governance.

Contemporary Relevance
The launch of this index comes at a time when Indian states are facing significant financial challenges, including:
- Rising fiscal deficits and unsustainable debt levels.
- Lower-than-expected tax revenue due to economic slowdowns.
- Increased social sector spending, impacting capital expenditure.
- The need for better financial planning post-pandemic.
- This index provides crucial insights into these issues, allowing states to take corrective measures before fiscal imbalances become severe.

Key Features
The Fiscal Health Index 2025 evaluates states on multiple indicators, including:
- Revenue Performance – Efficiency in tax and non-tax revenue collection.
- Expenditure Management – The balance between developmental spending and fiscal responsibility.
- Debt Sustainability – The burden of outstanding debt and repayment capacity.
- Fiscal Deficit Trends – A state's ability to manage its revenue-expenditure gap.
- Financial Transparency – Adoption of digital governance and financial disclosures.
- These parameters provide a holistic view of a state's financial health, helping both policymakers and investors.

State-wise Performance Analysis
The index ranks states based on their fiscal discipline. While high-performing states set an example for financial prudence, struggling states can use the findings to identify areas for improvement.
- Top Performers – States with strong revenue generation, controlled debt levels, and efficient public spending.
- Low Performers – States struggling with high fiscal deficits, inefficient spending, and debt mismanagement.
- Trends Over Time – How states have improved or declined in fiscal health over the years.

Impact on Governance & Policymaking
- Central Government: The findings will influence decisions on tax devolution, grants, and resource allocation.
- State Governments: Helps states improve budgeting, optimize spending, and reduce unnecessary borrowing.
- Investors & Economists: Provides data for assessing economic stability and investment potential in different regions.

Influence on the 16th Finance Commission
The Finance Commission plays a crucial role in distributing central resources to states. The Fiscal Health Index 2025 will:
- Guide the commission in designing a fair and balanced resource-sharing formula.
- Encourage states to adopt fiscal reforms to secure higher allocations.
- Promote better financial discipline among states.

Economic & Social Implications
A strong fiscal framework benefits various sectors:
- Infrastructure: Ensures more funds for roads, railways, and urban development.
- Social Welfare: Sustainable spending on education, healthcare, and social security.
- Employment: Encourages job creation by boosting investment in productive sectors.

Challenges in Implementation
While the index is a significant step forward, some challenges include:
- Data Accuracy: Variations in financial reporting across states.
- Political Resistance: Some states may oppose rankings that highlight poor fiscal management.
- Implementation Barriers: Need for capacity-building in financial management at the state level.
- Addressing these challenges will be crucial for the index to have a lasting impact.

Global Comparisons
Many countries, including the U.S., Germany, and China, have similar fiscal monitoring mechanisms. By benchmarking India's Fiscal Health Index 2025 against global best practices, policymakers can identify areas for improvement and adopt successful models from other nations.

Future Scope & Policy Recommendations
1. Encouraging States to Diversify Revenue Sources: Reducing dependency on central transfers.
2. Strengthening Debt Management Strategies: Ensuring sustainable borrowing practices.
3. Enhancing Transparency & Accountability: Promoting digital financial governance.
4. Periodic Updates to the Index: Ensuring real-time fiscal monitoring for better decision-making.

Conclusion
The Fiscal Health Index 2025 marks a significant step toward strengthening India's economic governance. By promoting fiscal responsibility, financial transparency, and effective policymaking, this initiative will play a vital role in shaping the future of India's economic landscape. As India aspires to become a $5 trillion economy, such measures will be instrumental in ensuring long-term financial stability.

Focus of the month

INDONESIAN PRESIDENT PRABOWO SUBIANTO VISITED INDIA AHEAD OF THE 76TH REPUBLIC DAY CELEBRATIONS, SERVING AS THE CHIEF GUEST

Introduction

- In a significant diplomatic event, Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto visited India ahead of the 76th Republic Day celebrations, where he was honored as the chief guest. His visit underscored the strengthening bilateral ties between India and Indonesia, focusing on cultural, economic, and strategic cooperation. This marks a new chapter in the deep-rooted historical relationship between the two maritime neighbors.

Historical Context

India and Indonesia share centuries-old civilizational ties, influenced by cultural, trade, and religious exchanges. The relationship gained momentum post-Independence, with both nations playing active roles in the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). Over the years, cooperation has evolved across various sectors, from trade and defense to maritime security and regional stability.

Objectives of the Visit

President Prabowo Subianto's visit aimed to:

1. Strengthen strategic ties between India and Indonesia in defense and maritime security.
2. Enhance economic cooperation, focusing on trade, investment, and infrastructure development.
3. Deepen cultural and people-to-people ties, reinforcing shared historical and linguistic links.
4. Expand collaboration in regional and global platforms, such as ASEAN and the Indo-Pacific.

Contemporary Relevance

The visit comes at a time when:

1. The Indo-Pacific region is witnessing geopolitical shifts, requiring stronger maritime partnerships.
2. India is expanding its Act East Policy, emphasizing closer engagement with ASEAN nations.
3. Indonesia is emerging as a key economic powerhouse, making economic collaboration crucial.
4. Defense cooperation is gaining importance, with both nations seeking to enhance joint military exercises and defense trade.

Key Highlights of the Visit

- Republic Day Honor – President Prabowo was the chief guest, reflecting Indonesia's growing importance in India's diplomatic priorities.
- Strategic Talks – Discussions on defense cooperation, joint military exercises, and maritime security in the Indo-Pacific.
- Economic Agreements – Strengthening trade relations, investment opportunities, and infrastructure development.
- Cultural Engagements – Reaffirming shared civilizational ties, including language, religion, and historical trade routes.
- Regional Cooperation – Strengthening ties under ASEAN, IORA (Indian Ocean Rim Association), and Indo-Pacific frameworks.

Impact on India-Indonesia Relations

1. Defense & Security: Enhanced maritime security cooperation to counter threats in the Indo-Pacific.
2. Trade & Economy: Potential rise in bilateral trade, with new agreements on investment and digital trade.
3. Diplomatic Relations: Strengthening multilateral engagement in regional forums like ASEAN and G20.
4. Cultural & People-to-People Ties: Increased exchanges in education, tourism, and technology sectors.

Challenges in Implementation

While the visit strengthens ties, challenges remain:

- Geopolitical Pressures: Balancing relations amid tensions with China in the Indo-Pacific.
- Trade Barriers: Addressing issues related to tariffs, regulations, and market access.
- Security Concerns: Strengthening counterterrorism efforts and cyber security collaboration.

Future Prospects & Policy Recommendations

- Expanding Defense Cooperation: Enhancing defense technology transfer and joint production.
- Boosting Economic Engagement: Increasing investment in infrastructure, digital economy, and green energy.
- Strengthening Cultural Diplomacy: Promoting educational and tourism exchanges between the nations.
- Deepening Indo-Pacific Strategy: Collaborating in maritime security and regional stability initiatives.
- Challenges in Implementation

Conclusion

- President Prabowo Subianto's visit to India ahead of the 76th Republic Day reflects the growing strategic, economic, and cultural partnership between the two nations. As India and Indonesia navigate global challenges, their strengthened ties will play a crucial role in shaping regional security and economic growth. This visit marks a step forward in deepening the India-Indonesia comprehensive strategic partnership.

Focus of the month

NANO UREA AND YIELD REDUCTION: EVALUATING THE CHALLENGES IN INDIAN AGRICULTURE

Introduction
Nano Urea, introduced as a revolutionary alternative to conventional urea, was expected to enhance crop productivity, reduce fertilizer dependency, and promote sustainable agriculture. However, recent reports indicate that its large-scale adoption has led to yield reduction in several crops, raising concerns among farmers and agricultural experts. This development has sparked a debate on the effectiveness, application methods, and long-term impact of Nano Urea on Indian agriculture.

Historical Context
India has long been dependent on conventional urea for crop fertilization, leading to excessive usage, soil degradation, and environmental concerns. In response, Nano Urea was introduced by IFFCO (Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative Limited) as a more efficient and eco-friendly alternative.
- Promoted as a liquid fertilizer with high nutrient absorption rates.
- Aimed to reduce urea consumption and dependency on imports.
- Expected to boost yields while cutting costs for farmers.
- However, its field performance is now being questioned, as reports suggest unexpected reductions in crop productivity.

Causes of Yield Reduction
Several factors have contributed to the decline in crop yields following the adoption of Nano Urea:
1. Limited Nitrogen Supply – Nano Urea provides lower nitrogen content compared to conventional urea, affecting plant growth.
2. Application Challenges – Improper spraying techniques and lack of awareness among farmers may have led to inefficient usage.
3. Soil Conditions – Different soil types react differently to Nano Urea, impacting nutrient absorption.
4. Crop-Specific Performance – Some crops may require higher nitrogen doses, making Nano Urea less effective.
5. Lack of Field Trials – Insufficient large-scale testing before commercialization could have contributed to unpredictable results.

Impact on Indian Agriculture
1. The yield reduction issue has multiple consequences for Indian agriculture:
2. Financial Burden on Farmers – Lower productivity leads to income losses and financial distress.
3. Food Security Concerns – Reduced crop yields could impact national food supply.
4. Fertilizer Policy Reassessment – The government may need to revisit policies promoting Nano Urea over conventional fertilizers.
5. Scientific Reevaluation – Need for further research on optimal dosage, soil compatibility, and crop suitability.

Government & Expert Reactions
1. IFFCO's Defense: Claims that proper application ensures optimal results and further awareness programs will address issues.
2. Agricultural Scientists: Call for more field trials and a balanced approach combining Nano Urea with traditional fertilizers.
3. Farmers' Response: Growing skepticism due to unexpected yield losses and lack of visible benefits.
4. Government's Next Steps: Reviewing the impact and considering adjustments in fertilizer subsidy policies.

Challenges & Way Forward
While Nano Urea has potential, its current challenges must be addressed:
Challenges:
- Lack of awareness among farmers on correct usage.
- Varied soil responses reducing uniform effectiveness.
- Potential over-promotion without adequate field trials.

Way Forward:
- Conduct more large-scale field studies before widespread adoption.
- Develop region-specific guidelines for Nano Urea application.
- Educate farmers on proper usage through training programs.
- Promote a hybrid approach—combining Nano Urea with conventional fertilizers for better results.

Conclusion
Nano Urea was introduced with the promise of revolutionizing Indian agriculture, but its reported impact on crop yields highlights the need for careful evaluation and scientific validation. While its benefits in reducing fertilizer dependency remain important, proper implementation strategies, awareness, and research-backed recommendations are crucial to ensuring its success. The focus now must be on addressing farmer concerns, improving application methods, and refining agricultural policies to strike the right balance between innovation and productivity.

Focus of the month

DEFENCE MINISTRY

Introduction

The Ministry of Defence (MoD) has designated 2025 as the "Year of Reforms" to modernize and enhance the operational capabilities of the armed forces. This initiative aims to transform the military into a technologically advanced, combat-ready force capable of conducting multi-domain integrated operations. The announcement reflects the government's commitment to strengthening national defense by integrating modern technology, improving strategic readiness, and fostering innovation across all branches of the armed forces.

Objectives of the Year of Reforms

The primary goal of this reform initiative is to ensure that the armed forces remain agile, adaptive, and prepared for contemporary and future threats. The focus will be on the following key areas:

1. **Technological Advancement**: The armed forces will undergo a significant technological transformation, incorporating artificial intelligence (AI), cyber warfare capabilities, advanced weapon systems, and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs). The use of AI-driven decision-making, automation in logistics, and big data analytics will enhance situational awareness and operational effectiveness.

2. **Combat Readiness**: The reforms will prioritize training and operational preparedness, ensuring that personnel are equipped with modern combat skills and knowledge of emerging threats. Upgraded training modules, joint military exercises, and the adoption of simulation-based training techniques will be crucial components.

3. **Multi-Domain Integrated Operations**: Modern warfare extends beyond traditional land, air, and sea battles to include cyber, space, and electronic warfare. The MoD aims to develop an integrated approach where all domains function cohesively to maximize combat effectiveness. This includes enhancing joint operations among the Army, Navy, and Air Force, ensuring seamless coordination in real-time battlefield scenarios.

