



DECEMBER, 2023



The

HINDU & EXPRESS NOTES

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1st December 2023

Making this Israeli Palestinian war the last-The Hindu Editorial

International relations

Key takeaways

1. **Urgency for Resolution:** Immediate attention is essential for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict due to the severe humanitarian crisis from the recent Gaza war, requiring swift action to address displacement and destruction.
2. **Potential Outcomes:** Both Israel and Hamas could gain from the conflict, with Israel's military victory and potential increased support for Hamas in the West Bank, altering regional dynamics.
3. **Role of International Bodies:** The involvement of international bodies, especially the United Nations, is crucial in overseeing peace efforts and negotiating the complexities of resolving the conflict.
4. **Concerns of Disproportionate Force:** Serious concerns persist over disproportionate force in Israel's self-defense, resulting in high civilian casualties, highlighting the challenge of balancing security and civilian protection.
5. **Challenges for Two-State Solution:** The feasibility of a two-state solution faces significant hurdles, notably extensive Israeli settlements in the West Bank, complicating efforts to establish a viable Palestinian state.
6. **Elections and Governance:** Conducting supervised elections holds promise in addressing governance issues, establishing legitimacy, and garnering Palestinian support for stability.
7. **Vision for Lasting Peace:** Achieving sustainable peace necessitates ending Israel's West Bank occupation for a viable Palestinian state and engaging neighbouring Arab states for regional stability.
8. **Hope for Regional Stability:** Resolving the conflict could positively impact regional stability by reducing tensions with entities like Iran and Hezbollah, fostering potential cooperation among regional nations.

Mains easy language

The situation between Israel and Palestine is really bad. There was a big fight recently, causing lots of people to lose their homes and many buildings got destroyed. Right now, it's a mess in Gaza where lots of people had to leave because it's not safe there anymore.

The fight is causing problems for both sides. Israel is winning in terms of fighting, but Hamas, the group in charge in Gaza, is getting more support from people in the Middle East, especially in the West Bank where people don't like their leaders much. They feel their leaders aren't doing a good job and are too friendly with Israel.

People around the world, especially big organizations like the United Nations, need to help stop the fighting and make things better. They say that Israel has the right to protect itself, but they're worried because lots of innocent people are getting hurt.

The idea of having two separate countries, Israel and Palestine, living side by side isn't easy because there are too many Israeli settlements in places where the Palestinians should live. It's like a big puzzle that's hard to solve.





The best way forward might be to have new leaders chosen by the people in fair elections. Also, big countries like the United States need to help and make sure everyone agrees to stop fighting. There's hope that if they can sort things out, there might be peace in the Middle East, which would be really great for everyone living there.

[A lot at stake-The Hindu Editorial](#)

International relations

Key takeaways

1. **India's Reputation:** India's global standing as a principled power faces a risk due to an indictment by the U.S. against an Indian national involved in an alleged assassination plot against a Khalistani separatist in the U.S.
2. **Allegations and Investigations:** The indictment involves communication between the accused, an Indian intelligence officer, and individuals in the U.S. Investigations raise concerns about information sharing between the U.S. and India and the honesty of the Modi government in handling the issue.
3. **Policy Implications:** If true, the allegations suggest a significant policy shift in India, necessitating transparency from the government. If officials were unaware, it implies grave incompetence or rogue actions. Evidence is required if the allegations are baseless.
4. **Inconsistent Messaging and Inquiries:** India's response to similar allegations by Canada and the U.S. appears inconsistent. The government has initiated a high-level inquiry to investigate the U.S.'s claims, and much depends on its findings.
5. **Impact on Diplomatic Relations:** The investigation's outcome could affect India's ties with the U.S. and other intelligence partners, potentially impacting the country's global credibility and reputation for principled conduct in international affairs.

Mains easy language

India is facing a serious problem as an Indian national has been accused of involvement in a plot to harm a Khalistani separatist in the U.S. This has put India's reputation as a trustworthy and principled country in question. The accusation is based on communication between this person, an Indian intelligence officer, and people in the U.S. This raises concerns about how much India knew about this and if they were honest about it.

If these accusations are true, it means India might have changed its policy, which the government needs to explain openly. If the Indian government didn't know about this, it means there's a big problem with the system, or some people acted alone. But if these accusations are wrong, then India must provide evidence to prove it.

India's response to these accusations, especially comparing its reactions to similar ones by Canada and the U.S., appears a bit different. The government has now started a serious investigation into this matter, and what they find out will be very important.

The outcome of this investigation could affect how India is seen by other countries, especially its relationship with the U.S. and other important countries it shares intelligence with. It's essential for India to handle this carefully as it could impact its credibility globally.

[Broadcast regulation 3.0, commissions and omissions-The Hindu Editorial](#)

Governance

Key takeaways

1. **Evolution of Broadcasting Regulation:** The new Broadcasting Services (Regulation) Bill continues the government's attempts to regulate broadcasting comprehensively, following previous efforts in 2007 and 1997.
2. **Mixed Aspects with Apprehensions:** While the Bill introduces transparency measures, concerns persist about its impact on privacy and diversity within broadcasting.
3. **Definitional Concerns and Impact:** The inclusion of Over-the-Top (OTT) content providers in broadcasting raises worries about conflicts in jurisdiction and potential limitations for smaller news outlets.
4. **Silent on Vital Aspects:** Lack of clarity on measuring media ownership and the absence of an independent regulator raise concerns about media power concentration and autonomy.
5. **Government Control and Issues:** The Bill grants significant control to the government, prompting worries about press freedom and external influence on media operations.
6. **Need for Refinement and Balance:** Despite aiming for transparency, the Bill requires refinement to address concerns regarding privacy, diversity, and press freedom while ensuring media independence.
7. **Focus on Protecting Media Freedoms:** Emphasizing the importance of protecting media freedoms, the Bill needs adjustments to strike a balance between transparency and safeguarding media independence and pluralism.





Mains easy language

The Broadcasting Services (Regulation) Bill signifies the government's proactive step to revamp broadcasting regulations, building on past attempts in 2007 and 1997. While the Bill introduces measures aimed at enhancing transparency in broadcasting operations, it prompts several concerns. One major worry is the potential impact on privacy and diversity within the broadcasting sector. The inclusion of Over-the-Top (OTT) content providers in the definition of broadcasting raises issues about conflicting jurisdictions and possible limitations for smaller news outlets, signaling potential hurdles for media pluralism.

Moreover, critical aspects such as defining media ownership and establishing an independent regulatory body are noticeably absent. This omission sparks concerns about potential concentration of media power and a lack of autonomy in regulating broadcasting activities.

The Bill also grants substantial control to the government, raising valid concerns about press freedom and the susceptibility of media operations to external influences. This poses significant risks to the independence and impartiality of the media.

While aiming for transparency, the Bill requires refinements to address concerns regarding privacy protection, maintaining diversity in media content, and safeguarding press freedom. Striking a balance between transparency and preserving media independence is essential for a robust regulatory framework that meets the evolving needs of the media landscape in the country.

Is the emerging global order bipolar?—The Hindu Editorial

International relations

Key takeaways

1. **Current Global Order Analysis:** The current global order reflects an asymmetrical bipolarity with the U.S. remaining dominant while China rapidly rises, accompanied by emerging influential power centers.
2. **China's Remarkable Ascendancy:** China's unprecedented economic growth and central control significantly reshape the global landscape, profoundly impacting international dynamics.
3. **Shifting Paradigms of Power:** The contemporary era emphasizes people's power, connectivity, and global integration, contributing to occasional bipolar impulses.
4. **Russia's Relationship Dynamics:** Russia has drawn closer to China due to geopolitical circumstances but remains cautious, seeking strategic partnerships with economies like India.
5. **India's Complex International Relations:** India navigates complex relationships with major powers like the U.S., Russia, and China, maintaining significant trade with China while balancing strategic interests.
6. **India's Approach towards Rising China:** India recognizes China as a long-term competitor, focusing on bolstering comprehensive national power, including economic growth, military modernization, and internal balance.
7. **Global Security Landscape:** Ongoing conflicts in Eastern Europe and West Asia, fueled by complex political dynamics and interests, stem partly from the military-industrial complex, resulting in widespread violence and geopolitical tensions.

Mains easy language

The discussion delves into the contemporary global order and the evolving geopolitical dynamics, focusing primarily on China's ascendancy and its consequential impact, alongside power interactions among major nations. The global landscape is depicted as an asymmetrical bipolarity, with the U.S. retaining dominance while China rapidly emerges as a significant power. This shifting paradigm emphasizes connectivity and people's influence, contributing to occasional bipolar tendencies in the global order. Russia's alignment with China reflects geopolitical responses, urging caution and diversification in global ties, including strengthened relations with India.

India, amid complex international relations, manages significant trade with China while tactfully balancing strategic interests with other major powers. In response to China's growing influence, India prioritizes augmenting national power through economic growth, military modernization, and internal coherence. Meanwhile, conflicts in Eastern Europe and West Asia underline global security complexities, influenced by intricate political dynamics and the military-industrial complex, contributing to heightened global tensions. This multifaceted scenario underscores the transformative influence of China's ascent, complexities in major power relations, India's strategic maneuvers, and the intricate global security landscape shaped by geopolitical complexities.

Understanding simultaneous elections—The Hindu Text and Context

Polity

Key takeaways

1. **Panel Formation:** The government formed a six-member panel to explore simultaneous elections for Lok Sabha, State assemblies, and local bodies.





2. **Historical Context:** Initially, Lok Sabha and State Assembly elections were simultaneous. However, this changed after Congress advanced Lok Sabha polls in 1969. Currently, only four states align their Assembly elections with Lok Sabha polls.
3. **Advocacy for Simultaneous Elections:** Mainly supported by the BJP, the proposal aims to cut costs, streamline administration, and improve efficiency. Proponents argue it can reduce political uncertainty and enhance developmental focus.
4. **Opposition and Concerns:** Critics fear simultaneous elections might sideline regional issues, challenge federal structure, and reduce accountability. Frequent elections are seen as fostering voter enthusiasm and accountability.
5. **Constitutional Hurdles:** Implementing simultaneous elections requires amendments to at least five articles in the Constitution, needing parliamentary consensus and State Legislatures' ratification.
6. **Complexity and Consultation:** The complexity of implementing changes calls for extensive consultations across political parties and states to achieve a consensus on simultaneous elections.

Mains easy language

The discussion around holding simultaneous elections for Lok Sabha, State assemblies, and local bodies has surged in recent times, spearheaded by a six-member panel established by the Union Government. Initially practiced during the early general elections when Lok Sabha and State Assembly polls were conducted together, the notion of simultaneous elections is under scrutiny once again. Proponents, particularly the BJP, highlight several advantages, including cost reduction, efficient administration, and ensuring sustained governance focus. However, critics voice concerns about potential downsides, such as sidelining regional issues, diluting federalism, and potentially diminishing voter enthusiasm and accountability.

The process of implementing simultaneous elections is complex and involves intricate constitutional amendments and logistical hurdles. Such an endeavor demands broad political consensus and extensive consultations among various political parties and states, given India's diverse electoral landscape. While the initiative aims to balance federal principles and enhance administrative efficiency, addressing the multifaceted complexities necessitates navigating through these intricacies through careful deliberation and negotiation among stakeholders.

Ultimately, achieving simultaneous elections in India would require significant legal amendments, cooperative federalism, and meticulous planning to synchronize election schedules at various levels of governance. The debate surrounding this proposal underscores the importance of reconciling administrative efficiency with federal principles and the need for a harmonized approach involving all stakeholders to effectively navigate the country's complex and multifaceted electoral landscape.

[The spread of AIDS can be stopped with sciencebacked protocols-The Hindu Science](#)

Science

Key Takeaways:

1. **Effective Treatment:** Antiretroviral medications can control HIV, preventing opportunistic infections, enabling individuals with HIV to lead normal lives. Early therapy after diagnosis is recommended.
2. **Global Scenario:** Around 39 million people globally live with HIV, with India having 2.4 million cases. Infections are still prevalent among specific high-risk populations
3. **Preventative Measures:** Traditional prevention methods like behavioral changes have had limited success. The absence of an HIV vaccine requires community involvement to curb infections.
4. **Health Impact:** HIV leads to compromised immunity, causing various infections and contributing to deaths, highlighting the need for proper healthcare guidelines.
5. **Healthcare Implementation:** Guidelines by organizations like the WHO are available but need better global implementation, especially in relation to advanced HIV prevention and treatment.
6. **Cost-Effective Solutions:** Initiating early antiretroviral therapy has proven to be cost-effective and lifesaving, but its effective implementation across lower-income countries remains a challenge.

Mains easy language

The global HIV scenario shows nearly 39 million individuals living with the virus, with India accounting for 2.4 million cases. Despite advancements in antiretroviral therapy (ART) and prevention, 1.3 million new infections occurred globally in 2022, with 63,000 in India, mainly affecting specific high-risk groups like sex workers, men having sex with men, and drug users.

Though treatment options have significantly improved, challenges persist in implementing preventive measures and ensuring timely therapy initiation. Moreover, despite India's significant contribution to generic antiretroviral medications, the national HIV program faces hurdles in introducing Preexposure Prophylaxis (PrEP), contributing to the persistent spread of HIV. Globally, the aim is to ensure 95% diagnosis, ART coverage, and viral load suppression for all individuals living with HIV, a goal yet to be fully realized.





Addressing this requires urgent implementation of innovative interventions like long-acting PrEP medications and wider adoption of ART initiation guidelines. Despite scientific advancements, the timely execution of these strategies remains crucial in combating HIV, ensuring timely diagnosis, treatment, and support to end the AIDS epidemic.

[Air pollution causes over 2 million deaths annually in India: study-The Hindu Science](#)

Environment

Key takeaways

1. **India's Air Pollution Impact:** Outdoor air pollution in India, largely stemming from fossil fuel use, causes approximately 2.18 million deaths annually, ranking second globally after China.
2. **Global Fossil Fuel Impact:** Fossil fuel-related air pollution leads to roughly 5.1 million extra deaths worldwide yearly, accounting for 61% of the estimated 8.3 million global deaths from ambient air pollution in 2019.
3. **Health Implications:** The fatalities associated with this pollution are primarily linked to prevalent health conditions such as heart disease, stroke, chronic lung disease, diabetes, and possibly other ailments like high blood pressure and neurodegenerative diseases.
4. **Policy Solutions:** Phasing out fossil fuels could substantially reduce deaths caused by air pollution, potentially averting a significant number of fatalities, particularly in regions like South and East Asia.
5. **Regional Impact:** South and East Asia, notably China and India, face the highest attributable deaths due to fossil fuel-related air pollution, emphasizing the urgent need for effective measures to combat this issue.

Mains easy language

A study published in The BMJ emphasizes the severe health consequences of outdoor air pollution in India and globally due to fossil fuel usage. The research revealed that approximately 2.18 million deaths annually in India are linked to outdoor air pollution, highlighting the critical need for addressing this issue.

Fossil fuel-related pollution contributes to around 5.1 million excess deaths worldwide each year, representing a majority of the 8.3 million deaths attributed to ambient air pollution in 2019. The impact of this pollution spans common health conditions like heart disease, stroke, lung ailments, diabetes, and potentially other disorders.

The study underscores the potential of phasing out fossil fuels in significantly reducing air pollution-related deaths. It indicates that such measures could prevent millions of deaths annually, particularly in regions like South and East Asia. This highlights the urgency for implementing policies that promote cleaner energy sources and curb fossil fuel usage to address the devastating impact of air pollution on public health.

[UPRISE ON UPSIDE-Indian express editorial](#)

Economy

Key takeaways

1. **Surprising Growth:** India's economy outperformed expectations, growing at a robust 7.6% in the second quarter, exceeding earlier projections that were between 6.5-7%.
2. **Sectoral Variations:** While the industrial sector, including construction, saw significant growth (13.2%), the agricultural sector experienced a decline in growth from 3.5% to 1.2%. The services sector also slowed down from 10.3% to 5.8%.
3. **Consumption and Investment Trends:** Private consumption notably slowed down from 6% to 3.1%, signaling weaknesses in certain population segments. However, investment activity remained healthy, growing by 11% in the second quarter.
4. **Government Role:** Government spending, especially on capital expenditure by both central and state governments, increased significantly, indicating continued robustness in this area.
5. **Anticipated Slowdown:** Despite the strong second-quarter performance, there are concerns about the economy's momentum in the second half of the year. Factors contributing to the anticipated slowdown include a possible weaker performance in agriculture, tightening financial conditions, and an expected decrease in government spending as general elections approach.

Mains easy language

India's economy showcased surprising strength in the second quarter, growing at 7.6%, surpassing earlier projections. The industrial sector, driven by construction and manufacturing, performed exceptionally well, while agriculture saw a decline and the services sector experienced a slowdown.

Consumption weakened notably, contrasting with healthy investment activities. Government spending, particularly on capital expenditure, increased significantly, supporting economic momentum.



| Clear your doubts now.



However, concerns loom over the economy's future trajectory. Anticipated factors contributing to a possible slowdown include potential agricultural underperformance, tighter financial conditions, and a decrease in government spending leading up to elections. The RBI had previously projected a slowdown in economic momentum for the third and fourth quarters.

The Pannun problem in India-US ties-Indian Express Explained

International relations

Key takeaways

1. **Allegations Against Indian Official:** An Indian intelligence official is accused of plotting to kill Khalistan separatist Gurbhagat Singh Pannun in New York, creating a significant diplomatic challenge for India and the US.
2. **US Indictment and Indian Response:** The indictment, naming the official as the chief conspirator, poses a potential threat to Indo-US ties. India's response involves constituting a high-level inquiry committee to investigate the matter.
3. **Divergent Reactions:** India's reaction to the US allegations differs starkly from its response to similar accusations made by Canada regarding the killing of another Khalistan separatist. India cooperates more with the US but sharply rejected Canada's claims.
4. **Past Diplomatic Standoffs:** Past instances, like the Devyani Khobragade case, resulted in diplomatic standoffs between India and the US, highlighting the sensitivity of such situations.
5. **Strategic Importance of US-India Ties:** The depth of the strategic relationship between India and the US provides India with some maneuvering room. However, the gravity of the allegations demands a balanced response to prevent a full-fledged diplomatic crisis.
6. **Interests vs. Values:** The debate arises whether the India-US relationship is based on shared values or mutual interests. Despite past challenges, both countries have maintained a steady relationship, collaborating on various fronts despite occasional divergences.
7. **Importance of Transparency:** India's transparent approach with Washington and taking necessary actions based on the findings of the inquiry committee are crucial to avoiding reputational damage and preventing a significant diplomatic problem.

Mains easy language

Allegations involving an Indian intelligence official in a plot to assassinate a Khalistan separatist in the US present a significant diplomatic challenge for India and the United States. India's response includes forming a high-level inquiry committee to investigate the matter thoroughly, reflecting its cautious approach to managing the situation without escalating tensions.

India's contrasting responses to similar allegations from Canada in the past highlight the nuanced diplomatic strategy it employs in different scenarios. Past diplomatic standoffs, like the Devyani Khobragade case, emphasize the sensitivity of such situations and the potential impact on bilateral relationships.

The depth of India's strategic ties with the US necessitates a careful and transparent approach to prevent the situation from evolving into a major diplomatic crisis. The episode prompts a debate about the foundation of the India-US relationship, whether rooted in shared values or mutual interests, despite occasional differences.

India's transparent engagement with the US and its commitment to addressing the allegations based on the inquiry committee's findings are crucial in avoiding reputational damage and preserving the trajectory of US-India relations.

The outcome of India's handling of this issue will significantly shape the future dynamics of US-India relations, underscoring the importance of a measured and prudent response to the current allegations.

2nd December 2023

Improving the capability of the Indian state-The Hindu Editorial

Polity

Key takeaways

1. **State's Paradox:** The Indian state is both too big in terms of bureaucracy and regulations, yet too small in terms of the number of civil servants and professionals across various sectors.
2. **Scarcity of Resources:** India faces scarcity in public goods provisions, welfare payments, and the justice system due to inadequate state capability, leading to outsourcing services that could be better provided by the public sector.
3. **Debating the Role of the State:** There's a debate between proponents of a larger state role for inclusive development and those advocating for a smaller state due to numerous policy failures.
4. **People-thin, Process-thick State:** India's state is thin in terms of personnel but thick in convoluted processes, resulting in perverse incentives and a skill gap among officials, hindering policy implementation.





5. **Need for Structural Changes:** Separating policymaking and implementation, delegating more power to frontline functionaries, and addressing the technocratic gap are essential for improving state capability.
6. **Professional Staff Augmentation:** Augmenting professional staff in regulatory bodies and oversight agencies, enhancing their scope and expertise, is crucial to effective governance.
7. **Public vs. Private Sector:** The political economy of the public sector undermines its efficacy, with excessive pay in the public sector leading to corruption and reducing social motivation.

Mains easy language

The Indian state grapples with a dual challenge: an intricate bureaucratic system stalling progress and a shortage of skilled personnel in vital sectors like healthcare, education, and law enforcement. The ongoing debate about the state's role overlooks a critical issue: a scarcity of personnel combined with excessive bureaucratic processes, fostering skewed incentives and a skill gap among officials. To address this, reforms are necessary—separating policymaking from execution, empowering frontline workers, and enhancing technocratic skills through lateral entries and specialized training.

Moreover, the reliance on consultancy firms underscores the lack of in-house expertise, highlighting the need for augmenting professional staff within oversight agencies. The public sector's inefficiency, driven by excessive pay and job security, fuels corruption and undermines societal welfare. Remedies such as recalibrating pay structures, limiting job entry ages, and creating more appealing opportunities in the private sector aim to mitigate these issues, fostering a more accountable, efficient, and inclusive governance framework in India.

Finding funds-The Hindu Editorial

Environment

Key takeaways

1. **L&D Fund Operationalization:** The Loss and Damage (L&D) fund, initiated during COP28, is now operational but faces significant challenges.
2. **Fund's Purpose and Funding:** The fund, addressing unavoidable climate impacts, needs replenishment primarily from developed nations. Initial commitments of \$450 million fall short of the required billions, with voluntary contributions posing concerns.
3. **Management and Oversight:** Hosted by the World Bank for four years, concerns include high fees, bureaucracy, and transparency issues. The World Bank's role could change based on its management performance.
4. **Challenges and Concerns:** Doubts exist over the fund's accessibility, timeliness, and adequacy, raising questions about its effectiveness.
5. **Unmet Goals and Necessary Actions:** Despite its launch, critical issues persist, such as funding shortages, bureaucratic obstacles, and uncertainties requiring immediate attention for the fund to effectively address climate change impacts.

Mains easy language

The Loss and Damage (L&D) fund, a long-awaited symbol of climate justice, has finally emerged during COP28 after decades of advocacy efforts. Despite this milestone, challenges are evident. The initial funding commitments of \$450 million fall drastically short of the needed resources, raising doubts about the fund's capacity to address the substantial impacts of climate change. Additionally, the voluntary nature of contributions introduces uncertainty regarding sustained financial support. Concerns about high fees, bureaucracy, and transparency surrounding the World Bank's oversight further complicate the fund's potential effectiveness.

These issues cast doubts on the fund's accessibility and its ability to provide timely and sufficient assistance to the most affected communities. To ensure the fund fulfills its purpose, urgent attention is required to bridge the funding gap, address bureaucratic obstacles, and establish clearer management frameworks. Resolving these critical issues is vital for the L&D fund to serve as an effective tool in providing crucial support to regions grappling with the adverse effects of climate change, ultimately contributing to a more equitable and resilient future for all.

Patchy expansion-The Hindu Editorial

Economy

Key takeaways

1. **GDP and GVA Growth:** The provisional estimates show a slight deceleration in real economic growth to 7.6% for the quarter ended September 30. Gross Value Added (GVA) also reflects a marginal slowing at 7.4% across eight broad sectors, with some sectors outperforming while others lagged.





2. **Sectoral Performance:** Manufacturing, mining, utilities, and construction sectors experienced robust double-digit expansions, aiding overall growth. However, agriculture, certain service sectors (like trade, hotels, transport, and communication), and financial and realty services witnessed significant slowdowns.
3. **Challenges in Agriculture:** Agriculture, livestock, and fishing sectors faced a notable slowdown, hitting an 18-quarter low, indicating challenges and vulnerability among rural earners.
4. **Services Sector Slowdown:** Key components of the services economy, particularly trade-related and financial/real estate services, experienced substantial drops in growth, indicating a loss of post-pandemic rebound momentum.
5. **Private Consumption and Government Spending:** Private consumption expenditure growth slowed significantly to 3.1%, while government spending, both on consumption and asset creation, played a vital role in boosting economic momentum.

Mains easy language

The latest GDP figures show a slight deceleration in economic growth to 7.6%, accompanied by a similar trend in Gross Value Added (GVA) across sectors. While manufacturing and construction sectors displayed robust growth, agriculture and key service sectors faced significant slowdowns, indicating a patchy expansion across the economy.