4. **Indigenization and Self-Reliance**: A major focus will be on promoting indigenous defense production under the "Make in India" initiative. Encouraging domestic defense manufacturing, collaborating with private industries, and investing in research and development (R&D) will reduce dependency on foreign arms suppliers.

5. **Cybersecurity and Information Warfare**: With the increasing threat of cyber-attacks and information warfare, strengthening cybersecurity infrastructure is essential. The armed forces will integrate advanced encryption technologies, cyber defense units, and AI-powered threat detection systems to counter emerging digital threats.

6. **Infrastructure Modernization**: Upgrading military infrastructure, including smart bases, digital command centers, and enhanced surveillance systems, will be prioritized. The use of satellite communication, advanced radar systems, and high-speed data networks will improve strategic response capabilities.

7. **Human Resource Development**: A technologically advanced military requires highly skilled personnel. Reforms in recruitment, training, and professional military education will ensure that defense personnel are equipped with the necessary expertise in emerging technologies and modern warfare strategies.

Expected Impact of the Reforms

By implementing these reforms, the armed forces will achieve greater operational efficiency, strategic agility, and enhanced deterrence capabilities. A technologically superior military will not only strengthen national security but also reinforce India's position as a formidable power in the global defense landscape. Additionally, investments in indigenous defense technology will boost the economy and create opportunities for innovation and employment.

In conclusion, the "Year of Reforms" marks a transformative phase for the Ministry of Defence, setting the stage for a future-ready military force capable of addressing modern security challenges with cutting-edge technology and integrated warfare strategies.

Focus of the month

PM SURYA GHAR: MUFT BIJLI YOJANA

Introduction

Launched on February 13, 2024, the PM Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana aims to provide free electricity up to 300 units per month to one crore households through rooftop solar installations. With a budget of ₹75,021 crore, the scheme seeks to enhance solar rooftop capacity, reduce electricity costs for households, and promote self-reliance in energy generation.

Background

India has been actively promoting renewable energy to meet its growing power demands sustainably.

This scheme provides substantial subsidies to encourage households to adopt solar energy, offering:

- 60% subsidy for systems up to 2 kW
- 40% subsidy for additional capacity between 2 to 3 kW (capped at 3 kW)

At benchmark prices, this translates to:

- ₹30,000 subsidy for 1 kW
- ₹60,000 subsidy for 2 kW
- ₹78,000 subsidy for 3 kW

Impact

1. Societal
- Reduces electricity bills, saving up to ₹15,000 annually for households consuming 300 units/month
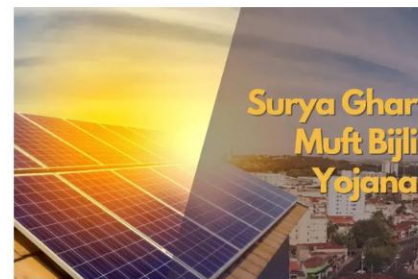- Encourages energy self-sufficiency and environmental consciousness
2. Political
- Reinforces government commitment to renewable energy and sustainability
- Supports India's carbon reduction goals and strengthens federal-state cooperation
3. Economic
- Adds 30 GW of solar capacity
- Generates 1,000 billion units of electricity over 25 years
- Reduces 720 million tonnes of CO_2 emissions
- Creates approximately 17 lakh jobs in manufacturing, logistics, sales, installation, and maintenance

Way Forward

1. Awareness Campaigns: Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) and Panchayats should actively promote rooftop solar adoption.
2. Model Solar Villages: Each district should develop at least one solar village to encourage rural participation.
3. Financial Support: Offer collateral-free low-interest loans to make adoption easier.
4. Streamlined Subsidies: Ensure timely subsidy disbursement to maintain public trust.
5. Private Sector Collaboration: Encourage public-private partnerships to expand rooftop solar reach.

Conclusion

The PM Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana is a game-changer in India's renewable energy transition. By empowering households with solar energy, it reduces costs, promotes sustainability, and drives economic growth. Effective implementation and public participation will be key to its success.

Reference

- PM India – "PM announces Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana" (*pmindia.gov.in*)
- Press Information Bureau (PIB) – "Cabinet approves PM-Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana" (*https://pib.gov.in*)

Focus of the month

ANDHRA PRADESH VOLUNTEER SYSTEM

Introduction
- The Andhra Pradesh Volunteer System was launched in 2019 by the state government of Andhra Pradesh under Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy's administration to enhance last-mile delivery of welfare schemes and ensure direct citizen engagement. Under this initiative, volunteers are appointed at the village and ward levels to assist in delivering government services and benefits to eligible citizens.

- The system operates under the Navaratnalu welfare program, ensuring that schemes related to pensions, ration, education, and healthcare reach beneficiaries without bureaucratic delays. The initiative is unique as it directly integrates the government with local communities, making governance accessible, accountable, and people-centric.
- This system also aligns with Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP) under Article 38 and Article 39, which advocate social justice and equitable resource distribution. It also supports the Good Governance Index, which emphasizes efficient public service delivery.

Key Features
The Andhra Pradesh Volunteer System has several distinct features that make it a unique governance model:
- Volunteer Recruitment – One volunteer is appointed for every 50 households in villages and wards, ensuring hyper-local service delivery.
- Doorstep Governance – Volunteers provide real-time assistance to beneficiaries by bringing government schemes directly to their homes.
- Technological Integration – The system is backed by an IT-enabled monitoring mechanism to ensure efficient tracking of service delivery.
- Employment Generation – The initiative has created over 2.8 lakh jobs, particularly for educated youth in rural areas.
- Transparency and Accountability – Volunteers act as direct representatives of the government and are held accountable through performance-based evaluations.
- Welfare Scheme Implementation – Major schemes like YSR Pension Kanuka, Amma Vodi (education aid), and Aarogyasri (health insurance) are efficiently implemented through this system.
- Grievance Redressal – Volunteers help in reporting and resolving citizen grievances, strengthening trust in governance.

These features showcase good governance principles, aligning with UPSC GS Paper 2 topics on public administration and service delivery.

Significance
The Andhra Pradesh Volunteer System has significant governance, social, and economic implications:
- Empowering Citizens – It enhances awareness and accessibility of government schemes, ensuring inclusivity in governance.
- Improved Service Delivery – By eliminating bureaucratic inefficiencies, it ensures timely and corruption-free delivery of welfare benefits.
- Decentralization of Governance – It is a model of participatory governance, making administration more responsive to local needs.
- Employment Generation – With over 2.8 lakh volunteers employed, it provides financial stability to youth in rural areas.
- Strengthening Rural Administration – It enhances coordination between local bodies, district officials, and the state government, improving administrative efficiency.
- Women Empowerment – Many women volunteers are part of the system, promoting gender inclusivity in governance.

This initiative aligns with GS Paper 2 topics like governance reforms, decentralization, and participatory administration.

Objectives of the Volunteer System
The primary objectives of the system include:
1. Ensuring last-mile delivery – Providing government services directly to beneficiaries.
2. Enhancing government accountability – Creating a citizen-government interface for better governance.
3. Reducing bureaucratic delays – Eliminating middlemen and corruption in welfare implementation.
4. Promoting employment – Generating job opportunities for educated youth.
5. Strengthening participatory governance – Encouraging community involvement in administration.

These objectives align with UPSC topics on welfare state policies and public service delivery.

Areas of Focus and Impact
The system has impacted several key areas:
1. Welfare Scheme Implementation – Volunteers ensure schemes like YSR Pension Kanuka, Aarogyasri, and Amma Vodi reach the right beneficiaries.
2. Education & Awareness – Spreading awareness about government programs in rural areas.
3. Health & Sanitation – Assisting in vaccination drives, sanitation programs, and health scheme awareness.
4. Employment Generation - Over 2.8 lakh youth employed, reducing rural unemployment.
5. Grievance Redressal - Volunteers report local issues to officials, ensuring quick resolution.

This aligns with UPSC GS Paper 2 (Governance) and GS Paper 3 (Economic Development).

Challenges in the Andhra Pradesh Volunteer System
Despite its advantages, the system faces several challenges:
1. Political Influence – Allegations of political bias in volunteer selection and operations.
2. Financial Burden – Sustainability is an issue due to high costs in maintaining volunteer salaries.
3. Lack of Training – Volunteers often lack proper training to handle governance tasks effectively.
4. Limited Authority – Volunteers lack decision-making power, making them dependent on officials.
5. Corruption and Misuse – Some cases of bribery and favoritism have been reported.
6. Addressing these challenges is key to making the system sustainable and effective.
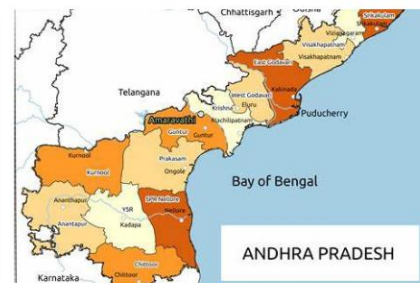
Impact of the Andhra Pradesh Volunteer System
1. Better governance at the grassroots level – Direct citizen-government interaction.
2. Increased welfare access – Improved awareness and accessibility of government schemes.
3. Economic upliftment – Employment for youth, especially in rural and semi-urban areas.
4. Women's empowerment – Increased female participation in governance roles.
5. Reduction in corruption – Minimal bureaucratic delays in welfare distribution.

This showcases effective policy implementation and decentralized governance, aligning with UPSC GS Paper 2 themes.

Success Stories and Impact
Several success stories highlight the system's effectiveness:
1. Pension Delivery – Volunteers have ensured timely distribution of pensions to lakhs of senior citizens.
2. COVID-19 Relief – Volunteers played a key role in distributing food, medicine, and vaccines.
3. Education Access – Under schemes like Amma Vodi, volunteers have helped increase school enrollments.

Criticism and Debate Around the Volunteer System
- Political Interference – Critics argue that the system is used for vote-bank politics.
- Questionable Efficiency – Some claim that duplication of work happens with existing local bodies.
- Transparency Issues – Reports of favoritism and partiality in welfare distribution.
- Sustainability Concerns – The system relies on continuous funding, raising concerns about its future viability.

Way Forward
To strengthen the Andhra Pradesh Volunteer System, the following reforms are needed:
- Transparent Selection Process – Ensure merit-based recruitment of volunteers.
- Regular Training Programs – Capacity building for volunteers to improve service efficiency.
- Independent Oversight – Third-party audits to monitor performance and corruption.
- Integration with Panchayati Raj – Strengthen the link between volunteers and local self-governance institutions.
- Sustainable Financial Model – Explore alternative funding through public-private partnerships (PPP).

These reforms align with UPSC themes on governance reforms and public administration.

Conclusion
The Andhra Pradesh Volunteer System is a unique model of last-mile governance that has improved service delivery, employment, and citizen participation. While it faces challenges related to political influence and sustainability, with proper reforms, it can become a benchmark for decentralized governance in India.

Focus of the month

JANUARY 26

On January 26, 2025, India celebrated its 76th Republic Day with grandeur and patriotic fervor, embracing the theme 'Swarnim Bharat: Virasat aur Vikas' (Golden India: Heritage and Development). This theme underscored the nation's rich cultural legacy and its strides toward progress. The event was graced by Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto as the chief guest, highlighting the deep-rooted diplomatic and cultural ties between India and Indonesia.

Significance of Republic Day

Republic Day marks the adoption of the Indian Constitution on January 26, 1950, signifying India's transition to a sovereign democratic republic. This day is celebrated annually to honor the democratic values enshrined in the Constitution and to reflect upon the nation's journey of unity, diversity, and development.

The Grand Parade at Kartavya Path

The Republic Day parade, held at Kartavya Path in New Delhi, is the centerpiece of the celebrations. This year, the parade showcased India's military prowess, cultural diversity, and technological advancements. The event commenced with Prime Minister Narendra Modi paying homage at the National War Memorial, followed by the unfurling of the national flag by President Droupadi Murmu, accompanied by a 21-gun salute.

Military Display and 'Nari Shakti'

The parade featured marching contingents from the armed forces, paramilitary forces, and police, displaying discipline and valor. A notable highlight was the participation of an all-women contingent from the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), symbolizing 'Nari Shakti' (women empowerment). Led by Assistant Commandant Aishwarya Joy M, the 148-member contingent showcased the pivotal role of women in national security.