Agriculture's sharp slowdown, alongside contractions in certain service sectors, underscores the challenges confronting rural earners. This slowdown in critical sectors, coupled with subdued rural demand impacting private consumption, poses concerns for sustainable growth.

Government spending emerged as a significant driver of economic momentum. However, the overreliance on this front raises questions about sustainability. Policymakers face the pressing challenge of diversifying and broadening the growth base to ensure an equitable upliftment across all sectors, thereby sustaining momentum and reducing economic inequality within the nation.

[A delusion of arrival-Indian Express Editorial](#)

International Relations

Key takeaways

1. **Confidence vs. Reality:** PM Modi's Tejas aircraft gesture reflects overconfidence in India's military capabilities. Yet, Tejas isn't fully operational, indicating India's continued dependence on imported defense equipment.
2. **Misleading Perceptions:** Government's focus on defense self-reliance sometimes misleads the public about India's actual military strength, as highlighted by alleged overseas incidents raising questions on the government's strategies.
3. **Limited Global Influence:** Despite domestic claims, India's global power remains limited. Prevailing narratives projecting India's arrival as a major world power overlook the country's actual global constraints.
4. **Geopolitical Constraints:** Recent global events, including reactions to India's actions during the Russia-Ukraine conflict and meetings between major world leaders, illustrate India's restricted space on the global stage.
5. **Historical Warning:** Past instances like the 1962 conflict and the 1991 economic crisis highlight the consequences of overestimating India's capabilities.
6. **Political Messaging vs. Reality:** While India shows promise as a rising power, it's crucial to distinguish political messaging for domestic audiences from the country's actual global standing.
7. **Emphasizing Realism:** The article stresses the importance of realistically assessing India's global position and understanding the distinction between perceived power and actual influence for the nation's benefit.

Mains easy language

The article critiques India's overconfidence in its military capabilities, exemplified by Prime Minister Modi's symbolic gesture of confidence in the Tejas aircraft. Despite the grand display, the Tejas isn't operationally ready, highlighting India's continued reliance on imported defense equipment. This exaggerated display of indigenous capability creates a misleading perception among the public, as the government's emphasis on defense self-reliance sometimes obscures the reality of India's limited military strength.

While domestically driven narratives project India as a major world power, the article highlights the country's constrained global influence. It challenges prevailing viewpoints propagated by geopolitical analysts and media, emphasizing the need to acknowledge India's actual limitations in the global arena. Recent geopolitical events, such as responses to India's actions during the Russia-Ukraine conflict and high-level international meetings, underscore India's restricted space on the global stage.

Reflecting on historical instances like the 1962 conflict with China and the economic crisis of 1991, the article warns against the dangers of overestimating India's capabilities. It cautions against the political propagation of a grandiose narrative, emphasizing the importance of a realistic assessment of India's actual geopolitical position. Amid India's promising rise as a potential global power, the article stresses the significance of discerning between political messaging for domestic audiences and the reality of India's true global standing. It asserts the need





to understand the difference between perceived power and actual influence, urging for a pragmatic approach beneficial for the nation's interests.

STANDING FIRM-Indian Express Editorial

Environment

Key takeaways

1. **India's Climate Commitments:** At COP28 in Dubai, India restated its dedication to combatting global warming and stressed equity and justice in climate diplomacy, echoing PM Modi's emphasis on global rights and equal participation.
2. **Emission Targets and Renewable Energy:** India has achieved emission intensity targets ahead of schedule and remains on track with its Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) under the Paris Agreement. Additionally, it reaffirmed commitments to renewable energy while recognizing coal's importance in its energy mix.
3. **Coal and Energy Priorities:** India's clear stance on coal emphasizes its critical role in the country's energy needs. The nation remains resolute in balancing emissions reduction with developmental imperatives.
4. **Debate on Coal Phase-out:** The challenge lies in addressing emissions while meeting the energy demands of growing populations. Nations like India lack immediate alternatives to coal, unlike those with natural gas reserves.
5. **Fossil Fuel Transition Complexity:** India advocates for a nuanced approach in transitioning from fossil fuels, underscoring uncertainties regarding natural gas as a clean energy source in the interim.

Mains easy language

India has presented a steadfast position at COP28 in Dubai, reaffirming its climate commitments based on principles of equity and justice. Prime Minister Modi underscored the importance of protecting everyone's rights and emphasized the country's achievements in meeting emission intensity targets and renewable energy goals.

Despite acknowledging coal's importance in India's energy landscape, the country remains committed to striking a balance between emissions reduction and development priorities. The debate around phasing out coal reveals the challenge of reducing emissions while addressing the energy needs of growing populations, particularly in emerging economies lacking immediate alternatives.

India advocates for a nuanced approach to transitioning from fossil fuels, highlighting uncertainties surrounding natural gas as a transitional clean energy source. While welcoming potential cooperation between major emitters like the US and China, India stands firm on its principled positions, signaling its commitment to maintaining a balanced stance amidst potential pressure from global climate negotiations.

A BRIDGE, NOT BARRIER-Indian Express Editorial

Polity

Key Takeaways

1. **Simplification of Legal Language:** India, led by PM Narendra Modi, is on a mission to simplify legal language, aligning with the "Access to Justice" vision, ensuring comprehension for all citizens.
2. **Constitutional Emphasis:** Inspired by B.R. Ambedkar's vision, the initiative emphasizes making legal texts comprehensible for ordinary citizens, ensuring the Constitution is accessible to all.
3. **Clarity and Corrections:** Efforts aim to rectify historical ambiguities in legal texts, enhancing effectiveness in enforcement and comprehension among legal practitioners and the public.
4. **Recognition and Digitization:** Globally acknowledged and aligned with international best practices, India's initiative has gained recognition. Utilizing technology through the Digital India campaign aims to enhance accessibility and inclusivity in legal evolution.
5. **Legal Empowerment and Economic Competitiveness:** Simplifying legal language fosters legal empowerment and reduces disputes, positioning India favorably for global economic competitiveness and attracting investment.
6. **Youth Empowerment and Education:** Emphasizing legal education empowers the youth, contributing to the nation's intellectual capital and their ability to navigate legal complexities effectively.
7. **Transformative Journey Towards Inclusive Justice:** The simplification of legal language isn't merely administrative; it signifies a transformative journey towards making justice an inherent right accessible to every individual, fostering an inclusive society.

Mains easy language

India, spearheaded by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, is actively simplifying its legal language, aligning with the broader "Access to Justice" vision. This initiative aims to make legal frameworks understandable and accessible to all citizens, echoing B.R. Ambedkar's call for the





Constitution's clarity for ordinary people. The objective is to bridge the gap between complex legal jargon and the general public, ensuring widespread comprehension of constitutional principles and rights.

This endeavor isn't merely administrative; it represents a transformative stride toward inclusive justice. By rectifying historical ambiguities in legal texts, the initiative seeks to enhance enforcement effectiveness and public comprehension. Leveraging technology through the Digital India campaign bolsters accessibility and inclusive legal evolution by incorporating public input.

Internationally acclaimed, India's efforts to simplify legal language enhance economic competitiveness by fostering a clear legal framework that attracts investment. Emphasis on legal education and youth empowerment contributes to intellectual capital and equips the younger generation to navigate legal intricacies effectively.

The simplification of legal language redefines justice as an inherent right accessible to every individual, not just a privilege. By removing barriers of complexity, India is reshaping the narrative of justice, ensuring legal understanding is open to all, fostering a society where justice is tangible and comprehensible for every citizen.

The GDP growth surprise-Indian Express Explained

Economy

Key Takeaways:

1. **GDP Growth Surprise:** Q2 GDP growth at 7.6% surpassed market expectations, leading to upward revisions in full-year GDP forecasts and validating the Reserve Bank of India's projections.
2. **RBI's Projections and Interest Rates:** With RBI's accurate GDP forecast, interest rate cuts are unlikely soon. Had growth been lower, the probability of a rate cut would have increased.
3. **Economic Recovery:** India's upside growth surprise in Q2 has signaled an upward trajectory in economic recovery, contrasting with the technical recession three years ago.
4. **GDP vs. GVA:** GDP measures spending, while Gross Value Added (GVA) looks at income. Experts typically scrutinize GVA for quarterly trends and GDP for annual analyses.
5. **GVA Insights:** Agriculture's steady decline, industrial growth spike, particularly in manufacturing, and a notable deceleration in the services sector highlight contrasting sectoral performances.
6. **Manufacturing Surge:** Manufacturing, growing at close to 14%, notably drove the GDP surprise, primarily benefiting from a low base effect, volume growth, and improved profit margins.
7. **Services Sector Deceleration:** The services sector, growing at 5.8%, exhibited a marked slowdown, especially in sub-sectors like trade and communication, contrasting with its usual higher growth rate.

Mains easy language

The recently released Q2 GDP growth of 7.6% has stirred optimism but also raised questions about the economy's overall health. While this growth outperformed expectations, it prompts a deeper dive into sectoral performances. The dichotomy between GDP and GVA calculation methods emphasizes the need for nuanced analysis—GVA for quarterly trends and GDP for annual assessments.

Sector-wise analysis reveals noteworthy trends: agriculture's continual decline, industrial upsurge led by manufacturing, and a significant slowdown in the services sector. While manufacturing's impressive growth marks a positive turn, caution remains, given its reliance on a low base effect. Conversely, the services sector's deceleration poses concerns, especially in vital sub-sectors.

Despite the positive Q2 data, skepticism looms among economists regarding the sustainability of this momentum. Forecasts suggest a potential moderation in growth for the upcoming quarters and possibly throughout FY25, highlighting the need for continued monitoring and analysis beyond the initial growth surge.

Loss and damage fund approved at COP28:why this is major stepforward-Indian Express Explained

Environment

Key takeaways

1. **Historic Agreement:** COP28's landmark agreement operationalizes a loss and damage fund to aid developing countries affected by climate disasters. Over \$400 million was immediately infused into the fund.
2. **Fund's Purpose:** The fund intends to assist nations reeling from climate-related disasters, compensating for losses beyond their means, primarily impacting developing and island nations.
3. **Understanding Loss and Damage:** Loss and damage cover both economic and non-economic impacts, from rebuilding infrastructure and crop loss to community displacement and trauma from natural calamities.





4. **Industrialization Impact:** Industrial-era emissions, largely attributed to the US, UK, EU, and a few other countries, contribute significantly to historical emissions compared to India and China. Greenhouse gases like CO₂ remain the primary contributors to global warming.
5. **Extent of Global Loss:** Estimates on annual losses due to climate-related issues vary significantly, ranging from billions to trillions of dollars annually, with projected increases in the future, disproportionately affecting developing nations and vulnerable communities.
6. **Fund's Size and Management:** Contributions totaling over \$400 million have been pledged, spearheaded by the UAE, EU, US, and Japan. The World Bank initially oversees the fund, with uncertainties regarding the scale and replenishment cycle.
7. **Developing Nations' Concerns:** Initially cautious about the World Bank's role, developing nations agreed to its management, foreseeing a source for richer nations to wield greater financial control, albeit recognizing the pressing need for trillions of dollars.

Mains easy language

The COP28 climate conference's inaugural breakthrough heralds a defining moment as countries unite to activate a loss and damage fund. This fund, long-awaited by developing nations, aims to support these nations in recovering from climate-induced disasters. While over \$400 million was swiftly infused into the fund, the broader purpose lies in aiding countries grappling with damages beyond their means.

The loss and damage fund's scope encapsulates both economic and non-economic impacts, ranging from tangible losses in infrastructure and agriculture to intangible but profound trauma and community displacement. Tracing back historical emissions, the responsibility for significant emissions lies primarily with industrial-era countries, accentuating the urgency for climate support mechanisms.

Annual losses due to climate perils vary widely, necessitating immediate financial aid projected to escalate with global warming. Despite uncertainties in the fund's size and oversight by the World Bank, contributions from leading nations underscore a shared commitment to address climate-induced hardships. Developing nations, initially wary of control dynamics, consented to World Bank management, prioritizing the fund's necessity over initial concerns.

3rd December 2023

[BCG revaccination study in adults to begin in 23 States-The Hindu Science](#)

Science

Key takeaways

1. **BCG Revaccination Study:** The Indian government plans a study across 23 states to assess BCG vaccine effectiveness against TB in high-risk adult groups: over 50s, prior TB patients, underweight individuals, diabetics, smokers, and alcohol consumers.
2. **Expert Committee vs. Implementation:** Despite an expert committee's clinical trial recommendation, the government chose a program study due to time concerns about trial completion.
3. **WHO's Stand:** The WHO doesn't back BCG revaccination for adults in high-burden countries. Previous studies lacked substantial impact, but recent South African trials hinted at TB infection prevention, prompting further trials.
4. **Past Evidence and Concerns:** Prior Indian studies show diminishing protection from a single BCG vaccine dose in infants over time, raising doubts about adult revaccination's efficacy and longevity.
5. **Study Execution Challenges:** The study relies partly on limited 1968 trial data, posing constraints due to sample size, absent confounder information, and undefined dose intervals.
6. **State Participation:** While 23 states join the study, Kerala, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, and Uttarakhand opt-out due to field issues, staff constraints, and a post-pandemic immunization focus.

Mains easy language

The Indian government aims to explore if giving adults another BCG vaccine shot can help prevent tuberculosis (TB) in 23 states. They'll focus on specific groups like older adults, those previously affected by TB, and individuals with certain health risks such as diabetes, smoking habits, and alcohol consumption.

Despite recommendations from experts for a different approach, the government opted for a quicker study method. Although the World Health Organization (WHO) isn't fully supportive of this initiative, recent trials in South Africa showed promising results, prompting the need for further investigation.

Previous experiences in India indicated that the protection offered by a single BCG vaccine given to babies didn't last long. Thus, there's uncertainty about how effective giving this vaccine again to adults might be in preventing TB.

The study faces challenges due to its reliance on older data, including limitations such as incomplete information and a relatively small sample size.

Some states chose not to participate due to practical challenges and a focus on resolving vaccination issues following the pandemic.





Did vaccination reduce COVID-related preterm births?-The Hindu Science

Science

Key takeaways

1. **Early Pandemic Findings:** Initially, mothers with COVID-19 showed a slightly higher risk of preterm delivery compared to non-infected mothers, akin to in utero exposure to intense wildfire smoke for 20 days.
2. **Vaccination Impact:** Vaccine distribution in California correlated with reduced adverse COVID-related preterm births in high acceptance areas, fading in low acceptance zones by January 2022 alongside widespread immunity.
3. **Complexity of Preterm Births:** Obstetric practices, healthcare decisions, and overall maternal health influence preterm births beyond direct COVID-19 effects, making the issue multifaceted.
4. **Varied Study Findings:** Global studies show mixed results, linking vaccination to lowered preterm birth risks in some cases, while socioeconomic factors and healthcare access contribute to differing outcomes.
5. **Debate and Clarification:** Expert opinions vary regarding vaccination's direct impact on preterm births, indicating a need for comprehensive assessment considering diverse variables beyond vaccination status.

Mains easy language

During the early phase of the COVID-19 pandemic, some studies found that pregnant women with COVID-19 had a slightly higher chance of giving birth prematurely compared to those without the infection. Scientists likened this risk increase to exposure to intense wildfire smoke while in the womb. However, as vaccines became available, their distribution showed a positive impact. In areas where more people accepted vaccines, there were fewer cases of preterm births linked to COVID-19. This effect was less noticeable in areas with lower vaccine acceptance and eventually disappeared as more people gained immunity against the virus in 2022.

Understanding premature births isn't straightforward. It's not just about the virus itself but also about decisions made by doctors during pregnancies. For instance, if a pregnant woman gets severely ill with COVID-19, doctors might decide to deliver the baby early to save the mother's life. This might lead to counting the birth as premature, even if it doesn't necessarily harm the baby's health. Moreover, various studies worldwide have shown different results. Some suggest that getting vaccinated reduced the risk of premature births related to COVID-19, while others have found unexpected trends.

Experts are debating the direct influence of vaccines on premature births. They stress the need to look at other factors, like a family's money situation or access to good healthcare, which could also affect these birth outcomes. This shows that while vaccines may have helped lower severe COVID-19 problems for pregnant women, their exact impact on premature births needs more investigation.

Six exoplanets found orbiting a nearby bright star-The Hindu Science

Science

Key takeaways

1. **Exoplanet Revelation:** A recent study in Nature disclosed the identification of six exoplanets encircling the bright star HD 110067 in Coma Berenices. These planets fall within sizes ranging from Earth to Neptune.
2. **Study Insights:** The research provides crucial details about their orbits, masses, and densities, contributing significant knowledge about their compositions and atmospheric traits.
3. **Sub-Neptune Traits:** Planets similar in size to Earth and Neptune, termed 'sub-Neptunes,' are commonly observed orbiting stars akin to the Sun. However, aspects like their formation and evolution remain enigmatic.
4. **Observational Techniques:** NASA's TESS and CHEOPS satellites were instrumental in detecting variations in the brightness of HD 110067, enabling the identification of these passing planets.
5. **Orbital Patterns:** The study's calculations unveiled distinct orbital patterns and resonances among these exoplanets, hinting at the system's stability for billions of years.
6. **Atmospheric Clues:** The detected low densities in these planets may imply the presence of sizable hydrogen-rich atmospheres.
7. **Significance of Discovery:** HD 110067 is notably the brightest star housing over four transiting exoplanets, offering a unique avenue to study sub-Neptunes and their formation within these systems.

Mains easy language

Researchers have identified six new exoplanets orbiting a bright star named HD 110067 in the Coma Berenices constellation. These planets exhibit sizes ranging from that of Earth to Neptune. The study, published in Nature, provides crucial data regarding their orbits, masses, and densities, shedding light on their composition and atmospheric characteristics.



| Clear your doubts now.



These 'sub-Neptunes,' common around stars akin to the Sun, remain a mystery regarding their origin and development. Using observations from NASA's TESS and CHEOPS satellites, astronomers monitored fluctuations in HD 110067's brightness, pinpointing the presence of these planets.

Calculations revealed intriguing orbital patterns and resonances among the exoplanets, indicating the stability of the system over billions of years. Notably, the planets exhibit low densities, potentially suggesting the presence of substantial hydrogen-rich atmospheres.

This discovery marks HD 110067 as the brightest star known to host more than four transiting exoplanets. Scientists anticipate further exploration of this system to unveil more about sub-Neptunes and their formation within such planetary systems.

[Why is COP-28 summit focusing on health?-The Hindu FAQ](#)

Environment

Key takeaways

1. **COP-28 and Health:** For the first time in 28 years of climate negotiations, COP-28 will prominently address the connection between climate change and health. This nexus includes extreme weather events, air pollution, food scarcity, and the impact on diseases.
2. **Health Focus at COP-28:** COP-28 will feature a 'Health Day' to emphasize how public health can adapt to climate change and who will fund this transformation.
3. **Historical Context:** Health discussions at UN climate talks aren't new, but it's the first official 'Health Day,' including an inter-ministerial meeting involving health, environment, finance, and other ministries.
4. **Expected Outcomes:** Discussions at COP-28 will cover emission reduction, healthcare adaptation to climate change, integrating health into climate policies, and funding for health-related climate initiatives.
5. **Challenges and Concerns:** G-20 countries, responsible for significant greenhouse gas emissions, have not prioritized health in their climate actions. Low-and middle-income nations often show more concern for health-related issues in their climate commitments.
6. **Financial Impact:** Health crises from climate change are estimated to cost \$2-4 billion annually by 2030. Around 40% of climate-induced poverty could stem from direct health impacts, requiring substantial financial support.
7. **India's Position:** India faces severe particulate air pollution and heat-related risks. However, its commitments in reducing emissions and transitioning to cleaner energy sources haven't strongly emphasized health concerns.
8. **Success Indicators:** The success of COP-28's focus on health will be measured by progress in reducing fossil fuel dependency, committing to emission reductions, ensuring grant-based climate financing, and a just transition to renewable energy.

Mains easy language

At COP-28, a significant shift occurs as the conference will extensively examine the link between climate change and public health, acknowledging the impact of extreme weather, air pollution, and disease patterns. 'Health Day' marks a pivotal moment, raising two crucial questions: how public health can adapt to climate change and who will finance this change.

While discussions on health have been part of previous UN climate talks, COP-28 stands out due to its official recognition and an inter-ministerial meeting dedicated to health issues. The conference aims to discuss emission reduction, healthcare adaptation, integration of health into climate policies, and financing health initiatives related to climate change.

Despite these efforts, challenges remain. Major economies have not prioritized health in their climate actions, while low and middle-income countries demonstrate greater concern for health in their climate commitments. Financially, health crises induced by climate change are estimated to create a substantial economic burden.

India, despite facing severe air pollution and heat-related risks, hasn't strongly emphasized health in its climate commitments. Success at COP-28's 'Health Day' will be gauged by reductions in fossil fuel dependency, emission cuts, securing grant-based financing, and ensuring a fair transition to renewable energy.

[Wooing Indian tourists with visa-free entry-The Hindu FAQ](#)

International relations

Key takeaways

1. **Visa-Free Entry to Malaysia:** Malaysia has granted visa-free travel to Indian citizens until December 31, 2024, allowing a 30-day stay upon entry. This step aims to attract more Indian tourists, recognizing their increasing visits to Malaysia.





2. **Malaysian Decision's Implications:** Post-COVID recovery strategy in Malaysia prioritizes tourism. The visa-free facility targets Indian and Chinese travelers to bolster tourism and help the country regain its status as a leading tourism destination.
3. **Other Countries Offering Visa-Free Travel:** Sri Lanka and Thailand, neighbouring economies, have also extended visa-free travel to Indians. Sri Lanka's policy seeks to boost tourism amid economic difficulties.
4. **Visa Exemption Categories:** India has visa exemption agreements catering to various passport categories with 34 countries for diplomatic passports and 99 countries for service/official passport holders. Additionally, about 26 countries provide visa-free access to ordinary Indian passport holders, subject to policy changes.
5. **Visa-Free Facilities' Duration and Conditions:** Countries offering visa-free travel to Indians do so for a specific period or advantage. However, security clearance and adherence to immigration protocols remain necessary, as seen in countries like Dominica and El Salvador.
6. **Factors Influencing Visa-Free Policies:** Countries that withdraw visa-free facilities often cite concerns about illegal immigration. Some countries promote e-visa facilities to simplify travel logistics and attract tourists, contributing significantly to their economy.

Mains easy language

Malaysia's recent decision to offer visa-free travel to Indian citizens until the end of 2024 reflects a strategic move to revitalize its tourism industry post-COVID. Aimed at attracting more Indian tourists, this initiative aligns with Malaysia's recovery plan and focuses on enhancing tourism, especially from major Asian economies like India and China.

This move parallels similar initiatives in neighboring economies like Sri Lanka and Thailand, emphasizing tourism as a significant economic driver. India itself has diplomatic agreements with various countries, offering different visa exemptions for diplomatic, service, and ordinary passport holders. However, these visa-free facilities are subject to policy changes and security considerations, and some countries have withdrawn such privileges due to immigration concerns.

E-visa facilities provided by countries like Singapore, Egypt, and Albania serve as attractive alternatives for tourists, simplifying travel procedures and contributing to a nation's tourism-driven economy. Overall, the trend of countries extending visa-free travel or e-visa facilities aims to eliminate travel hassles and foster tourism, highlighting its significance in boosting economies worldwide.

04th December 2023

India, disability inclusion and the power of 'by'-The Hindu Editorial

Sociology

Key Takeaways:

1. **Disability Intersectionality:** Disability intersects with various vulnerabilities—social, economic, and gender-related. Each aspect requires consideration for equitable actions.
2. **Global Disability Statistics:** Around 1.3 billion people globally live with disabilities, with 80% in developing countries and 70% residing in rural areas, facing higher instances of poverty and exclusion.
3. **'By' vs 'For' Approach:** Inclusion of persons with disabilities should involve them as active participants ('by') rather than merely being recipients ('for') in the process.
4. **Economic Impact:** Inclusion of persons with disabilities in the economy can significantly boost global GDP (3% to 7%), as highlighted by the International Labour Organization (ILO).
5. **Challenges in Rural Areas:** Rural areas face additional hurdles for persons with disabilities in accessing education, employment, and developmental schemes, requiring a bottom-up approach for inclusion.
6. **Role of Private Sector:** Private sector engagement is crucial for the employment of persons with disabilities, requiring not just legal frameworks but also confidence-building measures.
7. **SPARK Project Example:** The SPARK project demonstrates the effectiveness of involving persons with disabilities as Disability Inclusion Facilitators (DIFs) in rural areas, creating awareness and fostering economic opportunities.

Mains easy language

The narrative emphasizes the importance of a 'by' approach—actively involving persons with disabilities in processes rather than doing things 'for' them. Inclusion in the economy could significantly enhance global GDP, yet the reality remains mixed due to limited employment opportunities and persistent stereotypes.

Rural areas face amplified challenges where persons with disabilities encounter limited access to education, employment, and inclusive developmental schemes. However, initiatives like the SPARK project showcase the power of engaging and training persons with disabilities as facilitators for inclusion, resulting in attitudinal shifts and economic development.