Cultural Tableaux: A Glimpse into India's Diversity

A significant attraction of the Republic Day parade is the display of tableaux, which are elaborate floats representing various states, Union Territories, and central ministries. These tableaux encapsulate the nation's cultural richness, historical milestones, and developmental initiatives.

This year, 31 tableaux were showcased, with 16 from states and Union Territories and 15 from central ministries and departments. Each tableau was meticulously designed to align with the overarching theme of 'Swarnim Bharat: Virasat aur Vikas.'

Highlights of State and Union Territory Tableaux

Uttar Pradesh: The state's tableau depicted the upcoming Maha Kumbh 2025 in Prayagraj, illustrating scenes of 'Samudra Manthan' (churning of the ocean), 'Amrit Kalash' (pot of nectar), and devotees bathing at the Sangam, the confluence of the Ganga, Yamuna, and Saraswati rivers.

Bihar: Bihar's tableau focused on the ancient Nalanda University, emphasizing its historical significance as a center of learning and its contribution to India's educational heritag.

Madhya Pradesh: The tableau showcased the reintroduction of cheetahs in the state's Kuno National Park, highlighting wildlife conservation efforts and biodiversity.

Karnataka: Karnataka's tableau featured Lakkundi, renowned for its intricate stone craftsmanship, reflecting the state's architectural heritage and artistic excellence.

Gujarat: The tableau from Gujarat presented the 12th-century Kirit Toran (arches) from Vadnagar alongside the C-295 Transport Aircraft Assembly Unit, symbolizing a blend of historical architecture and modern industrial development.

Central Ministries and Departments Tableaux

Several central ministries and departments also contributed to the parade with thematic tableaux:

Ministry of Tribal Affairs: Awarded the Best Tableau, it commemorated the 150th birth anniversary of Bhagwan Birsa Munda, depicting tribal heritage with a majestic Sal tree and traditional dances like the Paika from Jharkhand and Nagada from Chattisgarh.

Ministry of Rural Development: The tableau highlighted the 'Lakhpati Didi Initiative,' promoting women's economic empowerment through entrepreneurship and self-reliance.

Ministry of Earth Sciences: Celebrating 150 years of the India Meteorological Department, the tableau showcased advancements in weather forecasting and its impact on saving lives and livelihoods.

International Participation

A historic first, a contingent of 342 members from the Indonesian National Armed Forces participated in the parade, symbolizing the strengthening defense and cultural ties between India and Indonesia.

Cultural Performances

The parade also featured cultural performances by approximately 5,000 artists, presenting over 45 traditional dance forms from various parts of India. This vibrant display of cultural diversity resonated with the theme of 'Swarnim Bharat: Virasat aur Vikas,' celebrating the nation's heritage and progress.

Conclusion

The 76th Republic Day celebrations were a testament to India's unity in diversity, showcasing its rich cultural tapestry, military strength, and developmental milestones. The meticulously crafted tableaux served as a window into the nation's soul, reflecting its journey from a storied past to a promising future.

Focus of the month

CONGO RAWANDA

Historical Background

The roots of the DRC-Rwanda conflict can be traced back to the 1994 Rwandan Genocide. Following the genocide, millions of Rwandan Hutus, including genocidaires, fled into eastern Congo. This led to insecurity as these groups formed militias that threatened Rwanda and destabilized the region. Rwanda and Uganda backed Congolese rebel groups, leading to the First (1996–1997) and Second (1998–2003) Congo Wars, involving multiple African nations.

Key Factors Driving the Conflict

1. Ethnic and Political Tensions
  - The rivalry between Hutu and Tutsi communities, originating from Rwandan history, has spilled into eastern Congo. Rwanda accuses the DRC of harboring Hutu rebel groups like the **Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR)**.
  - The DRC, in turn, accuses Rwanda of supporting the **March 23 Movement (M23), a Tutsi-led militia.

2. Resource Exploitation
  - The DRC is rich in minerals like coltan, gold, and diamonds, which fuel the conflict. Rebel groups, foreign corporations, and even neighboring countries exploit these resources to finance their activities.
  - Rwanda has been accused of illegally extracting minerals from the DRC, worsening tensions.

3. Weak Governance and Armed Groups
  - The Congolese government has struggled to maintain control over its eastern provinces due to weak institutions and corruption.
  - Dozens of armed groups, including the **Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), FDLR, and M23**, operate in the region, making peace efforts difficult.
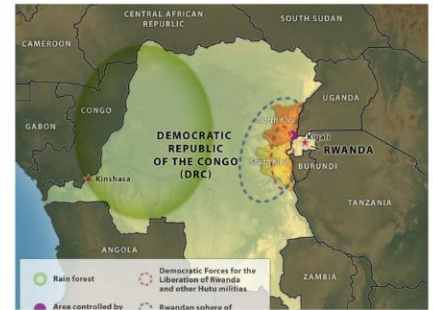
4. Geopolitical Rivalries
  - Rwanda and Uganda have been accused of using eastern Congo as a battleground for influence.
  - Western powers and China also have interests in Congo's minerals, indirectly affecting the conflict.

Humanitarian Consequences

- Over six million people have died since the wars began, making it one of the deadliest conflicts since World War II.
- Millions have been displaced, leading to a severe refugee crisis.
- Sexual violence has been widely used as a weapon of war.

International Interventions and Peace Efforts
- United Nations Peacekeeping (MONUSCO): The UN has deployed one of its largest peacekeeping missions, but its effectiveness is debated.
- African Union and Regional Efforts: The East African Community (EAC) has deployed troops, and diplomatic negotiations continue.
- Recent Developments: In 2022-2023, clashes between the Congolese army and M23 rebels escalated, worsening tensions between DRC and Rwanda.

Conclusion

The DRC-Rwanda conflict is a multi-dimensional crisis shaped by historical grievances, ethnic tensions, and economic interests. Resolving it requires strong regional cooperation, good governance, and sustainable development to break the cycle of violence.

Focus of the month

PM MODI LAUNCHES INDIA'S FIRST REGIONAL RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEM (RRTS) IN GHAZIABAD, UP (NAMO BHARAT CORRIDOR)

1. Introduction
Date of Launch: October 20, 2023
Location: Sahibabad, Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh
Project Name: Namo Bharat Corridor, India's first Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS)
Objective: To provide high-speed, efficient, and eco-friendly mass transit connectivity in the National Capital Region (NCR).
Implementing Agency: National Capital Region Transport Corporation (NCRTC)
Significance: Aimed at decongesting traffic, reducing pollution, and boosting regional economic integration.

2. Key Features of the Namo Bharat Corridor
Route and Connectivity:
First operational segment: Sahibabad to Duhai Depot (17 km) of the Delhi-Meerut RRTS Corridor (total length: 82 km).
Future expansion includes corridors connecting Delhi to Alwar and Panipat.
Speed & Technology:
Operates at a speed of 160 kmph with a design speed of 180 kmph.
Semi-high-speed rail with modern aerodynamic coaches.
Eco-Friendly Features:
Powered by renewable energy sources.
Regenerative braking system to enhance energy efficiency.
Passenger Convenience:
Automatic fare collection, Wi-Fi, and modern amenities.
Women-only coach and priority seating for senior citizens and differently-abled passengers.
Make in India Initiative:
100% 'Made in India' rolling stock and technology.
Supports local manufacturing and employment generation.

3. Economic and Social Impact
A. Economic Benefits
Boost to Real Estate & Infrastructure: Increased demand for commercial and residential spaces near transit corridors.
Job Creation: Direct employment in construction, operations, and allied services.
Improved Business Connectivity: Faster movement of goods and people enhances productivity.
B. Social Benefits
Reduced Traffic Congestion: Less dependence on private vehicles, easing road traffic.
Lower Pollution: Shift from fossil fuel-based transport to electric-powered transit.
Time Efficiency: Drastically cuts down travel time between Delhi and Meerut to less than 60 minutes.

4. Challenges and Concerns
Land Acquisition & Resettlement Issues: Delays due to land disputes and rehabilitation concerns.
High Project Cost: Estimated cost ₹30,000 crore; financial sustainability needs long-term planning.
Integration with Existing Transport: Need for better last-mile connectivity for seamless commuter experience.
Operational Efficiency: Ensuring smooth functioning, maintenance, and security of the RRTS.

5. Future Expansion and Policy Implications
Expansion Plans:
Delhi-Meerut (82 km) to be fully operational by 2025.
Future Delhi-Alwar and Delhi-Panipat corridors to strengthen NCR connectivity.
Urban Transport Policy:
Encourages transit-oriented development (TOD) to create sustainable urban spaces.
Supports the National Electric Mobility Mission Plan (NEMMP) for eco-friendly transit.
Lessons for Other Indian Cities:
Can be a model for cities like Mumbai, Bengaluru, and Chennai, which require efficient regional transit systems.

6. Conclusion
The Namo Bharat Corridor is a landmark initiative towards modernizing India's urban transit.
It aligns with India's sustainable development goals (SDGs), economic growth, and public mobility needs.
With successful implementation, RRTS corridors can transform intercity travel, ensuring a faster, cleaner, and more efficient future for public transport in India.

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Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) - www.mohua.gov.in
Niti Aayog - Urban Transport Reports - www.niti.gov.in
The Hindu - RRTS Project Updates - *www.thehindu.com*

Focus of the month

MANUAL SCAVENGING IN INDIA: A GRIM REALITY

1. Introduction
Manual scavenging refers to the hazardous practice of cleaning human excreta from dry latrines, sewers, and septic tanks without protective equipment. Despite being legally banned, it persists due to caste-based discrimination, lack of mechanization, and administrative failure.
The 2013 Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers Act criminalized the practice, but implementation remains weak (PRS Legislative Research, 2023).

2. Causes of Manual Scavenging
Caste-Based Discrimination: Historically, Dalits, particularly the Valmiki community, have been forced into manual scavenging due to societal exclusion (National Dalit Watch, 2022).
Lack of Alternative Livelihoods: Poor education, limited employment opportunities, and inadequate government rehabilitation programs compel many to continue (ILO Report, 2021).
Failure of Mechanization: Sewer-cleaning machines and robotic alternatives remain underutilized due to high costs and lack of political will (Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, 2023).
Weak Law Enforcement: Despite legal bans, local authorities often fail to prevent manual scavenging, and prosecutions are rare (Supreme Court Judgment, 2014).

3. Consequences of Manual Scavenging
Severe Health Risks: Exposure to toxic gases like hydrogen sulfide and methane leads to respiratory diseases, skin infections, and frequent sewer deaths (National Commission for Safai Karamcharis, 2023).
Social Stigma and Marginalization: Manual scavengers remain ostracized, denied access to education, and forced into intergenerational cycles of poverty (UN Human Rights Report, 2022).
Economic Exploitation: Most workers earn below minimum wage, with women often paid even less (National Human Rights Commission, 2023).

4. Government Response and Legal Framework
The Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and Their Rehabilitation Act, 2013: Criminalizes manual scavenging and mandates rehabilitation (PRS Legislative Research, 2023).
Supreme Court Directives (2014): Mandated ₹10 lakh compensation for sewer death victims and strict enforcement of mechanization (Supreme Court Order, 2014).
National Action Plan for Mechanized Sanitation Ecosystem (NAMASTE, 2022): Focuses on robotic solutions and skill development for sanitation workers (Ministry of Social Justice, 2022).

5. Challenges in Eradication
Poor Implementation of Laws: Many municipalities continue to employ manual scavengers despite the ban (CAG Report, 2022).
Limited Access to Rehabilitation: Government schemes fail to provide sustainable employment alternatives (Dalit Human Rights India, 2023).
Social Resistance: Deep-rooted caste bias prevents effective social and economic integration of manual scavengers (Oxfam India, 2023).

6. Way Forward
Strict Law Enforcement: Ensure harsh penalties for violations and strict accountability for municipal authorities (NHRC, 2023).
Mechanization & Technology: Expand the use of sewer-cleaning machines, robotic cleaners, and vacuum pumps (NITI Aayog, 2023).
Economic and Social Upliftment: Provide financial aid, employment reservations, and education support for rehabilitated workers (World Bank Report, 2022).

7. Conclusion
Manual scavenging is a human rights violation that requires urgent policy intervention. While legal bans exist, weak enforcement and caste-based exploitation sustain the practice. A multi-pronged approach involving strict law implementation, technological innovation, and socio-economic upliftment is essential to eradicate it and uphold constitutional values of dignity and equality (Indian Constitution, Article 21 & 17).

8. References
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Press Information Bureau (PIB), Government of India – www.pib.gov.in
National Commission for Safai Karamcharis (NCSK) – www.ncsk.nic.in
Drishti IAS – Daily News Analysis on Manual Scavenging – www.drishtiias.com
The Hindu – Reports on Sanitation and Manual Scavenging – www.thehindu.com

Focus of the month

DEEPSEEK

Introduction:

It is a Chinese artificial intelligence (AI) startup that has recently gained significant attention for its advanced AI models and applications.

Background:

Founded by AI enthusiast Liang Wenfeng, DeepSeek originated from High-Flyer, a hedge fund focused on AI-driven stock trading. Over time, the company expanded its focus to broader AI applications, leading to the establishment of DeepSeek as a separate entity dedicated to artificial general intelligence research

Impact:

✅**Societal:**

It advancements have made sophisticated AI tools more accessible to the public, potentially transforming various sectors, including education, healthcare, and customer service.
•The widespread adoption of its AI assistant indicates a growing public trust and reliance on AI technologies for daily tasks and information.

✅**Political:**

•The success of DeepSeek challenges the traditional perception of American dominance in AI technology.

 •It highlights China's growing capabilities in the tech sector, prompting discussions about global leadership in AI and the effectiveness of technology bans and trade restrictions.

✅**Economic:**

•It emergence has significant implications for leading U.S. tech companies, such as Microsoft, Meta, Tesla, and Apple.
• DeepSeek's could disrupt existing business models, leading to increased competition and innovation in the AI industry.

Way Forward:

1)To maintain a competitive edge, companies and governments should invest in AI research and development, foster international collaborations, and establish policies that encourage innovation while ensuring ethical standards.
2)Embracing open-source: Models and promoting transparency can also drive broader adoption and productivity gains across the global economy.

Conclusion:

DeepSeek's rapid rise underscores the dynamic nature of the AI landscape and the shifting balance of technological leadership. It serves as a reminder of the importance of continuous innovation, adaptability, and global cooperation in advancing AI for the benefit of society

Sources:
https://www.deepseek.com/

EDITORIAL SECTION >>>>>>>

Judicial Appointments and Pendency in Indian Courts: An Analysis

General Studies-2; Topic: Structure, Organization, and Functioning of the Executive and Judiciary

Introduction:
- Judiciary in Crisis: The Indian judiciary has come under scrutiny due to mounting case backlogs, particularly in High Courts.
- Key Report: The Department of Justice's recent findings spotlight critical concerns in judicial appointments, linking them directly to case pendency.

Background
- Debate on Appointments: Judicial appointments in India are fraught with delays and controversies, intensifying case backlogs.
- Standoff Between Executive and Judiciary: This deadlock has left numerous higher judiciary positions vacant.
- NJAC vs. Collegium:
  - The Supreme Court struck down the National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC) Act and the 99th Constitutional Amendment in 2014, reverting to the collegium system.
  - While the NJAC aimed to reform appointments with more accountability, the judiciary rejected it to preserve independence, despite criticisms of the collegium system for its lack of transparency.

Collegium System vs NJAC
- Collegium System:
  - Appointments are made by the Chief Justice of India and senior judges.
  - Designed to protect judicial independence but criticized for its opacity, lack of accountability, and nepotism.
- NJAC Proposal:
  - Included broader stakeholders: Chief Justice of India, Law Minister, senior judges, and two eminent persons.
  - Aimed to create a transparent, balanced system but was viewed by the judiciary as granting excessive government control.
- Current Debate:
  - Calls persist for a reformed NJAC to address the shortcomings of the collegium system while maintaining judicial independence.

Case Pendency: A Mounting Crisis
- Scale of Backlog:
  - Nearly 60 lakh cases are pending in High Courts (April 2023).
  - Over 4 crore cases remain unresolved in lower courts.
- Vacancies in Judiciary:
  - Approximately 30% of High Court judge positions are unfilled due to appointment delays.
- Consequences:
  - Justice delayed leads to loss of public confidence in the judiciary.
  - Marginalized and economically weaker groups face disproportionate challenges in prolonged legal battles.

Comparative Models of Judicial Appointments
Learning from Global Practices:
- United Kingdom:
  - A 15-member Judicial Appointments Commission ensures a fair and transparent selection process.
  - Includes judges, legal professionals, and laypersons.
- South Africa:
  - The Judicial Service Commission advises the President on appointments.
  - Composed of judiciary members, legal academia, politicians, and civil society for diverse representation.
- France:
  - The High Council of the Judiciary involves members from the judiciary, legal experts, and laypersons.
  - Ensures a balanced and well-rounded approach to judicial appointments.

Key Takeaway: International models emphasize diversity, accountability, and judicial independence while promoting transparency.

Challenges and Opportunities
- Core Challenge: Balancing judicial independence with accountability.
- Collegium Criticisms:
  - Lack of transparency and potential favoritism undermine its credibility.
  - Calls for reform highlight the need for clearer processes and public accountability.
- Reform Pathways: A reworked NJAC or a new framework could address these concerns.

Way Forward
- Reform Judicial Appointment Processes:
  - Revisit and rework the NJAC to include judiciary, executive, and civil society input.
  - Strike a balance between independence and accountability.
- Enhance Collegium Transparency:
  - Clearly define criteria for appointments.
  - Disclose decisions publicly to ensure accountability.
- Adopt Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR):
  - Promote mechanisms like mediation and arbitration to reduce case loads.
  - Leverage technology to streamline case management.
- Incorporate Global Best Practices:
  - Learn from models like the UK, South Africa, and France for diversity and transparency in appointments.
- Invest in Judicial Infrastructure:
  - Expand courtrooms, upgrade technology, and increase support staff.

Impact: These measures would alleviate case pendency, restore public confidence, and reinforce the judiciary's role in Indian democracy.

Conclusion
- Addressing the dual challenges of judicial appointments and case pendency is crucial to upholding the rule of law. A robust, transparent, and merit-based appointment system coupled with infrastructure development can ensure a judiciary that meets modern demands while retaining public trust.

Source : Anonymous

Reshaping Urban Governance in India through Behavioural Insights

General Studies-1; Topic: Urbanization, their problems and their remedies.

Introduction:
- Indian cities are on the cusp of transformative growth, with urban populations projected to reach 40% by 2030 from 30% in 2011.
- This shift presents immense opportunities for economic and social progress but also introduces multifaceted challenges such as strained infrastructure, environmental degradation, and social inequalities.
- Addressing these challenges requires not only traditional approaches but also innovative behavioural insights to create resilient and inclusive urban systems.

The Emerging Urban Landscape
- Demographic Growth:
  - Urban areas will host over 600 million Indians by 2030, necessitating extensive planning for housing, transportation, and basic services.
- Infrastructure Strain:
  - Current infrastructure is inadequate to support rapid urbanization, leading to congestion, water scarcity, and pollution.
- Environmental Concerns:
  - Urban expansion exacerbates deforestation, waste generation, and greenhouse gas emissions, amplifying climate risks.
- Social Inequalities:
  - Informal settlements, lack of affordable housing, and inadequate access to services deepen disparities in urban areas.

Climate Change and Urban Resilience
- Direct and Indirect Impacts:
  - Direct: Floods, heatwaves, and water scarcity are increasingly frequent.
  - Indirect: Migration from climate-affected rural regions intensifies urban challenges.
- Need for Sustainable Urban Planning:
  - Urban resilience hinges on reducing vulnerabilities through climate-adaptive infrastructure and policy.

The Role of Behavioural Change in Urban Governance
While traditional urban strategies rely on infrastructure investment, legal frameworks, and technological interventions, the critical role of behavioural change is often overlooked.

Citizen Behaviour and Urban Systems
- Waste Management:
  - Proper waste segregation by individuals reduces pollution and enhances waste processing efficiency.
  - Example: Indore's transformation into India's cleanest city through awareness campaigns and community involvement.
- Public Transport Use:
  - Increased adoption of public transport alleviates traffic congestion, reduces emissions, and promotes energy efficiency.
- Energy Conservation:
  - Citizens adopting energy-saving practices can significantly reduce urban energy demand.

Public Service Provider Behaviour
- Empathy-Driven Community Policing:
  - Police officers engaging with communities build trust and foster safer neighbourhoods.
- Gender-Sensitive Public Transport:
  - Transport workers adhering to safety protocols reduce gender-based violence and encourage public transport use.

The Power of Behavioural Frameworks
Traditional communication strategies—like generic awareness campaigns—often fail to drive sustained behaviour change.

Behavioural frameworks such as **MINDSPACE** (which emphasizes **Incentives, Norms, and Priming**) can create impactful public messaging.

Successful Examples:
- Swachh Bharat Abhiyan:
  - Leveraged ,trusted celebrities as messengers to promote cleanliness.
- Delhi's Odd-Even Scheme:
  - Simplified vehicle restrictions using default sorting mechanisms (vehicle number plates).
- Indore's "Kachra Gadi" Song:
  - A catchy, community-driven initiative to promote waste segregation.

Institutionalizing Behavioural Approaches in Urban Governance
To harness the potential of behavioural insights, Indian cities should institutionalize structured roles and strategies:

Proposed Role: Chief Behavioural Officer (CBO)
- A CBO, embedded within urban local bodies, would work closely with municipal commissioners to integrate behavioural insights into governance.

Key Responsibilities of the CBO:
- Annual Behavioural Plan:
  - Design and implement city-wide initiatives targeting key urban challenges.
- Collaboration:
  - Work with city departments, civil society, and external partners to promote sustainable behaviours.
- Data and Research:
  - Invest in research and analytics to understand behavioural patterns and design effective interventions.
- Citizen Engagement Platforms:
  - Use digital tools to engage with citizens and last-mile service providers for real-time feedback and behavioural nudges.

Steps for Implementation
To successfully integrate behavioural approaches, a systematic framework is essential:
- Role Establishment:
  - Define the role of CBOs and allocate adequate budgets for staffing and operational needs.
- Stakeholder Consultation:
  - Develop behavioural plans in collaboration with communities, experts, and policymakers.
- Capacity Building:
  - Train municipal staff and service providers on behavioural strategies.
- Technology Integration:
  - Deploy mobile applications, AI tools, and social media campaigns for citizen engagement and behavioural nudging.

Potential Benefits of Behaviourally Informed Urban Governance
- Improved Service Delivery:
  - Enhances efficiency in waste management, public transport, and policing.
- Cost Savings:
  - Reduces operational expenses through sustainable citizen behaviours.
- Better Quality of Life:
  - Creates cleaner, safer, and more liveable urban environments.
- Climate Resilience:
  - Supports adaptation and mitigation strategies to address climate change impacts.

Challenges
- Resistance to Change: Both citizens and service providers may resist behavioural adjustments.
- Limited Resources: Urban local bodies often lack funds and expertise to implement behavioural strategies.
- Data Gaps: Insufficient research on behavioural patterns hinders effective planning.

Way Forward
- Establish a Behavioural Insights Division at the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs to guide cities.
- Scale up successful projects like the NITI Aayog Behavioural Insights Unit.
- Promote public-private partnerships for funding and expertise.

Conclusion
- Indian cities stand at a critical juncture where the integration of behavioural insights into urban governance can redefine the urban experience. By addressing challenges with data-driven, community-focused strategies, cities can ensure sustainable development, improve quality of life, and enhance climate resilience.
- The time for transformational change is now, with behavioural science as a key driver for shaping the cities of the future.

Source : Anonymous

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Wildfires in California and the Global Climate Crisis

General Studies-3; Topic: Disaster and disaster management.

Introduction:
- The recent wildfires in California, especially in the Los Angeles region, underscore the devastating impact of climate change on human lives, biodiversity, and the way societies function.

Wildfires in California: Current Context
- Environmental Costs:
  - Biodiversity Loss: Forest ecosystems, plants, and animal species have been severely affected, threatening long-term ecological balance.
- Challenges in Fire Management:
  - Despite California's advanced firefighting capabilities, these fires have proven difficult to control.
  - High temperatures, strong winds, and prolonged droughts exacerbate fire intensity and spread.