The roadmap for successful disability inclusion involves a shift in attitudes, increased awareness, and active participation of persons with disabilities in decision-making processes. A fundamental recommitment to inclusive development agendas, with the prioritization of voices and needs of persons with disabilities, is crucial for achieving social justice and meeting Sustainable Development Goals.

On re-criminalising adultery-The Hindu Text and Context

Polity/sociology

Key takeaways

1. **Parliamentary Committee's Recommendation:** The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Home Affairs suggested re-criminalizing adultery on gender-neutral lines to protect the sanctity of marriage, despite the 2018 Supreme Court ruling decriminalizing it.
2. **Supreme Court's 2018 Ruling:** The Supreme Court, in the Joseph Shine case, struck down the provision criminalizing adultery, asserting it as a matter of individual privacy rather than a criminal act. It remained a valid ground for divorce and a civil wrong.
3. **Historical Perspective:** The evolution of the adultery law in India reflects a transition from initial reluctance (Lord Macaulay) to include it as a penal offense to subsequent recommendations (1971 Law Commission) emphasizing societal norms at different periods.
4. **Reasons for Overturning:** The 2018 ruling highlighted flaws in the law, such as undermining individual autonomy and treating women as property. It was considered outdated and incongruent with contemporary constitutional values.
5. **Contrasting Views:** The Committee's stance emphasizes safeguarding the institution of marriage, while critics argue against such intrusion into private lives, considering marriage a personal matter rather than a state-regulated institution.
6. **Legislative Override Possibility:** Although a Supreme Court ruling sets a precedent, the Parliament holds the authority to legislate against it by addressing the legal basis upon which the judgment was made.
7. **Continued Debate:** The issue of re-criminalizing adultery remains contentious, with contrasting opinions between the committee recommending its re-criminalization and dissenting voices advocating for the preservation of individual privacy within marriages.

Mains easy language

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Home Affairs proposed re-criminalizing adultery on gender-neutral grounds, asserting the importance of protecting the sanctity of marriage in Indian society. However, this stands in contrast to the 2018 Supreme Court decision in the Joseph Shine case, which decriminalized adultery, considering it a matter of privacy and individual autonomy.

The legislative history of adultery laws in India reflects evolving perspectives. Lord Macaulay didn't advocate criminalizing adultery initially, but subsequent discussions led to its inclusion, particularly in consideration of women's status within marriage. The 1971 Law Commission suggested retaining the provision, emphasizing societal norms at that time.

The 2018 Supreme Court ruling highlighted the archaic nature of the law and its infringement on individual autonomy and privacy within marriages. It was criticized for treating women as property and was deemed incompatible with contemporary constitutional morality.

The possibility of overturning the Supreme Court ruling through legislation exists. However, any legislative action to revert the judgment must address the flaws pointed out by the court to be considered valid. This includes amending the legal basis upon which the judgment was made, ensuring a fundamental change in the context of the law regarding marriage and individual autonomy.

Why is Facebook Parent Meta suing the U.S. Federal Trade Commission?-The Hindu Text and Context

Polity

Key takeaways

1. **Legal Battle Initiated by Meta:** Meta, formerly Facebook, has taken legal action against the FTC, asserting immediate and irreparable harm caused by attempts to revisit a 2019 privacy settlement, which involved a hefty \$5 billion penalty.
2. **FTC's Allegations:** The FTC accuses Meta of privacy violations, proposing stricter regulations on data collection from minors and limitations on certain technological functionalities, citing Meta's non-compliance with prior terms.
3. **Potential Business Impact:** Proposed changes could significantly restrict Meta's ability to target young users and introduce innovative services. Meta raises concerns about the FTC's actions infringing on its constitutional rights.
4. **Legal Precedent Implications:** If successful, Meta's lawsuit might set a precedent for other tech giants, allowing them to contest regulatory actions. This could reshape how regulatory bodies approach major tech corporations in the future.
5. **Clash between Tech Giants and Regulators:** The lawsuit exemplifies the ongoing conflict between regulatory bodies and prominent tech entities, potentially altering the dynamics of regulatory oversight within the tech industry.





6. **Continued Regulatory Disputes:** Meta's legal challenge underscores the persistent discord between tech giants and regulatory authorities over privacy standards and regulatory compliance, indicating a potential shift in future regulatory practices.
7. **Larger Implications on Tech Regulation:** The outcome of this lawsuit may significantly impact the broader landscape of how regulatory bodies govern major tech companies, possibly influencing the stringency and enforcement of privacy and consumer protection measures.

Mains easy language

Meta's lawsuit against the FTC represents a pivotal clash between tech giants and regulatory bodies. The legal battle centers on the FTC's move to revisit a 2019 privacy settlement, involving a hefty \$5 billion penalty imposed on Meta. The company claims immediate harm from the FTC's actions, alleging violations of its constitutional rights.

The FTC accuses Meta of privacy breaches and proposes stricter regulations, including limits on data collection from minors and curbs on certain tech features. Meta fears these changes will hinder targeting younger users and innovating services, prompting concerns over its constitutional rights.

This legal confrontation may set a precedent for tech corporations contesting regulatory actions, potentially reshaping how regulatory bodies oversee major tech firms. It highlights an ongoing struggle between tech giants and regulators, emphasizing the discord over privacy compliance and regulatory oversight within the industry.

The lawsuit's outcome carries significant implications for tech regulations, potentially influencing the enforcement of privacy standards and consumer protection measures in the future regulatory landscape.

The transformative benefits of population level genome sequencing-The Hindu Science

Science

Key takeaways

1. **Genomic Revolution:** Technological advancements have enabled large-scale genome sequencing, revolutionizing biological sciences by unveiling extensive genetic information for diverse populations.
2. **Global Initiatives:** Countries and organizations worldwide are engaged in significant genome sequencing projects. The UK's completion of half a million genomes set a benchmark, following pioneering programs like deCODE in Iceland.
3. **Diverse Goals:** Population-level genomic efforts aim to understand disease prevalence, biomarkers, and therapeutic targets. These initiatives also focus on implementing precision medicine and public health measures, offering direct healthcare benefits.
4. **Cost Reduction:** Decreasing whole-genome sequencing costs suggest widespread genetic sequencing soon. This could transform routine diagnostics and accessibility to genetic information.
5. **Ethical Challenges:** Despite promises of advancements, ethical concerns persist regarding equitable access, ethical data use, and representation. Some countries have established frameworks to prevent genetic data misuse.
6. **Global Participation:** Asia and India actively contribute to large-scale sequencing. Projects like GenomeAsia and India's IndiGen initiative have uncovered insights into genetic diseases and diverse population responses to drugs.
7. **Future Prospects:** Population-scale genomics is set to revolutionize healthcare, deepen our understanding of human biology and evolution, and shape the landscape of medical knowledge. Individuals' access to their genetic sequences is on the horizon.

Mains easy language

Advancements in genome sequencing have spurred a genomic revolution, with technological progress enabling large-scale sequencing and deciphering extensive genetic data for diverse populations. Countries and organizations globally are engaged in ambitious genome sequencing programs, notably highlighted by the UK's completion of half a million genomes, following pioneering initiatives such as Iceland's deCODE project. These endeavors, driven by population-scale genomic data, seek to unravel disease patterns, identify biomarkers, and pinpoint therapeutic targets, fostering precision medicine and yielding direct healthcare benefits.

The declining costs of whole-genome sequencing hint at its widespread adoption, promising a transformative impact on routine diagnostics and broader accessibility to genetic insights. However, alongside these promises, ethical concerns persist, including issues of equitable access, ethical data utilization, and fair representation within datasets. Some nations have established regulatory frameworks to curb genetic data misuse, emphasizing the importance of ethical governance in genomic research.

Asia, particularly India, actively contributes to large-scale genomic initiatives such as GenomeAsia and India's IndiGen program, revealing valuable insights into genetic diseases and diverse population responses to medications. Looking ahead, population-scale genomics is poised to revolutionize healthcare, deepen our understanding of human biology and evolution, and significantly influence the landscape of medical knowledge. Moreover, the potential for individuals to access and comprehend their own genetic sequences is on the horizon, marking an era of personalized healthcare insights and informed decision-making.





Mizoram: how are poll schedules decided? Indian Express Explained

Polity

Key takeaways

1. **Mizoram Election Delay:** The Election Commission of India (ECI) postponed vote counting in Mizoram from Sunday, December 3, to Monday, December 4, recognizing the state's predominantly Christian population, which typically attends church on Sundays.
2. **Factors in Election Schedules:** Election schedules factor in diverse elements such as security force movements, electronic voting machine (EVM) logistics, religious and national festivals, and the prevailing law and order situation.
3. **ECI's Criteria:** Elections can be notified within six months before Lok Sabha or state Assembly term expiration, with efforts to synchronize multiple state Assembly elections if their terms conclude around the same time.
4. **Current Election Schedule:** Initially, vote counting for five states was planned for December 3. However, due to appeals against conducting counting on a Sunday, Mizoram's counting was shifted to December 4.
5. **Previous Date Changes:** Earlier instances have witnessed changes in election dates due to reasons like social events such as weddings causing potential inconvenience to a considerable number of people, prompting adjustments in the schedule.

Mains easy language

The Election Commission of India (ECI) decided to delay the vote counting in Mizoram by a day, citing the significance of Sundays for the predominantly Christian populace's religious activities, particularly attending church services. The election schedule's formulation involves several considerations, including logistical aspects like security forces' movement and the availability of electronic voting machines (EVMs), along with the avoidance of major festivals and the consideration of law and order situations.

In the recent round of Assembly elections, the ECI initially set December 3 as the counting day across five states. However, after receiving representations to avoid conducting the count on a Sunday, the ECI shifted Mizoram's counting to Monday, December 4. This alteration isn't unprecedented, as previous instances have seen changes in election dates due to various reasons, including societal events like weddings or social engagements causing potential inconvenience to a significant number of people.

What is All India Judicial Service, why it has failed to become a reality-Indian Express Explained

Polity

Key takeaways

1. **AIJS Proposal:** The AIJS is intended to centralize the recruitment of district judges and lower judiciary across all states, similar to how the UPSC handles central recruitment for civil services.
2. **Jurisdiction and Recruitment:** Currently, the selection and appointment of district judges fall under the authority of states, involving State Public Service Commissions and High Courts through separate exams and interviews.
3. **Purpose of AIJS:** The envisioned AIJS aims to standardize the selection process, ensure uniform training, address delays in filling vacancies, and resolve structural issues in the lower judiciary system.
4. **Legal History:** Although the Supreme Court directed the establishment of the AIJS in 1992, subsequent reviews granted liberty to the Centre to initiate steps. In 2017, the SC suggested a "Central Selection Mechanism" for common exams.
5. **Obstacles to Implementation:** The AIJS's realization faces obstacles due to the absence of consensus among stakeholders, disagreements between state governments and High Courts, and differences in opinions on various aspects of its execution.
6. **Persistent Challenges:** Despite multiple recommendations by the Law Commission and parliamentary committees supporting the AIJS, challenges related to eligibility, age criteria, qualification standards, and reservation criteria remain unresolved.
7. **Stalled Progress:** Efforts by the Centre to forge consensus and formulate comprehensive proposals have not materialized due to the lack of unanimous agreement among stakeholders, hindering the AIJS's implementation.

Mains easy language

The All India Judicial Service (AIJS), envisioned to centralize the recruitment of district judges and lower judiciary, has been a subject of debate and deliberation since its proposal in 1958. The AIJS aimed to standardize the recruitment process, ensuring efficiency, uniformity in training, and faster resolution of vacancies in the judiciary across states.

However, despite multiple discussions and recommendations by the Law Commission and Parliamentary committees supporting the idea, the AIJS has faced obstacles. Challenges arose due to conflicting opinions among stakeholders, lack of consensus among state governments and High Courts, and divergent views on various aspects of its implementation, such as eligibility, age, qualification, and reservation criteria.



| Clear your doubts now.



While the Supreme Court has supported the establishment of AIJS and proposed central mechanisms, the proposal's journey to implementation has been marred by disagreements and differing perspectives. Despite efforts by the Centre to seek consensus and come up with comprehensive proposals, the AIJS remains unrealized due to the absence of unanimous agreement among the stakeholders involved.