California's Wildfire Vulnerability
- Climatic Factors:
  - Prolonged Droughts: Persistent dry conditions create a tinderbox environment.
  - Santa Ana Winds: Hot, dry winds spread embers quickly, intensifying wildfires.
  - Rising Temperatures: Climate change has increased average temperatures, making wildfires more frequent and severe.
- Geographical Features:
  - Vegetation: Dense forests and dry bush provide abundant fuel for fires.
  - Urban-Wildland Interfaces: The proximity of human settlements to forests increases vulnerability.
- Anthropogenic Influences:
  - Deforestation: Clearing of forests for urban development amplifies risks.
  - Power Lines: Sparks from aging electrical infrastructure often ignite fires.
  - Overdevelopment: Expanding urban areas encroach on natural ecosystems, worsening fire impacts.

Wildfires as Symptoms of Climate Change
- Part of a Global Phenomenon:
  - Wildfires in California are just one manifestation of extreme climate events, which include cyclones, floods, droughts, and heatwaves.
  - The frequency and intensity of such events have increased globally due to rising temperatures.
- Evidence of Global Warming:
  - Temperature Rise: The world has already exceeded the 1.5°C limit set by the Paris Agreement.
  - Melting Ice and Rising Sea Levels: Polar ice caps and glaciers are melting, causing coastal flooding.
  - Disrupted Natural Cycles: Seasonal patterns and ecosystems are being destabilized, affecting biodiversity and agriculture.
- Role of Greenhouse Gases:
  - Burning Fossil Fuels: Emissions from coal, oil, and gas have accelerated global warming.
  - Deforestation: The loss of forests reduces the planet's capacity to absorb carbon dioxide, intensifying warming.

Political and Policy Implications
- Global Policy Gaps:
  - Despite international agreements, such as the Paris Accord, global action has been inadequate.
  - Wealthier nations, while responsible for a significant share of emissions, have not provided sufficient support to vulnerable countries.

Broader Global Implications
- Vulnerability Beyond California:
  - Other regions face different climate-induced disasters: typhoons in Southeast Asia, floods in South Asia, and droughts in Africa.
  - These disasters disproportionately affect vulnerable populations, exacerbating inequalities.
- Economic Disruption:
  - Wildfires result in billions of dollars in property damage, loss of infrastructure, and increased insurance costs.
  - Industries dependent on natural ecosystems, such as agriculture and tourism, face severe challenges.
- Environmental Feedback Loops:
  - Carbon Release: Fires release stored carbon into the atmosphere, further warming the planet.
  - Loss of Carbon Sinks: Destroyed forests reduce the planet's ability to absorb CO_2.
- Safe Havens at Risk:
  - Even traditionally "safe" regions are becoming vulnerable to extreme events, limiting relocation options for affected populations.

Scientific Perspective
- Predictability of Disasters:
  - Climate models have long predicted the increasing intensity of wildfires due to rising global temperatures.
  - A climate scientist in Pasadena moved to a safer location, anticipating these fires—a stark reminder of how individuals are taking adaptive measures.
- Global Scientific Consensus:
  - The scientific community agrees that human-induced climate change is the primary driver of such extreme events.
  - Without immediate action, the planet risks crossing critical tipping points.

Way Forward
- Global Cooperation:
  - Countries must commit to stricter emission reduction targets under international frameworks like the Paris Agreement.
  - Wealthier nations should provide financial and technological support to developing countries for climate adaptation.
- Policy Reform:
  - Governments must prioritize renewable energy adoption, energy efficiency, and sustainable practices.
  - Strengthening regulations on industries and deforestation is critical to reducing emissions.
- Community Engagement:
  - Public awareness campaigns can encourage individual action and pressure governments for systemic changes.
  - Grassroots movements can play a vital role in local climate adaptation measures.
- Technological Innovations:
  - Advances in fire detection, carbon capture, and climate modeling can mitigate disaster impacts.
  - AI and satellite technologies can improve early warning systems for extreme events.
- Resilience and Adaptation:
  - Enhancing disaster preparedness, including forest management and urban planning, can reduce wildfire risks.
  - Building climate-resilient infrastructure is crucial to protecting communities.

Conclusion
- The wildfires in California serve as a powerful reminder of the urgent need to address climate change. Failure to act decisively will lead to escalating disasters, with dire consequences for biodiversity, economies, and human lives.
- Immediate and coordinated efforts are essential to mitigate climate risks and secure a sustainable future for all.

Source : Anonymous

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Impact on Higher Education and Federalism

General Studies-2; Topic: Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

Introduction:
- The University Grants Commission (UGC) recently released draft regulations aimed at reforming the appointment of vice-chancellors and faculty in universities and colleges.
- These proposals have sparked significant debate, as they have far-reaching implications for India's higher education system and federal structure.

Key Provisions of the Draft Regulations
- Overriding Powers of Chancellors:
  - The draft grants chancellors overriding powers in appointing vice-chancellors for state universities.
  - The search committee for vice-chancellors will no longer include state government representatives.
- Appointment of Vice-Chancellors:
  - Governors, appointed by the Central government, serve as chancellors of state universities, effectively centralizing the appointment process.
  - Vice-chancellors can be appointed from diverse fields, including business and administration, with no mandatory requirement for a PhD or specific teaching experience.
- Changes to Faculty Appointments and Promotions:
  - Existing norms for faculty appointments and promotions are proposed to be revised, details of which indicate a potential shift in standards and eligibility criteria.

Federal Concerns and Violations
- Undermining Federal Principles:
  - The regulations strip state governments of their legitimate role in appointing vice-chancellors, violating the principles of federalism enshrined in the Constitution.
  - States, which fund and establish universities through legislative acts, are being denied participation in key decisions.
- Constitutional Interpretation of Entry 66:
  - Entry 66 in the Union List allows the Union government to set standards and coordinate higher education but does not authorize it to override state powers.
  - The regulations stretch the interpretation of coordination to exert direct administrative control, undermining states' autonomy.
- Concurrent List Limitations:
  - Education is a subject in the Concurrent List, allowing both the Centre and states to legislate. However, the UGC's mandate does not extend to controlling the functioning of state universities.

Implications for State Universities
- Governors as Chancellors:
  - In some,the role of governors as chancellors has been contentious, with some state governments seeking to curtail their powers.
  - The regulations empower governors further, leading to potential conflicts with state governments.
- Financial and Legislative Responsibilities:
  - State universities are primarily funded by state governments, and their operations are governed by state legislations. The draft regulations bypass these frameworks.
- Political and Administrative Control:
  - The Central government's attempt to centralize control over appointments and educational policies aligns with a broader trend of political influence in education, raising concerns about academic freedom and state autonomy.

Broader Concerns for Higher Education
- Compromising Academic Standards:
  - The removal of PhD and teaching experience requirements for vice-chancellors may dilute academic and administrative standards in higher education.
- Resistance from Stakeholders:
  - Universities, faculty, and state governments have strongly opposed the regulations, citing fears of political interference and loss of institutional independence.
- Potential for Syllabus Overhaul:
  - The Central government has already faced criticism for influencing curriculum changes, and these regulations could extend such control to appointments, further politicizing higher education.

International Best Practices in Higher Education Governance and Leadership Appointments
- United Kingdom: Vice-chancellor appointments involve search committees comprising representatives from the university's governing body, academic staff, student unions, and external experts.
- Australia: Universities have clear and transparent criteria for appointing vice-chancellors, emphasizing academic qualifications, leadership experience, and alignment with the university's mission.
- Many Canadian universities involve community stakeholders, including faculty and local government representatives, in leadership appointments. This ensures decisions align with regional and institutional priorities.
- United States: Public universities operate under the governance of state legislatures and boards of trustees. These boards are empowered to make key decisions, including leadership appointments, with limited federal interference.

Way Forward
- Strengthen Federal Cooperation:
  - The Centre and states should collaborate to ensure that reforms align with both national standards and regional autonomy.
- Reassess Appointment Norms:
  - Academic and administrative qualifications for vice-chancellors should be retained to maintain the credibility of higher education institutions.
- Preserve State Roles:
  - States should retain their legitimate role in the governance of universities, ensuring a balanced distribution of power.
- Transparent and Inclusive Reforms:
  - The UGC should consult with state governments, universities, and academic stakeholders to draft regulations that uphold both standards and autonomy.

Conclusion
- The UGC's draft regulations signify a significant shift in India's higher education governance. While the intent to streamline and standardize appointments is commendable, the centralization of power at the expense of states undermines federal principles and institutional autonomy.
- To address these concerns, a balanced, cooperative, and inclusive approach is essential, ensuring that reforms strengthen education without compromising federal values or academic independence.

Source : Anonymous

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Reserve Bank of India's Financial Stability Report

General Studies-3; Topic: Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment.

Introduction
- The Reserve Bank of India's Financial Stability Report (FSR) provides a critical assessment of the Indian banking system, its resilience, and the financial health of the broader economy.
- The report indicates significant improvements in the banking sector while identifying potential risks and challenges.

Strengthened Health of the Banking Sector
Improvement in Asset Quality
- Gross Non-Performing Assets (GNPA):
  - GNPA ratio declined to 2.6% in September 2024, the lowest in 12 years. This reflects a combination of better credit discipline, enhanced recovery mechanisms, and economic recovery.
- Net Non-Performing Assets (NPA):
  - Net NPAs dropped to 0.6%, showcasing improved loan recovery and provisioning coverage by banks.
- Capital Adequacy:
  - Banks remain well-capitalized with robust Capital Adequacy Ratios (CARs), far exceeding regulatory requirements.

Enhanced Profitability
- Profitability metrics have improved significantly across public and private sector banks due to:
  - Lower provisioning for bad loans.
  - Increased interest income driven by higher credit growth.
  - Focus on operational efficiency and cost rationalization.

Stress-Test Results
- The report highlights that Indian banks are well-equipped to handle macroeconomic shocks, withstanding potential stress scenarios.

Challenges in Specific Segments
While the overall banking health has improved, certain segments require immediate attention.
1. Unsecured Retail Loans
- Asset Quality Concerns:
  - Unsecured loans, including personal loans and credit cards, have shown an increase in write-offs due to poor repayment performance.
- Dilution in Underwriting Standards:
  - Intense competition among banks to expand their retail loan portfolios has led to relaxed credit appraisal norms.
- High Contribution to Retail Growth:
  - The unsecured segment forms a large portion of retail credit growth, increasing systemic vulnerability.
2. Microfinance Sector
- The microfinance sector, which serves low-income households, is witnessing stress due to:
  - High indebtedness among borrowers with multiple loans.
  - Rising delinquencies, especially in rural areas.
- This indicates financial strain among economically weaker sections, impacting loan recovery.
3. Consumer Credit and Gold Loans
- Stress Indicators:
  - Smaller consumer loans and gold loans are experiencing higher default rates, reflecting financial instability among small borrowers.

Growth Projections and Economic Outlook
GDP Growth Forecast
- The RBI projects 6.6% GDP growth for 2024-25, driven by:
  - Rural consumption: An expected revival in rural demand due to higher agricultural output and government support.
  - Government Spending: Increased public expenditure on infrastructure and welfare programs.
  - Strong Services Exports: IT and other services sectors continue to perform robustly, contributing to growth.
- The recent dip to 5.4% GDP growth highlights the need for sustained efforts to stimulate demand and investment.

Inflation Trends
- Moderation Expected:
  - Inflation is projected to ease, providing relief to consumers and creating space for policy interventions.
- Monetary Policy Constraints:
  - Despite moderating inflation, limited monetary policy space could constrain further interest rate cuts to stimulate growth.

Investment Climate
- Improved Corporate Performance:
  - Corporates are reporting better earnings, reflecting enhanced productivity and profitability.
- Risks in Equity Markets:
  - The report warns of vulnerabilities arising from stretched equity valuations and speculative behavior among market participants.

External and Global Risks
- Geo-Political Uncertainty
  - Global tensions and adverse geopolitical developments pose risks to trade, energy prices, and supply chains.
  - India needs to strengthen its external buffers, including forex reserves, to mitigate such risks.
- Rising Global Debt
  - The report highlights the increasing levels of global public debt, which could destabilize international financial systems.
  - Countries with weak fiscal positions are more vulnerable to external shocks.
- Protectionist Policies
  - Trade and industrial policies by major economies could hinder India's exports and disrupt global trade flows.

Policy Recommendations
- Strengthen Retail Lending Practices
  - Enforce stricter underwriting standards for unsecured loans.
  - Implement comprehensive risk management frameworks to prevent asset quality deterioration.
- Support for Vulnerable Sectors
  - Provide targeted relief for microfinance borrowers and small borrowers to reduce financial stress.
  - Expand credit outreach programs to rural areas, ensuring inclusivity in financial services.
- Focus on Economic Disparities
  - Address the growing divide between small borrowers and large corporates by implementing policies that promote equitable growth.
  - Encourage micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) by improving their access to affordable credit.
- Enhance Systemic Resilience
  - Encourage adoption of advanced technologies like AI-driven risk assessment to strengthen credit appraisal systems.
  - Build stronger capital buffers among banks to handle unexpected shocks.
- Prepare for External Shocks
  - Diversify export markets to mitigate risks from global trade disruptions.
  - Strengthen multilateral collaborations to address global financial vulnerabilities.

Conclusion
- The RBI's Financial Stability Report paints a promising picture of the Indian banking system's health, highlighting improved asset quality, profitability, and resilience. However, challenges persist in the retail lending and microfinance segments, reflecting economic vulnerabilities among smaller borrowers.
- Balancing growth, financial stability, and inclusiveness will be key to achieving sustained economic progress.

Source : Anonymous

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Scrapping of the No-Detention Policy in Schools

General Studies-2; Topic: Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

Introduction
- The Central government's decision to scrap the no-detention policy in schools has sparked a nationwide debate on its implications for elementary and foundational education.
- This policy shift reflects a significant departure from the ideals of the Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2009, which emphasized inclusivity and universal education.

Background of the No-Detention Policy
- Introduction in RTE Act (2009):
  ○ The RTE Act included the no-detention policy, allowing automatic promotion of students till Class 8.
  ○ Aimed at reducing dropout rates and fostering a child-friendly learning environment.
  ○ Enforced through Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE), which focused on regular assessments rather than one-time examinations.
- Rationale Behind the Policy:
  ○ Prevent psychological stress and humiliation due to failure.
  ○ Ensure inclusive education and universal literacy.
  ○ Address dropout rates, which were at 42.5% at the time of RTE's enactment.

Reasons for Scrapping the Policy
- Poor Learning Outcomes:
  ○ Reports highlighted alarming deficits in foundational literacy and numeracy.
  ○ Many students promoted under the policy were found lacking basic knowledge and skills appropriate for their age/class.
- Mismatch with Learning Objectives:
  ○ The primary aim of schooling—equipping students with necessary life skills—was being compromised.
  ○ Automatic promotions diluted the importance of consistent academic effort.
- State-Level Variations:
  ○ In 2019, the Centre allowed states to decide on the detention policy.
  ○ 18 states/UTs opted out, while 18 others continued with the no-detention policy, reflecting diverse regional priorities.

The New Policy
- Policy Features:
  ○ Students in government schools will face examinations at the end of Class 5 and Class 8.
  ○ Students failing to meet pass norms will undergo re-assessment after two months.
  ○ Persistent failure will result in detention for the year.
- Focus on Accountability:
  ○ The new policy aims to enforce accountability among students, teachers, and schools.
  ○ Emphasizes academic rigor to align with broader learning objectives.

Arguments Supporting the Scrapping
- Improved Learning Outcomes:
  ○ Introducing examinations may motivate students to focus on academic goals.
  ○ Detention policies encourage teachers and schools to prioritize weaker students.
- Preparation for Future Challenges:
  ○ Builds resilience and prepares students for competitive examinations.
  ○ Mimics real-world scenarios where accountability is paramount.

- Global Practices:
  ○ Many advanced education systems, like those in Finland and Singapore, incorporate periodic assessments to gauge student performance.

Counter-arguments:
- Potential for Increased Dropouts:
  ○ Detention is a known contributor to dropout rates, especially among disadvantaged students.
  ○ Current dropout rates are at 12.6%, still a significant concern.
- Impact on Marginalized Groups:
  ○ Children from poor families, lacking parental or societal support, are disproportionately affected.
  ○ Detention risks amplifying inequality in education.
- Failure of the Ecosystem:
  ○ Non-performance often stems from systemic failures, including inadequate teaching methods, lack of resources, and poor infrastructure.
  ○ Penalizing students for institutional shortcomings is unjust.

Diverse Regional Responses
- Tamil Nadu:
  ○ Continues with the no-detention policy to protect children from disadvantaged backgrounds.
  ○ Emphasizes holistic development over exam-oriented learning.
- Karnataka:
  ○ Divided opinions among school managements and stakeholders, reflecting concerns about balancing academic rigor with inclusivity.
- Other States:
  ○ Some states advocate periodic examinations, while others highlight the psychological and socio-economic risks of detention.

Way Forward
- Hybrid Models of Evaluation:
  ○ Implement a balanced system that combines continuous evaluation with periodic assessments.
  ○ Use formative assessments to identify and support weaker students.
- Teacher Training and Capacity Building:
  ○ Focus on equipping teachers with skills to handle diverse learning needs.
  ○ Encourage innovative teaching methods tailored to individual students.
- Socio-Economic Support Systems:
  ○ Provide additional resources to students from marginalized backgrounds, such as free tutoring, mid-day meals, and counseling.
- Monitoring and Accountability:
  ○ Hold schools accountable for poor performance through regular audits and inspections.
  ○ Introduce performance-based incentives for schools and teachers.

Conclusion:
- The decision to scrap the no-detention policy highlights the government's intent to improve learning outcomes. However, this approach must balance academic rigor with inclusivity and equity.
- By addressing systemic flaws and ensuring support for vulnerable students, India can achieve the twin goals of quality education and universal access.

Source : Anonymous

India-Australia Economic Partnership

General Studies-2; Topic: Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

Introduction
- India and Australia have a long-standing relationship based on shared democratic values, common legal frameworks, and historical ties as Commonwealth members.
- In recent years, their partnership has evolved to focus on economic collaboration, highlighting their mutual interests and strategic alignment in the Indo-Pacific region.
- The Australia-India Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (ECTA) symbolizes this growing economic partnership and reflects their commitment to shared prosperity.

Overview of the ECTA
- Implementation
  - Came into force: December 29, 2022.
  - First FTA between India and Australia, marking a significant milestone in bilateral trade relations.
- Scope and Coverage
  - Tariff reductions for nearly all traded goods.
  - Includes provisions for services, mobility, and technical cooperation.
  - Addresses non-tariff barriers such as mutual recognition of standards and certifications.
- Significance
  - Positions both nations as strategic trade partners.
  - Reflects India's and Australia's intent to strengthen their roles as economic powerhouses in the Indo-Pacific.

Key Achievements of ECTA
- Tariff Reductions
  - **For Australian Exports:** Over 85% of Australian exports to India are tariff-free, with this figure set to reach 90% by 2026.
  - **For Indian Exports:** 96% of Indian exports to Australia currently enjoy tariff-free status, with complete coverage expected by 2026.

- Sectors Benefiting in India
  - Labour-intensive sectors such as:
  a. **Textiles and Apparel:** Enhanced market access for Indian manufacturers.
  b. **Agriculture and Processed Food:** Expanded opportunities for Indian agri-exports.
  c. **Leather and Footwear:** Lower tariffs increase competitiveness.
  d. **Pharmaceuticals:** Streamlined regulations reduce costs for Indian exporters.
  e. **Furniture:** Significant potential for small and medium enterprises.

- Benefits for Australia
  - Access to one of the world's fastest-growing consumer markets (India's 1.4 billion population).
  - Increased export opportunities for:
  a. **Raw Materials:** Coal, minerals, and agricultural commodities.
  b. **Wine and Dairy Products:** Reduced trade barriers enhance competitiveness.

Broader Economic Impact
- Trade Resilience
  - Despite a 7.17% decline in trade during 2023-24 (reflecting global trends), the partnership remains robust.
  - Australia is India's 13th-largest trading partner, a position expected to strengthen under ECTA.
- Strategic Alignment
  - ECTA aligns with India's goal of enhancing trade relations with Indo-Pacific nations.
  - Promotes trade diversification for Australia, reducing its reliance on traditional markets like China.
- Supporting Green Growth
  - Collaboration on renewable energy technologies and climate change mitigation strategies.
  - Potential for India to leverage Australia's expertise in solar and hydrogen energy.

Challenges in Implementation
- Trade Imbalance
  - Australia's exports to India are predominantly resource-based, while India's exports are diverse but relatively smaller in value.
  - Balancing trade volumes and addressing trade deficits remain challenges.
- Global Economic Uncertainty
  - Fluctuating demand due to global recessions or geopolitical conflicts can impact bilateral trade flows.
  - Ensuring steady progress in trade amidst such challenges requires continuous dialogue.
- Negotiation for CECA
  - Ongoing negotiations for the Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) require alignment on broader issues like intellectual property, labour mobility, and investment frameworks.

Future Prospects: CECA and Beyond
- CECA
  - Aims to build upon ECTA with a broader and deeper economic scope.
  - Key Focus Areas:
  a. Technology Partnerships: Strengthening collaboration in AI, digital technologies, and fintech.
  b. Renewable Energy: Developing hydrogen and solar energy projects.
  c. Cultural Exchange: Enhancing people-to-people ties through educational and cultural collaborations.
- Indo-Pacific Strategy
  - Positions India and Australia as critical economic and strategic players in the region.
  - Strengthens alliances with nations like Japan and the US under frameworks like the Quad.
- Long-Term Vision
  - Establishes India and Australia as partners in global economic governance.
  - Facilitates leadership roles in climate action, sustainable development, and multilateral cooperation.

Way Forward
- The ongoing Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) negotiations should aim for deeper integration in areas like:
  - Intellectual Property Rights (IPR): Aligning IPR frameworks to encourage innovation and collaboration.
  - Digital Trade: Facilitating cross-border data flows and cybersecurity cooperation.
  - Investment Protections: Enhancing investor confidence through robust dispute resolution mechanisms.
- Expand educational partnerships between Australian universities and Indian institutions.
- Create a joint innovation fund to support startups and research in emerging technologies.
- Facilitate Australian investments in India's infrastructure, renewable energy, and manufacturing sectors under Make in India and PLI schemes.
- Utilize platforms like Quad and Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) to enhance regional economic stability.
- Collaborate on marine resource management and sustainable fisheries to strengthen the Indo-Pacific maritime economy.
- Establish a joint mechanism to monitor and address trade bottlenecks, ensuring smooth implementation of ECTA provisions.
- Collaborate in multilateral forums like the WTO, G20, and UN to advocate for fair and inclusive trade practices..

Conclusion
- India and Australia, united by shared values and strategic goals, are poised to become pivotal players in shaping the economic landscape of the Indo-Pacific. With ECTA as the bedrock, this partnership offers a promising roadmap for mutual growth and global influence.

Source : THE HINDU

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GST Council Meeting at Jaisalmer

General Studies-3; Topic: Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment..

Introduction

- The Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council meeting held in Jaisalmer, Rajasthan, has sparked widespread criticism for prioritizing trivial issues, such as popcorn tax slabs, while deferring significant policy decisions.

Key Outcomes of the Meeting

1. Decisions on Minor Items
- Popcorn GST Rates:
  - Salted popcorn: 5% GST.
  - Pre-packaged and labelled popcorn: 12% GST.
  - Caramel popcorn: 18% GST.
- The decision has been widely ridiculed for its excessive focus on trivial items. Social media reactions highlight how this emphasis undermines the Council's broader role in addressing complex taxation issues.

2. Other Adjustments:
- Fortified Rice Kernels: Reduction in GST for certain varieties aimed at promoting nutritional security.
- Gene Therapy: GST exemption, signaling support for advanced medical technologies.
- Penal Charges on Loans: Exemption from GST on penal charges for non-compliance with loan terms, potentially benefiting borrowers.