05th December 2023

A dark shadow on New Delhi's credibility-The Hindu Editorial

International relations

Key takeaways

1. **Credibility Concerns:** The recent U.S. indictment against an Indian national has significantly impacted New Delhi's credibility, raising doubts about both its covert capacities and public messaging.
2. **Legal Challenges and Operations:** India's involvement in various intelligence operations facing legal challenges in friendly countries has brought forth concerns regarding its activities abroad.
3. **Trust Deficit and Information Sharing:** The lack of complete information sharing by the U.S. with India, despite high-level meetings, indicates a significant trust deficit between the two nations, echoing previous instances where critical information was withheld.
4. **Bilateral Relations Strain:** The actions taken by the U.S. and India's varying reactions highlight potential strains in bilateral relations, emphasizing the need for trust-building measures between the countries.
5. **Double Standards in Engagements:** India's differing responses to allegations from different countries suggest a potential double standard in its international engagements, particularly when compared to how Western nations handle similar situations.
6. **Neighborhood Impact:** Neighboring countries are closely observing India's actions, potentially impacting relations with nations like Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, Maldives, etc., necessitating reassurance from India's side.
7. **Image Projection and Values Alignment:** The episode will significantly shape India's global image, either as a risk-taking "hard power" or a proponent of international law and diplomacy, emphasizing the need to align actions with stated values and conduct a thorough investigation.

Mains easy language

The recent U.S. indictment against an Indian national has seriously questioned New Delhi's credibility in covert operations and international relations. Allegations of targeting Khalistani separatists have cast doubts on India's transparency and raised concerns about its activities abroad. Despite high-level talks, the lack of comprehensive information sharing between the U.S. and India highlights a persistent trust gap between the nations, echoing past instances where critical details were withheld.

India's response to different countries' allegations hints at potential double standards in its international engagements. Moreover, this episode's fallout extends to India's standing in neighboring nations, prompting the need to reassure countries like Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, and the Maldives about its activities within their borders.

The enduring impact lies in how India wishes to portray itself globally – as a determined "hard power" willing to confront threats or as a proponent of international norms and values. The Ministry of External Affairs' denial of covert actions aligning with an investigation promises a reevaluation of India's actions against its stated principles. This situation demands careful introspection and efforts to rebuild trust and credibility in India's global engagements.

The need to transform agri-food systems-The Hindu Text and Context

Economics(agriculture)

Key takeaways

1. **FAO Report Insights:** The UN FAO report highlighted global agri-food systems' hidden costs, surpassing \$10 trillion, urging a crucial systemic transformation.
2. **Impact of Intensive Agriculture:** Intensive agriculture methods, like mono-cropping and chemical-intensive practices, led by the Green Revolution, have harmed nutritional diversity, ecology, and increased farmer debt.
3. **Preference for Certain Crops:** Procurement policies heavily favor rice and wheat, neglecting nutritious coarse grains, while promoting water-intensive cash crops, affecting food security and biodiversity.
4. **Global Impact on Local Farmers:** Global trade dynamics affect local farmers' incomes; fluctuations in markets and historical trade relations have impacted food production in India.



| Clear your doubts now.



5. **Role of Crop Diversification:** Crop diversification, especially through agroecology-rooted multi-cropping systems, can rejuvenate lands, support biodiversity, and enhance soil health.
6. **Benefits of Diversification:** Diversification, including millets and other crops, offers nutritional benefits, reduces groundwater pressure, and needs fewer inputs, addressing environmental issues while sustaining farmer incomes.
7. **Transition Challenges:** Shifting to diversified farming requires a systematic approach, gradual adjustment, investment in value addition, and addressing institutional hurdles.
8. **Sustainable Transition Pathways:** Economic modeling suggests diversified farming can improve ecological outcomes and sustain farm incomes, emphasizing the need for local seeds, market access, and institutional support.

Mains easy language

The recent UN FAO report highlighted the staggering hidden costs surpassing \$10 trillion in global agri-food systems, pressing for urgent transformative changes. Intensive farming practices like mono-cropping and chemical-heavy methods, prominent since the Green Revolution, have harmed biodiversity, nutritional diversity, and burdened farmers with high debts.

Policies favoring rice and wheat procurement have sidelined nutritious coarse grains while encouraging water-intensive crops like sugarcane, risking food security and biodiversity. Global trade fluctuations have influenced local farming practices in India, impacting farmers' incomes.

The FAO report advocates for crop diversification, emphasizing agroecology-rooted multi-cropping systems to rejuvenate degraded lands, restore biodiversity, and improve soil health. Diversification, including crops like millets, promises nutritional benefits while reducing water dependency and input needs, addressing environmental concerns and sustaining farmer incomes.

Transitioning to diversified farming demands a systematic shift, gradual adaptation, investment in value addition, and overcoming institutional hurdles. Economic modeling supports diversified farming's potential to improve ecological outcomes and ensure stable farm incomes, stressing the importance of local seeds, market access, and institutional backing. This transition aligns with the FAO's call for urgent and sustainable changes in global agri-food systems.

Mapping the socio-economic changes in the lower Cauvery delta-The Hindu Text and context

Economics

Key takeaways

1. **Rice Cultivation Decline:** The lower Cauvery delta has experienced a decline in rice cultivation due to reduced water availability, impacting various sectors like employment, education, and living conditions.
2. **Crop Pattern Alteration:** Changes in water-sharing arrangements and inadequate agricultural policies have led to shifts in crop patterns, resulting in decreased agricultural productivity.
3. **Persistent Socio-Economic Inequality:** Despite a decrease in oppression, socio-economic inequality persists, notably with landlords owning a significant proportion of land, influencing class and caste dynamics.
4. **Historical Shifts and Present Realities:** Changes in land ownership among Dalits signal a shift, but economic growth hasn't addressed underlying structural issues, contributing to ongoing disparities.
5. **Limited Impact of Economic Growth:** Growth without substantial structural changes has failed to mitigate entrenched socio-economic disparities, particularly regarding class, caste, and gender.
6. **Inadequate Policy Response:** Agricultural and irrigation policies have not adequately addressed challenges arising from water scarcity, exacerbating the decline in agricultural yields.
7. **Need for Structural Reforms:** The study emphasizes the urgency of implementing comprehensive structural reforms to address persistent socio-economic inequalities in rural Tamil Nadu.

Mains easy language

The Foundation for Agrarian Studies delved into the socio-economic landscape of the lower Cauvery delta, focusing on two villages, Palakurichi and Venmani. The decline in rice cultivation, once the region's forte, stemmed from reduced Cauvery water supply, resulting in altered crop patterns and subsequent socio-economic impacts.

Despite improvements in Dalit empowerment and a shift from historic exploitative practices, inequality persists, with landlords dominating land ownership. The study acknowledges historic shifts in production relations but emphasizes the limitations of growth without substantial structural changes, highlighting persistent inequalities in class, caste, and gender.





The volume's sections dissect various facets, including irrigation, landholdings, livelihoods, and the impact of COVID-19. It underscores the necessity for transformative changes to address ingrained socio-economic disparities in rural Tamil Nadu, advocating for comprehensive structural reforms to mitigate persistent inequalities.

CENTRES OF INCLUSION-Indian Express Editorial

Sociology

Key takeaways

1. **Discrimination and Marginalization:** Transgender individuals historically faced discrimination and lacked adequate healthcare due to exclusionary practices like conversion therapy.
2. **Legal Recognition and Challenges:** Legal directives emphasize rights for transgender individuals, but structural barriers persist, hindering access to healthcare despite mandates.
3. **Role of Government Institutions:** Mandates exist for transgender-inclusive facilities, surgeries in government hospitals, and healthcare professional sensitization.
4. **Need for Inclusive Healthcare:** Focus should shift to more Centers of Inclusion at grassroots levels, not solely on Centers of Excellence like AIIMS, to ensure nationwide access.
5. **Critique of Surgery Mandate:** Criticism surrounds the insistence on surgery for legal recognition, contrary to meeting the felt needs of transgender individuals.
6. **Nationwide Access and Compliance:** All government medical institutions should offer gender-affirming services, complying with legal requirements and revising medical curricula for inclusive care.

Mains easy language

The establishment of a Center of Excellence in transgender healthcare at AIIMS, New Delhi, reflects progress in recognizing the healthcare needs of transgender individuals. However, despite legal advancements, challenges persist in accessing adequate healthcare due to exclusionary infrastructure, insufficient services, and a lack of sensitized healthcare professionals. The historical discrimination against transgender individuals has resulted in practices like conversion therapy, exacerbating their healthcare struggles.

While legislative mandates exist for transgender-inclusive facilities and services, their implementation remains inconsistent. The emphasis on sex reassignment surgery for legal recognition contradicts the NALSA judgment, undermining individuals' rights to self-identify without mandatory surgery. This approach risks pressuring individuals into surgery solely for legal recognition, overlooking their actual healthcare needs.

The AIIMS initiative, although commendable, cannot comprehensively address the nationwide healthcare needs of transgender individuals. Shifting the focus to create Centers of Inclusion at grassroots levels in all government medical institutions, ensuring compliance with legal mandates, and sensitizing healthcare providers will better cater to the diverse healthcare needs of transgender individuals across India.

The untold oil stories-Indian Express Editorial

International Relations

Key takeaways

1. **Leaders' Impact on Oil Markets:** The current oil market is significantly influenced by the actions and psychology of influential figures like Benjamin Netanyahu, Joe Biden, and Mohammed bin Salman.
2. **Unexpected Market Stability:** Despite recent geopolitical tensions, oil prices haven't surged as anticipated, attributed to stable supplies, new discoveries, increased US shale production, and decreased Chinese demand.
3. **Leaders' Decisions' Influence:** Netanyahu, Biden, and MBS, facing distinct challenges, possess substantial power to impact the petroleum market due to their geopolitical influence and current circumstances.
4. **Speculated Scenarios:** Imagined hypothetical situations involving these leaders' actions shed light on the unpredictable nature of the oil market, urging preparedness for uncertain outcomes.
5. **Factors Behind Price Fluctuations:** Consideration of future actions, such as building reserves or adapting trading norms, is suggested due to potential oil market fluctuations, whether prices soar or plummet.
6. **Psychological Over Fundamentals:** The focus on geopolitical and psychological aspects over traditional supply-demand fundamentals underlines the current market's complexity and unpredictability.
7. **Need for Contingency Plans:** Emphasizing the importance of preparedness, these speculations prompt the consideration of contingency measures to address possible oil market disruptions, urging proactive strategies.



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Mains easy language

The global oil market is experiencing a notable shift, where the traditional drivers of supply and demand are being overshadowed by the influence of key world leaders like Benjamin Netanyahu, Joe Biden, and Mohammed bin Salman. Despite recent tensions, oil prices haven't surged as anticipated, thanks to steady supplies, discoveries in regions like Brazil and Guyana, rising US shale oil production, and reduced Chinese demand. However, the impact of these leaders' decisions and mindsets appears to wield more control over market dynamics than conventional fundamentals.

Netanyahu, Biden, and MBS, facing distinct challenges and holding significant geopolitical positions, hold substantial power in shaping the petroleum market. The hypothetical scenarios drawn from potential decisions by these leaders underscore the unpredictability inherent in the market, emphasizing the need for readiness and foresight.

In anticipation of potential market fluctuations, proactive strategies are critical. Preparing reserves to withstand price hikes or adjusting trading norms to navigate unforeseen price drops emerge as prudent tactics. Recognizing the complexity of geopolitical and psychological factors, adaptability becomes crucial. Hence, proactive and adaptable strategies are essential to navigate the volatile oil market, ensuring preparedness for disruptions, whether from unexpected price surges or sudden declines. This shift necessitates agile responses and anticipatory actions to effectively navigate the uncertainties, emphasizing the need for readiness in an ever-evolving global oil landscape.

[In Manipur, for lasting peace-Indian Express Editorial](#)

Polity

Key Takeaways:

1. **UNLF Accord in Manipur:** The recent peace accord with UNLF in Manipur marks a positive step towards peace, but the complete terms and its impact remain unknown.
2. **Historical Context:** Peace accords have facilitated normalcy in states like Mizoram and Tripura, yet Nagaland and Manipur still await comprehensive resolutions, posing challenges.
3. **Fragmented Insurgent Groups:** Within UNLF, divisions persist, notably with the emergence of the Pambei faction, leading to uncertainties regarding the agreement's success.
4. **Hurdles to Lasting Peace:** Significant challenges include the abundance of looted arms, the involvement of militants in ongoing conflicts, and withdrawal of criminal cases.
5. **Diverse Stakeholder Demands:** Multiple ethnic and tribal groups in regions like Manipur pose challenges due to varied historical grievances, aspirations, and demands, complicating resolution efforts.
6. **Implementation Challenges:** Peace agreements face fragility due to historical distrust, government commitment concerns, external influences, and the potential for disruptions by extremist factions.
7. **Call for Comprehensive Efforts:** A holistic approach involving political negotiations, stakeholder engagement, and addressing displacement and criminal cases is vital to achieving lasting peace in Manipur.