Postponed Major Issues

- Health Insurance GST Reduction:
  - A long-standing demand for reducing GST on health insurance premiums remains unaddressed. This inaction affects stakeholders, especially those with premiums due in the current cycle.
- Rate Rationalisation:
  - The Group of Ministers (GoM) on rate rationalisation sought more time, delaying crucial reforms to simplify the tax structure.
  - Existing multiplicity of tax slabs (0%, 5%, 12%, 18%, and 28%) continues to cause inefficiency, compliance burdens, and scope for malpractices.
- Compensation Cess:
  - Extension of discussions on the compensation cess mechanism perpetuates uncertainty for states reliant on GST revenue sharing.

Challenges in the Current GST System

- Multiplicity of Tax Slabs
  - India's GST system includes a wide array of tax slabs and differential rates, making it one of the most complex in the world.
  - Tax variations on items based on packaging or content (e.g., popcorn, sweets, and sanitary products) increase compliance costs and invite litigation.

- Lack of State Autonomy
  - States relinquished their taxation powers to establish GST but feel sidelined in decision-making.
  - They often express dissatisfaction with revenue sharing, particularly the retention of special taxes by the Centre.
  - States argue for greater fiscal autonomy or revenue adjustments but are constrained by the Council's centralized structure.
  - Deferred Reforms
  - Rationalisation of tax slabs and compensation mechanisms are repeatedly deferred, eroding trust among stakeholders.
  - Businesses and taxpayers face operational challenges due to prolonged uncertainty, undermining GST's objective as a unified system.

Recommendations for Improvement

- Rationalisation of Tax Slabs
- Reduce the number of tax slabs to enhance simplicity and predictability.
- Eliminate variations based on minor differences in product attributes (e.g., packaging, content).
- Strengthen Decision-Making
- Prioritise addressing critical issues such as GST on health insurance and compensation cess mechanisms.
- Expedite decision-making processes to avoid prolonged uncertainty for businesses and states.
- Balance Centre-State Dynamics
- Address revenue-sharing concerns by creating a transparent and equitable mechanism.
- Enhance state participation in the Council's decision-making to build consensus and trust.
- Focus on Structural Reforms
- Undertake a comprehensive review of the GST system to align with global best practices.
- Prioritize simplification and rationalisation to reduce compliance burdens and operational inefficiencies.

Conclusion

- The Jaisalmer GST Council meeting serves as a example of the systemic challenges plaguing India's GST framework.
- To restore GST's credibility as a unified tax system, the Council must prioritize structural reforms and demonstrate a commitment to balanced decision-making.
- Without these measures, GST risks becoming an overly complex and contentious system, undermining its potential to drive India's economic growth.

Source : THE HINDU

Cryptocurrency Trends in 2024

General Studies-3; Topic: Science and Technology- developments and their applications and effects in everyday life.

Introduction:
- Bitcoin achieved an all-time high, crossing the $100,000 mark in December 2024.
- The rise was influenced by public endorsements from US President-elect Donald Trump and advisor Elon Musk.
- This surge marked a remarkable recovery after the 2022 collapse of FTX, which led to losses worth billions and eroded investor confidence.

Genesis and Evolution
- Introduced in 2009, Bitcoin emerged as a decentralized financial system in response to the 2008 financial crisis.
- It symbolized a departure from traditional banking, offering a transparent, secure, and unregulated financial ecosystem.
- Polarized Views:
  ○ Cryptocurrencies are divisive:
  a. Advocates praise their potential to democratize finance.
  b. Critics highlight their volatility, illicit usage, and regulatory loopholes.
- Despite skepticism, the global crypto market has grown to a valuation of $3 trillion.

Key Factors Driving Cryptocurrency's Growth
- Intrinsic Value of Cryptocurrencies:
  ○ Bitcoin Scarcity: Bitcoin's value partly derives from its limited supply of 21 million coins, of which 19 million have already been mined.
  ○ Momentum-Based Valuation: Cryptocurrency values are driven by exchange momentum and investment speculation.
- Cultural and Demographic Shifts:
  ○ Tech-Savvy Youth: A significant portion of investors are under 35, drawn to crypto's innovation and potential for high returns.
  ○ Community-Driven Tokens: Meme coins, such as Dogecoin and Shiba Inu, thrive on online community sentiments and cultural trends.
- Institutional Participation:
  ○ The introduction of exchange-traded funds (ETFs) has brought institutional credibility.
  ○ ETFs allow traditional investors to participate without engaging directly in complex crypto trades.

Challenges and Concerns
Illicit Uses and Scams:
- Cryptos, due to their anonymity and speed, have been exploited for:
  ○ Money laundering.
  ○ Illicit transactions on the dark web.
  ○ Pump-and-dump schemes targeting uninformed investors.
India's 2023 Data:
  ○ 840 crypto-related complaints were registered.
  ○ Total losses amounted to hundreds of crores of rupees.
  ○ An Initial Coin Offering (ICO) in 2021 defrauded investors of ₹1,200 crore.
Volatility:
- Meme Coins:
  ○ Governed by sentiment, meme tokens are highly volatile.
  ○ Examples:
  a. Elon Musk temporarily changing his name to Kekius Maximus caused a token's value to rise by 900%.
  b. Dogecoin surged by 800%, driven by social media trends.
Stablecoins:
- While backed by assets, stablecoins could undermine sovereign currencies, raising regulatory concerns.
Environmental Concerns:
- Cryptocurrency mining, particularly Bitcoin, is energy-intensive, contributing to carbon emissions.
- This has led to increased scrutiny from environmental regulators.
Regulatory Loopholes:
- The borderless nature of cryptocurrency makes enforcement challenging.
- Differences in national regulations encourage regulatory arbitrage, where actors exploit gaps across jurisdictions.

Regulatory Approaches: A Global Perspective
Diverse Approaches:
- Prohibition:
  ○ Nations like China have banned cryptocurrencies, citing risks to state sovereignty.
- Asset Class Recognition:
  ○ Countries like Canada and Australia treat cryptocurrencies as financial assets, subject to taxation.
- Legal Tender:
  ○ El Salvador and the Central African Republic have adopted Bitcoin as legal tender, aiming to boost financial inclusion.
India's Stance:
- Wait-and-Watch Policy:
  ○ Cryptocurrencies are not banned but lack a comprehensive regulatory framework.
  ○ Treated as a virtual digital asset, crypto transactions are taxed at a flat 30% rate.
- Market Size:
  ○ India's crypto investor base is approximately 2 crore, making it a lucrative market.
  ○ Binance re-entered India after paying a fine of ₹18.82 crore for regulatory non-compliance.
The Need for Global Consensus:
- Harmonized Regulations:
  ○ Cryptocurrencies demand international cooperation to prevent fraud and ensure stability.
  ○ Irony: Although cryptos were envisioned to escape regulation, their future depends on effective governance.

The Role of Meme Coins in Cryptocurrency Dynamics
Emergence and Popularity:
- Meme coins are community-driven tokens, often tied to internet trends.
- Examples:
  ○ Shiba Inu became popular in India due to its emotional connect, with $1 billion donated for COVID-19 relief.
  ○ Dogecoin surged due to social media endorsements.
- Risks:
  ○ Highly susceptible to market manipulation due to a lack of intrinsic value.
  ○ Extreme volatility leads to significant financial risks for retail investors.

Way Forward
- Launch nationwide programs to educate investors on the risks, rewards, and mechanisms of cryptocurrency.
- Strengthen coordination between financial regulators, law enforcement agencies, and technology platforms.
- Engage in multilateral discussions through forums like G20, IMF, and FATF to establish global standards for crypto regulation.
- Adopt successful practices from countries with advanced crypto regulations, such as Canada's asset-based approach or Singapore's licensing system.
- Employ artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) tools to detect fraudulent activities, pump-and-dump schemes, and suspicious trading patterns.
- Promote energy-efficient blockchain technologies, such as Proof of Stake (PoS), over energy-intensive Proof of Work (PoW) mechanisms.
- Ensure policies evolve with technological advancements and emerging trends in the crypto space.

Conclusion
- As a growing market, India has the potential to shape the global narrative on cryptocurrency. With strategic regulation and education, it can harness crypto's potential while mitigating its risks.
- Cryptocurrencies are here to stay, driven by youth, innovation, and global investment. However, a cautious approach is essential to ensure sustainable growth in this disruptive ecosystem.

Source : THE HINDU

EDITORIAL SECTION >>>>>>>>

India at an Inflection Point: Navigating Global Challenges in 2025 and Beyond

General Studies-2; Topic: Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests, Indian diaspora.

Introduction
- India, as the world's largest democracy and the fifth-largest economy, finds itself at a critical juncture in international relations.
- This moment is defined by a rapidly evolving global order shaped by geopolitical realignments, economic uncertainties, and technological advancements.
- To fully realize its potential, India must adeptly manage complex global dynamics while addressing significant domestic challenges.

Geopolitical Challenges and Relationships with Global Powers
Strategic Autonomy: Modern Non-Alignment
- India continues to prioritize strategic autonomy, maintaining flexibility in its foreign policy decisions.
- This approach allows India to balance ties with global powers like the US, China, and Russia while avoiding rigid alliances.

The Indo–US Relationship: Collaborative Yet Brittle
- Strengths:
  - Strategic cooperation through the Quad, aimed at ensuring a free and open Indo-Pacific amidst China's rise.
  - Collaboration in emerging technologies such as AI, semiconductors, and defense partnerships.
  - Trade volume surpassing $100 billion underscores the economic interdependence.
- Challenges:
  - Allegations involving Indian officials and differing views on issues like Russia and Iran create diplomatic friction.
  - Legal proceedings in US courts and domestic political factors, including potential shifts under Donald Trump's re-election, could introduce uncertainty in trade and immigration policies.
  - Key unresolved issues, such as H1-B visa restrictions and market access for Indian IT firms, add to economic tensions.

India–China Relations: Managing Rivalry
- Post-Galwan Standoff:
  - Despite limited disengagement, border disputes remain unresolved, with significant military deployment on both sides.
  - Bilateral trade hit $136 billion in 2023, but a trade deficit exceeding $85 billion highlights India's reliance on Chinese imports (electronics and pharmaceuticals).
- Challenges:
  - China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) encircles India with strategic infrastructure investments in Pakistan, Nepal, and Sri Lanka.
  - The China+1 strategy, adopted by global conglomerates, offers opportunities for India but demands a competitive policy environment.

India–Russia Relations: A Strategic Necessity
- The enduring bond, fueled by discounted oil imports, remains critical despite Russia's growing proximity to China.
- Russia's closer alignment with China, and emerging nuclear collaborations in West Asia, could complicate India's strategic calculus.
- Continued defense cooperation, particularly in areas like missile systems and naval assets, is pivotal.

Expanding Economic Engagements and Investment Horizons
Trade Agreements and Global Integration
- Bilateral trade pacts with Australia and the UAE have strengthened India's role in global value chains.
- The Unified Payments Interface (UPI) is being promoted as a model for secure and efficient global financial transactions.
- India's withdrawal from the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) reflects a cautious approach to trade liberalization, but it has slowed integration into broader Asian markets.

Challenges in Attracting Investments
- Declining FDI: Net FDI dropped to a 16-year low of $10.58 billion in 2023-24 due to:
  - Bureaucratic inefficiencies and high tariffs.
  - Inconsistent policy implementation.
- Free Trade Agreement (FTA) Stalemates:
  - Ongoing negotiations with the UK and EU have been delayed due to disagreements on tariffs, data localization, and labour mobility.

Sustainability and Green Economy
- India's commitment to achieving net-zero emissions by 2070 requires balancing economic growth with sustainability.
- Advocacy for limiting global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels aligns with its leadership in global climate initiatives.
- The Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) schemes show promise but have yet to deliver consistent results across sectors.

Leadership on the Global Stage
Multilateral Reforms and Advocacy
- India continues to advocate for reforms in global institutions like the UN Security Council, IMF, and World Bank, seeking greater representation for developing nations.
- Its tenure as a non-permanent UNSC member highlighted its commitment to counterterrorism and climate action, but the lack of progress on Security Council reforms reflects the complexity of global power politics.