Mains easy language

The recent peace accord between the government and UNLF in Manipur signifies a positive step towards peace. However, the full agreement's terms and its impact remain unclear, especially amidst divisions within UNLF. Manipur, a state fraught with ethnic and tribal complexities, faces challenges in resolving historical grievances and diverse demands from different groups, making comprehensive peace elusive.

Implementing peace agreements in Manipur encounters hurdles like abundant looted arms, ongoing conflicts involving militants, and the withdrawal of criminal cases. Additionally, historical distrust in the government's commitment and external influences complicate peace efforts. A comprehensive approach involving political negotiations, stakeholder engagement, addressing displacement, and prosecuting criminal cases is crucial to establish lasting peace in the region.

The fragility of peace accords, vulnerability to disruptions by extremist factions, and the multitude of divergent interests among stakeholders necessitate a holistic and concerted effort to navigate the complex dynamics and achieve sustainable peace in Manipur.

[The fossil fuel question-Indian Express Explained](#)

Environment

Key Takeaways:

1. **Fossil Fuel Impact:** Fossil fuels contribute to 80% of greenhouse gas emissions, yet past COP conferences have overlooked their role in global warming.





2. **Potential Change:** Sultan Al Jaber's remarks at COP28 might introduce a reference to fossil fuel phase-down in the conference's outcome, challenging the norm of disregarding their impact.
3. **Controversy Surrounding Al Jaber:** Al Jaber's roles as a minister in the UAE government and CEO of an oil company sparked controversies regarding potential conflicts of interest.
4. **Fossil Fuel Debate:** Efforts to cut emissions often neglect the core issue of fossil fuel usage, focusing instead on reducing energy consumption and improving efficiencies.
5. **Current Climate Actions' Impact:** Ongoing efforts are projected to reduce emissions by only 2% from 2019 levels by 2030, falling drastically short of the necessary 43% reduction to limit global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius.
6. **Renewable Energy vs. Fossil Fuels:** While renewable energy installations are increasing, they often cater to rising demands, and the shift from fossil fuels is not happening swiftly enough.
7. **India's Stand:** India's call for a phase-down of fossil fuels at COP27 faced challenges and eventually was not pursued vigorously at COP28, despite initial support from influential nations.

Mains easy language

Fossil fuels are the primary contributors to greenhouse gas emissions, yet they have evaded explicit acknowledgement in climate conferences for decades. Sultan Al Jaber's recent remarks at COP28 might usher in a monumental shift by possibly including a reference to phase-down fossil fuels in the conference's outcome – a departure from the long-standing silence on their impact.

Despite this potential shift, the controversy surrounding Al Jaber's dual roles and conflicts of interest due to his position as both a minister in the UAE government and the CEO of an oil company has raised skepticism. Efforts to address emissions have traditionally focused on energy consumption and efficiencies, largely sidestepping the issue of fossil fuel usage.

Current climate actions are insufficient, aiming to reduce emissions by a mere 2%, falling far short of the necessary 43% reduction by 2030. While renewable energy installations are on the rise, the transition from fossil fuels lacks speed. India's push for fossil fuel phase-down at COP27 faced challenges, and despite initial support, it wasn't actively pursued at COP28.

This potential inclusion of fossil fuel phase-down in the COP28 outcome signifies a groundbreaking shift. However, it poses challenges as major economies heavily reliant on fossil fuels may resist specific commitments. The specifics and schedules of any phase-down proposal are likely to undergo intense negotiations, emphasizing the complexities and significance of this potential shift in climate talks.

[Why is Cyclone Michaung, headed to Andhra coast, an unusual storm? - Indian Express Explained](#)

Geography

Key takeaways

1. **Uncommon Timing:** Cyclone Michaung's occurrence during December is unusual as high-intensity cyclones during this time are infrequent due to typically unfavorable oceanic conditions.
2. **Storm Intensity:** Initially labeled a 'tropical cyclone,' Michaung intensified unexpectedly to a 'severe' storm with wind speeds ranging from 88 to 166 kph.
3. **Cyclone Patterns:** Cyclone activity in the North Indian Ocean basin is typically observed during pre-monsoon (April-June) and post-monsoon (October-December) months, with May and November seeing more intense storms.
4. **Oceanic Influence:** Warm ocean temperatures significantly contribute to cyclone development and intensification, alongside other atmospheric conditions, notably Tropical Cyclone Heat Potential (TCHP).
5. **Expected Impact:** The IMD's warnings encompass heavy to extremely heavy rainfall, potential crop damage, storm surges, and strong winds, primarily affecting multiple districts of Andhra Pradesh.
6. **Rare Event:** The unusual intensity and timing of Cyclone Michaung's landfall pose a significant concern, defying the typical patterns of cyclone formation and behavior in the North Indian Ocean.

Mains easy language

Cyclone Michaung's impending landfall on the Andhra Pradesh coast, anticipated between Nellore and Machilipatnam, draws attention due to its uncommon occurrence in December. Typically, this time of the year doesn't witness storms of such destructive intensities in the North Indian Ocean region. Initially classified as a 'tropical cyclone,' Michaung unexpectedly escalated into a 'severe' storm with wind speeds surging from 88 to 166 kph, contrary to meteorological projections.

The North Indian Ocean basin generally encounters cyclones during pre-monsoon and post-monsoon months, with May and November recording more intense storms. Warm ocean temperatures, specifically above 26 degrees Celsius at considerable depths, provide conducive





conditions for cyclone formation, playing a crucial role in their rapid intensification at sea. Factors such as Tropical Cyclone Heat Potential (TCHP), atmospheric conditions, boundary layers, windshear, and air-sea interactions significantly contribute to the complex process of storm intensification.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) issued warnings of heavy to extremely heavy rainfall, potential crop damage, storm surges, and strong winds across several districts in Andhra Pradesh, emphasizing the likelihood of widespread inundation and adverse impacts on agriculture. The storm's atypical timing, unexpected intensification, and imminent effects underscore the departure from conventional cyclone patterns, necessitating heightened vigilance and preparedness in the affected regions.

06th December 2023

'VOWS FOR THE PLANET'-Indian Express Editorial

Environment

Key takeaways

1. **India's Clean Energy Ambition:** India aims to lead as the first major economy to achieve developed country status through a significant transition to clean energy sources.
2. **Global Impact of India's Actions:** India's policy decisions and emissions reduction targets are crucial not only for its own vulnerability to climate change but also for achieving the collective global goal of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius.
3. **UK-India Collaboration:** Both countries are working together extensively on research, policies, and technologies to promote renewables, green hydrogen, sustainable mobility, and mutual investments in each other's green transitions.
4. **Support for Developing Nations:** Developed nations, including the UK, are committed to supporting countries like India in building solutions and responding to climate change impacts through significant financial pledges and international climate finance.
5. **Biodiversity Conservation:** Collaboration efforts extend to reversing biodiversity loss, showcased by Indian companies like S4S Technologies receiving support for their innovative solutions benefiting farmers and the environment.
6. **Call for Action at COP28:** Emphasizing the urgent need for collective commitment from all countries to limit temperature rise, transition away from fossil fuels, protect nature, build resilience against climate disasters, and accelerate climate finance.
7. **Leadership Role of UK and India:** Both countries are positioned to lead by example, showcasing India's clean energy transition and the UK's emissions reduction efforts as models for global climate action and sustainability.

Mains easy language

The main synopsis centers on India's pivotal shift towards clean energy, aligning with global climate goals. India's pursuit of developed status through clean energy adoption is not only crucial for its resilience but also essential in the global effort to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius, a target set by the Paris Agreement.

The collaboration between the UK and India spans various facets, encompassing renewable energy, technological innovations, and reciprocal investments. This partnership aims to expedite the adoption of renewable energy sources, champion green hydrogen, and advance sustainable mobility. Moreover, the UK's commitment to increased international climate finance, alongside initiatives like supporting S4S Technologies, highlights a broader commitment to aiding vulnerable nations and biodiversity conservation.

The urgency for collective action at COP28 underscores the imperative need to limit temperature rise, transition from fossil fuels, and accelerate climate finance. India's strides in clean energy and the UK's emission reductions stand as global exemplars, inspiring other nations to join the collective fight against climate change. This collaboration demonstrates how concerted efforts and shared commitments can drive meaningful progress towards a sustainable future.

THE CRIME STORY'-Indian Express Editorial

sociology

Key Takeaways:

1. **NCRB's Disturbing Trends:** The latest NCRB report shows a troubling surge in crimes against women, children, senior citizens, Scheduled Castes, and Scheduled Tribes, alongside increased suicides and cybercrimes in 2022.
2. **Limitations of NCRB Data:** Acknowledging its data reflects registered, not actual, crime numbers, the report aids policymakers and law enforcement despite its limitations.
3. **Focus on Vulnerable Sections:** NCRB consistently highlights vulnerabilities of marginalized groups, urging policymakers to prioritize safety for women, children, and senior citizens in various spaces.



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4. **Caveats and Under-reporting:** While increased crime numbers might stem from awareness or enforcement, concerns remain about under-reporting, particularly in cases involving acquaintances.
5. **Need for Nuanced Reporting:** NCRB must refine methods to capture true crime extent, considering socio-economic factors affecting reporting accuracy.
6. **Cybercrime Concerns:** Rising cybercrimes emphasize the need for proactive measures by law enforcement to address digital threats.
7. **Adapting to Challenges:** NCRB needs to evolve, engaging in discussions about leveraging digital systems for crime prevention and investigation while addressing existing challenges effectively.

Mains easy language

The recent NCRB report highlights a concerning surge in various crimes against vulnerable groups—women, children, senior citizens, Scheduled Castes, and Scheduled Tribes—alongside increased suicides and cybercrimes in 2022. However, the report emphasizes that its data reflects registered, not actual, crime numbers, underscoring the need for cautious interpretation by policymakers and law enforcement. The consistent focus on vulnerabilities of marginalized sections urges policymakers to prioritize creating safer environments for these groups, emphasizing the safety of women, children, and senior citizens in different settings. While increased crime numbers might stem from factors like heightened awareness or law enforcement presence, concerns persist regarding under-reporting, particularly in cases involving acquaintances or close circles. To improve accuracy, NCRB must refine its methodologies, considering socio-economic factors influencing reporting accuracy. The escalating threat of cybercrimes calls for proactive measures by law enforcement to combat digital threats effectively. Additionally, NCRB should adapt to evolving challenges, engaging in discussions about leveraging digital systems for crime prevention and investigation while addressing existing challenges with nuanced solutions.

India & geopolitics of AI-Indian Express Editorial

International relations

Key takeaways

1. **AI and Nuclear History Comparison:** The discussion juxtaposes the geopolitics of Artificial Intelligence (AI) with historical parallels from the nuclear era, highlighting similarities and disparities in their emergence and potential impact.
2. **AI Governance Challenges:** Governing AI involves managing geopolitical rivalries, preventing misuse, and establishing international norms, akin to challenges faced during the nuclear age. Calls for bans on military AI and freezes on research echo past concerns.
3. **US-China AI Dominance:** US-China agreements and rivalries dominate AI discussions, mirroring the superpower dynamics observed during the nuclear era. Both nations strive to control military AI advancements while impeding each other's progress.
4. **Global Norms and Coalitions:** Efforts to establish international norms for AI governance are underway, similar to past endeavors in nuclear regulation. Initiatives like the GPAI aim to foster global collaboration in discussing AI's implications.
5. **India's Nuclear History and AI Lesson:** India's nuclear past provides valuable lessons for navigating the complexities of AI governance. Emphasizing the importance of building strong domestic AI capabilities and leveraging international partnerships is essential.
6. **Private Sector's Role in AI Development:** Recognizing the pivotal role of the private sector in AI research, development, and innovation, highlighting the need for India to reform its technology sector to keep pace globally.
7. **Avoiding Past Mistakes in AI Development:** The discussion urges India to avoid past mistakes made during its nuclear posturing in the 1970s. Stressing the urgency of building robust AI capabilities without falling into the trap of exceptionalism.

Mains easy language

The discussion centers on the intersection of India's nuclear history and the current geopolitics of Artificial Intelligence (AI). It juxtaposes these domains, highlighting similarities and disparities in their emergence and potential impacts. The governance challenges in AI echo past concerns faced during the nuclear age, involving managing global tensions, preventing misuse, and establishing international norms.

US-China dynamics dominate the AI landscape, mirroring the historical superpower rivalry observed during the nuclear era. Both nations aim to lead in military AI while hindering each other's progress. Efforts to forge global AI norms and coalitions, such as the Global Partnership for Artificial Intelligence (GPAI), resemble past endeavors in nuclear regulation, aiming for international collaboration in AI governance.