Global South Leadership
- Initiatives like the International Solar Alliance (ISA) and the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) showcase India's leadership in sustainable development.
- Engagement with BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) underscores its role in promoting South-South cooperation.
- Challenges persist in balancing partnerships with the Global North and Global South, particularly on technology transfer and geopolitical issues.

Regional Stability: Challenges in Neighbourhood Diplomacy
- Bangladesh:
  - Anti-India rhetoric has intensified, stalling joint infrastructure projects like cross-border rail links.
  - Bangladesh's closer ties with China and Pakistan indicate a shift in regional dynamics.
- Nepal:
  - Pro-China policies and infrastructure projects, such as BRI-backed initiatives, threaten India's traditional influence.
- Maldives:
  - A pro-China government complicates India's Neighbourhood First diplomacy.
- Pakistan:
  - Diplomatic relations remain frozen, with persistent tensions over terrorism and Kashmir.

Way Forward
- India's efforts to counter Chinese-backed infrastructure and trade initiatives demand enhanced economic and diplomatic engagements in South Asia.
- Projects like the India-Bangladesh Friendship Pipeline and the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project must be expedited to strengthen regional ties.
- Social cohesion and robust domestic development are essential to strengthen India's global advocacy for an equitable world order.
- Addressing domestic challenges like poverty alleviation, healthcare, and education will enhance India's credibility as a leader of the Global South.
- India must invest in R&D and digital infrastructure to position itself as a leader in emerging technologies like AI, quantum computing, and renewable energy.
- Reforms in bureaucratic processes, trade policies, and taxation will attract investments and ensure sustained economic growth.

Conclusion
- India stands at a decisive moment where its actions in the next decade will define its global standing. Balancing geopolitical ambitions, fostering regional stability, advancing economic diplomacy, and addressing domestic challenges will be critical.
- With strategic vision and policy coherence, India can emerge as a key architect of a stable and inclusive global order, leveraging its demographic dividend, economic strength, and cultural influence to lead on the world stage.

Source : THE HINDU

EDITORIAL SECTION ⟫⟫⟫⟫⟫⟫⟫

Tackling Poor Air Quality in India

General Studies-3; Topic: Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.

Introduction
- Air pollution is one of the most significant environmental risks in India, with levels of particulate matter (PM10 and PM2.5) exceeding World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines in most cities.
- Its persistence year-round, exacerbated by winter conditions, poses challenges for public health, economic productivity, and environmental sustainability.
- Addressing air pollution requires systemic reforms and multifaceted interventions across sectors.

Key Sources of Air Pollution in India
1. Transport Sector
- Dominance of Fossil Fuels: Increasing vehicle numbers and poor vehicular standards contribute significantly to PM2.5 emissions.
- Traffic Congestion: High congestion levels exacerbate emissions, even in cities with metro systems due to inadequate last-mile connectivity.
- Policy Challenges:
  - Although Delhi-NCR enforces a 10-year age limit on commercial vehicles, implementation is inconsistent.
  - The slow transition to electric vehicles (EVs) reflects a lack of infrastructure and incentives.
- Public Transport Deficiency: Suboptimal performance of public transportation systems increases dependency on private vehicles.
2. Industrial Sector
- Usage of Polluting Fuels:
  - Biomass, coal, and unauthorized fuels dominate medium and small-scale enterprises.
  - Poor operational practices and lack of emissions monitoring undermine installed air pollution control devices.
3. Municipal Waste Management
- Open Burning of Waste:
  - Inefficiency in waste segregation leads to increased landfill fires and burning of municipal solid waste.
  - Lack of infrastructure for waste treatment remains a major challenge.
4. Re-Suspended Dust
- Urban Infrastructure Gaps: Dust from unpaved roads, construction sites, and barren lands contributes heavily to PM10 levels.
5. Agriculture
- Stubble Burning: Parali burning in northern states like Punjab and Haryana exacerbates winter air pollution in Delhi-NCR.
- Unsustainable Practices: Excessive fertilizer use leads to ammonia emissions, further degrading air quality.
6. Rural Emissions
- Biomass Burning: Rural households use biomass for cooking and heating, leading to high emissions of particulate matter.
- Regional Contribution: Emissions from rural areas impact urban air quality due to interconnected airsheds.

Impacts of Air Pollution
- Public Health
  - Increases the prevalence of respiratory diseases, cardiovascular issues, and lung cancer.
  - Worsens health inequities, as marginalized populations are most affected.
- Economic Consequences
  - Reduces productivity due to health-related absenteeism.
  - Burdens the healthcare system with increased spending on pollution-induced illnesses.
- Environmental Degradation
  - Affects biodiversity and soil quality, especially in regions reliant on agriculture.

Lessons from China
- Beijing's Phased Approach
  - 1970–1990: Focused on controlling emissions from coal-fired plants.
  - 1990–2000: Addressed industrial and vehicular emissions.
  - 2000 Onwards: Adopted a regional pollution strategy targeting complex sources.
- Comprehensive Measures
  - Promoted clean energy and improved fuel quality.
  - Implemented incentives for scrappage of old vehicles and adopted intelligent traffic systems.
  - Enhanced public transportation and non-motorized infrastructure.
- The Great Green Wall
  - Reduced dust storms and particulate matter through afforestation across northern China.
  - Integrated satellite monitoring and community participation for long-term impact.

Strategies to Tackle Air Pollution in India
- Transport Sector Reforms
  - Promote Electric Vehicles: Develop EV infrastructure and incentivize adoption.
  - Scrappage Policy Enforcement: Implement mandatory retirement of old and polluting vehicles.
  - Strengthen Public Transport: Improve service quality and last-mile connectivity in metro systems.
  - Intelligent Traffic Management: Use AI and data-driven systems to reduce congestion and optimize traffic flow.
- Industrial Emission Control
  - Fuel Shift: Encourage the use of cleaner fuels like natural gas.
  - Strict Monitoring: Mandate real-time emissions reporting by industries.
- Waste Management
  - Segregation at Source: Promote awareness and systems for waste segregation to reduce landfill dependency.
  - Carbon Market Utilization: Leverage funding for waste treatment infrastructure through carbon credits.
- Dust Management
  - Pave Roads: Prioritize road paving and maintenance in urban areas.
  - Construction Guidelines: Enforce dust suppression measures at construction sites.
- Agriculture
  - Biofertilizers: Reduce reliance on chemical fertilizers to minimize ammonia emissions.
  - Incentivize Crop Residue Management: Promote alternatives like Happy Seeders to prevent stubble burning.
- Rural Interventions
  - Biogas Plants: Establish rural biogas units to reduce biomass burning.
  - Community Awareness: Educate rural populations on the health impacts of air pollution.

Policy Recommendations
- Regional Airshed Management: Adopt a regional approach to manage emissions, as pollution often transcends city boundaries.
- Integration with Climate Policy: Align air quality goals with carbon emission reduction strategies to maximize impact.
- Public Health Budget Allocation: Redirect a portion of the health budget toward air pollution mitigation measures.
- Afforestation Initiatives: Draw inspiration from China's Great Green Wall to combat re-suspended dust and enhance greenery.
- Awareness Campaigns: Educate citizens on the individual and collective role in improving air quality.

Conclusion
- India's poor air quality is a multifaceted issue requiring holistic and coordinated efforts. While temporary solutions like water sprinkling and artificial rain provide relief, addressing root causes is essential.
- By integrating air quality measures with climate goals, strengthening institutional frameworks, and fostering public participation, India can transform its air pollution crisis into an opportunity for cleaner, healthier living.

Source : IE

Eco-precariat struggles in unliveable cities

General Studies-1; Topic: Urbanization, their problems and their remedies.

Introduction
- Bengaluru, once celebrated for its temperate climate, has witnessed a dramatic transformation in recent years.
- Extreme heatwaves followed by torrential rains have disrupted its urban ecosystem, disproportionately impacting the city's most vulnerable groups, such as gig workers and street vendors.

Bengaluru's Changing Climatic Profile
- Extreme Weather Events:
  - Bengaluru's summer heatwaves have reached record temperatures, causing health risks and reduced productivity.
  - Torrential rains have led to flooding, especially in poorly planned urban areas, disrupting transportation and economic activities.
- Urban Heat Island Effect:
  - Rapid urbanization has intensified the heat island effect, with concrete structures and asphalt absorbing more heat than natural landscapes.
- Erratic Weather Patterns:
  - Sudden transitions between extreme heat and heavy rainfall exacerbate vulnerabilities for communities dependent on outdoor work.

Socio-Economic Vulnerabilities
- Gig Workers
- Disruption of Work:
  - Gig workers, such as delivery personnel, face blocked access to platforms due to absences during extreme weather.
  - Prolonged exposure to heatwaves or floods compromises their health and earning potential.
- Street Vendors
- Exposure to Climatic Hazards: Heatwaves, waterlogging, and pollution reduce their working hours and damage perishable goods, leading to significant income loss.
- Legislative Gaps: The Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2014, does not address climate-related vulnerabilities.
- Eco-Precariat Workers
- Definition: Eco-precariat workers are those in environmentally exposed jobs with low pay, no job security, and inadequate benefits.
- Vicious Cycle of Poverty: Loss of income due to extreme weather plunges families into cyclical poverty, exacerbating socio-economic inequities.

The Need for Inclusive Urban Planning
- Reimagining Cities as Habitats
- Move away from viewing cities as economic centers focused on capital gains.
- Prioritize social well-being by integrating resilience, community development, and equity in urban planning.
- Ensure liveability through:
- Climate-adaptive infrastructure, such as flood-resilient drainage systems.
- Urban greenery to mitigate the urban heat island effect.
- Public transportation systems designed for climate extremes.

Innovative Solutions for Building Climate Resilience
- Micro-Insurance for Eco-Precariat Workers
- Implement micro-insurance for gig workers and street vendors to compensate for income losses during extreme weather events.
- Case Study: Gujarat's Extreme Heat Income Micro-Insurance Program
  - Mechanism: Compensation triggered by algorithms based on satellite-recorded temperatures.
- Financial Innovations
- Heat Cess: Imposing a cess on high-emission industries can generate revenue for climate resilience programs.
- Climate Risk Funds: Create a dedicated fund to provide emergency relief for vulnerable groups during climatic disasters.
- Strengthening Existing Frameworks
- Amend the **Street Vendors Act, 2014**, to integrate climate risk assessments and mitigation strategies.

Way Forward
- Collaboration and Community Participation
  - Foster partnerships between government, NGOs, and private stakeholders for integrated climate resilience planning.
  - Encourage the participation of workers in policy formulation to address their specific needs.
- Legal and Policy Interventions
- Enact climate legislation under Entry 23 of the Concurrent List to classify eco-precariat workers as climate-vulnerable and ensure targeted protections.
- Develop policies emphasizing equitable urban development and social justice.
- Financial Sustainability of Compensation Models:
  - Frequent payouts during escalating climate disasters may strain state resources.
  - Augment revenue through diversified taxes or private-sector contributions.
- Pre-emptive Strategies:
  - Strengthen early warning systems for extreme weather.
  - Develop alternative employment opportunities during periods of climatic disruptions.

Conclusion
- By integrating climate adaptation into urban planning and focusing on social equity, Bengaluru can serve as a model for other cities grappling with the dual crises of climate change and urban vulnerability.
- The need of the hour is a unified approach that balances economic growth with ecological and human well-being.

Source : THE HINDU

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SESSION 2024 - 2025

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DO CHECK OUT OUR FIRST OCTOBER ISSUE!!

As we conclude yet another edition of Dhairya Times, I extend my sincere appreciation to Editorial Board Members of Dhairya - The Civil Services Society for committing to provide this horizon to Aspirants in and across. Their anticipated attribution to this publication is an enhanced learning effort and sign of true team work.

To all the Aspirants and our devoted readers, we hope this is serving as the right resource material for you and that this is yielding the right output. We are obliged by your response by far and continue to yield the best in our capability to Dhairya Times - A Quest For Horizon.

With every edition, we are Inculcating more clarity and novel information for our readers and trying our best to provide the handbook one could require.

Let's continue to strive and emmerse ourselves in Reading , perceiving and standing up tall with all the awareness we must. This community seeks our dedication to publish and yours to read and we shall take that down to the coming year as well.

Best regards,

Vimlok Tiwari
Convenor, Dhairya: The Civil Service Society