Drawing from India's nuclear history, the discourse emphasizes vital lessons for navigating the complexities of AI governance. It stresses the urgency of building robust domestic AI capabilities and leveraging international partnerships. Additionally, the discussion underscores the critical role of the private sector in AI research and innovation, prompting India to reform its technology sector to stay globally competitive.

Overall, the dialogue urges India to learn from past nuclear mistakes and avoid similar pitfalls in AI development. It emphasizes the need for India to focus on building strong AI capabilities without falling into the trap of exceptionalism, recognizing the universal nature of science and technology.





This flood, that flood: Deluge in Chennai and memories of 2015-Indian Express Explained

Geography

Key takeaways

1. **Recent Flood Causes:** Chennai's recent floods were a result of Cyclone Michaung's impact, intensified by its closeness to the Tamil Nadu coast, slow movement, and heavy rainfall.
2. **Comparison with 2015:** Unlike the 2015 floods triggered by sudden water discharge from Chembarambakkam Lake, the recent deluge was directly linked to Cyclone Michaung's rainfall.
3. **Factors Amplifying Impact:** The severity of the recent flooding was intensified by the cyclonic system's proximity to the coast, slow movement, and continued intensification, resulting in heavy and prolonged rainfall.
4. **2015 Mismanagement Criticism:** The 2015 floods faced criticism due to the sudden discharge from Chembarambakkam Lake without adequate public warning, causing chaos and widespread destruction.
5. **Improved Lake Management:** During the recent rainfall, the Water Resources Department monitored Chembarambakkam Lake closely and gradually released water, preventing a crisis akin to 2015 by avoiding sudden discharge.
6. **Direct Cause of Recent Flood:** The current flood resulted directly from Cyclone Michaung's rainfall, differentiating it from the 2015 flood caused by sudden and unprepared water discharge.
7. **Reservoir Contributions to Flooding:** Controlled releases from Chembarambakkam and Poondi reservoirs contributed to the city's flood challenges during the recent rainfall.

Mains easy language

The recent flooding in Chennai, triggered by Cyclone Michaung, evoked memories of a similar crisis in 2015, yet with significant differences in causes and management. Cyclone Michaung's impact, exacerbated by its proximity to the Tamil Nadu coast, slow movement, and intensified rainfall, led to severe inundation.

In contrast, the 2015 floods stemmed from mismanaged water discharge from Chembarambakkam Lake, without adequate warnings, causing chaos and destruction. The comparison highlights improved management strategies in the recent crisis, where the Water Resources Department vigilantly monitored the lake, gradually releasing water to avert a similar catastrophe.

While the recent flooding was primarily due to Cyclone Michaung's rainfall, controlled reservoir releases added to the city's flooding challenge. This comparison underscores advancements in lake management and strategic water release, mitigating crises caused by sudden water discharge, and delineates the evolving strategies to handle natural disasters in Chennai.

Sensex, GDP, and elections-Indian Express Explained

Economy

Key takeaways

1. **Economic Indicators and Elections:** The correlation between rising economic indicators like GDP growth and stock market returns with an incumbent's election victory isn't straightforward.
2. **Recent Developments:** India's GDP growth of 7.6% in the second quarter, BJP's victories in state elections, and the stock market hitting record highs are seen as indicators of political and policy stability.
3. **GDP Growth and Election Outcomes:** Mapping India's GDP growth rate since 1991, there's no consistent correlation between higher GDP growth and an incumbent's victory or defeat in elections.
4. **Sensex Performance and Elections:** The movement of the Sensex, though reflective of investors' sentiments, doesn't consistently predict election outcomes. Positive or negative annual Sensex returns don't necessarily forecast the incumbent's success or loss in elections.
5. **GDP Growth vs. Election Results:** Several instances in the past three decades contradict the assumption that robust GDP growth ensures an incumbent's re-election, as incumbents lost despite improving GDP rates.
6. **Sensex Performance vs. Elections:** There's no reliable pattern linking annual Sensex performance to election results, as good or bad years in the stock market haven't consistently favored or opposed the incumbent.
7. **Economic Indicators and Electoral Influence:** Contrary to popular belief, India's elections often demonstrate that the economy doesn't always dictate voting behaviours or election outcomes.

Mains easy language





The article delves into the relationship between economic indicators, such as GDP growth and stock market performance, and their predictive value regarding electoral outcomes in India. Recent events like India's robust GDP growth, the BJP's victories in state elections, and the surge in stock markets have sparked discussions about their impact on the incumbent's chances in elections.

Examining the historical data spanning three decades, the article challenges the conventional belief that higher GDP growth or positive Sensex returns ensure electoral success for the ruling party. It illustrates instances where despite strong GDP growth, incumbent governments faced defeat in elections, while good or bad years in the stock market didn't consistently influence electoral outcomes.

The analysis provides a nuanced view, emphasizing that economic indicators alone may not determine voting behaviors or guarantee victory for the incumbent. It highlights the intricate nature of Indian elections, demonstrating that the electorate's decisions aren't solely driven by economic performance, challenging the notion of a direct link between economic indicators and electoral results.

[The Ambedkar touch in rethinking social justice policies-The Hindu Editorial](#)

Social Justice

Key takeaways

1. **Ambedkar's Vision:** Babasaheb Ambedkar envisaged an India where historically marginalized groups, particularly Dalits and Adivasis, actively partake in the nation's growth as equal stakeholders.
2. **Contemporary Challenges:** Despite some strides, marginalized communities still struggle to secure meaningful representation and participation in power structures, echoing Ambedkar's concerns.
3. **Ambedkar's Ethical Framework:** Ambedkar's principles serve as a moral compass, critiquing the present-day neglect of Dalits and Adivasis within the neo-liberal economy and advocating for institutional reforms grounded in ethical values.
4. **Market Economy and Exclusivity:** The current economic model predominantly favors a select corporate elite, sidelining the aspirations and needs of marginalized groups like Dalits and Adivasis, leaving them at the periphery.
5. **Reimagining Social Justice:** To ensure a more just society, policies must extend beyond tokenism, striving to democratize and elevate the status of marginalized communities, thus rectifying past injustices.
6. **Economic Inclusion:** Empowering Dalits and Adivasis as leaders and active contributors to industrial growth will bolster their influence and contribute to economic diversification.
7. **State Responsibilities:** There's a pressing need for the state to embrace a more proactive role, implementing welfare policies and fostering economic opportunities to integrate marginalized groups into the economic fabric.

Mains easy language

The article explores the disparity between Ambedkar's vision of inclusive development for historically marginalized communities and the contemporary reality where neo-liberal economic structures fail to address their concerns. It critiques the tokenistic representation of Dalits and Adivasis in power circles and emphasizes the need for a redefined social justice framework that integrates these groups into the economic mainstream.

Highlighting Ambedkar's ethical approach, the piece stresses the importance of ethical corrective measures to democratize institutions and ensure substantive participation of marginalized communities in economic development. It advocates for policies that move beyond welfare packages to empower Dalits and Adivasis as influential contributors to industrial growth, emphasizing their role as essential components of urbanization and technological innovation.

Additionally, it calls for a redefined role for the state, urging it to adopt welfarist measures and deviate from being a passive associate of big businesses. Instead, the state should uphold its transformative role, ensuring economic inclusivity for Dalits and Adivasis, thereby redefining capitalism as a cooperative mode of economic order that guarantees their substantive participation in the economy and associated institutions of power.

[The journey towards a plastic-free world -The Hindu Text and Context](#)

Environment

Key takeaways

1. **INC-3 Discussions:** The Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) deliberated during its third round to craft a binding treaty by 2025 to combat global plastic pollution.
2. **Zero Draft Revisions:** Initially robust, the 'zero draft' proposed strict measures for a treaty targeting plastic production, trade, and financial mechanisms. However, member states diluted core obligations during negotiations.



| Clear your doubts now.



3. **Objective Disputes:** Nations largely supported the treaty's aim to end plastic pollution but diverged on adding clauses for sustainable development and economic interests.
4. **Provision Contentions:** Debates surrounded plastic production cuts, lifecycle definition, regulation of problematic compounds, financial strategies, and trade restrictions.
5. **Industry Influence:** Industry lobbying influenced talks, challenging efforts to limit plastic production. Some states rejected measures they deemed beyond the resolution's mandate.
6. **National Divergence:** Discord arose due to varied national priorities, hampering unified treaty formulation.
7. **Challenges Faced:** INC-3 encountered delays, lacked consensus on crucial aspects, and didn't conduct intersessional work, impeding goal setting for the treaty's execution.

Mains easy language

The Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) had discussions about creating a global rule to reduce plastic pollution. This was a critical meeting under the UN to develop a treaty for managing plastic waste around the world. The draft of this treaty, called the 'zero draft', was proposed with strict rules to control plastic pollution. However, during discussions, countries disagreed on many key points, resulting in a weaker set of rules.

The initial draft proposed strong measures like reducing the production of certain types of plastics and limiting trade in plastic items. But during the discussions, some countries disagreed on these strict measures. They wanted more flexibility and didn't want to reduce plastic production as much as the draft suggested. Similarly, there were disagreements about how much control the treaty should have over the trade of plastic items.

Additionally, countries couldn't agree on how to manage the money needed to implement these rules. Some nations were not in favor of certain financial strategies that would have helped control plastic pollution.

The talks faced delays and didn't come to a clear agreement on important topics. This affected the progress of creating a concrete plan to manage plastic waste worldwide. Overall, the discussions highlighted disagreements among countries and industries about how strict the rules should be to tackle the global plastic pollution problem.

Understanding how the Global Positioning System (GPS) works-The Hindu Text and Context

Science and technology

Key Takeaways:

1. **GPS Revolution:** Global Positioning System (GPS) has brought a revolutionary change, impacting various sectors from military operations to everyday applications like agriculture, logistics, and air travel.
2. **GPS Components:** Comprising three segments—space, control, and user—GPS involves 24 satellites orbiting Earth, control stations to monitor and maintain satellite performance, and multiple applications across sectors.
3. **GPS Functionality:** Satellites continuously broadcast signals detailing their location and time, enabling receivers (like in smartphones) to calculate precise distances, using signals from at least four satellites to determine exact positions.
4. **Error Adjustments:** GPS accounts for factors like gravitational potential and relative velocities between satellites and receivers, ensuring accurate measurements. Errors in timekeeping can lead to significant location discrepancies.
5. **Atomic Clocks:** Satellites use highly precise atomic clocks, synchronized to within nanoseconds, crucial for maintaining accurate timing, as even a small offset can lead to substantial location errors.
6. **Global Navigation Systems:** Countries like Russia (GLONASS), EU (Galileo), China (BeiDou), and India (NavIC) operate their Global Navigation Satellite Systems (GNSS), each with unique features and coverage areas.
7. **International Cooperation:** Various global committees facilitate cooperation among different GNSS systems to ensure compatibility and harmonious operation, benefitting various sectors worldwide.

Mains easy language

The Global Positioning System (GPS) stands as a game-changer across diverse sectors, revolutionizing how we determine locations and navigate. Originating from the U.S. Defense Department in 1973, GPS's modern constellation consists of 24 satellites, forming a critical space segment.

The system's functionality lies in broadcasting radio signals from satellites to receivers, enabling precise distance calculations for accurate positioning. Highly precise atomic clocks on satellites maintain synchronized timing crucial for accurate location determination.





Besides the US GPS, other countries operate their navigation systems, such as Russia's GLONASS, the EU's Galileo, and India's NavIC. Global cooperation among these systems ensures compatibility, benefiting various industries, including aviation, agriculture, and logistics, among others.

GPS remains pivotal not just in everyday navigation but also in critical sectors like military operations, disaster management, and scientific studies. The system's continued evolution and international collaboration promise further advancements and broader applications in the future.

07th December 2023

Navigating the U.S.China relationship-The Hindu Text and Context

International relations

Key takeaways

1. **Restored Military Communication:** Biden and Xi agreed to restore crucial military-to-military communications, aiming to prevent potential nuclear misunderstandings.
2. **Taiwan's Contentious Status:** Disagreement persists over Taiwan, with the U.S. providing security support while China sees it as part of its territory.
3. **Economic Hostility:** Both nations engage in trade disputes, imposing bans and restrictions, notably in critical technology sectors like semiconductors.
4. **Technological Competition:** Intense rivalry exists in high-tech sectors, with efforts to undermine each other's technological advancements, especially in AI and semiconductors.
5. **Shift towards Coexistence:** Despite tensions, a subtle shift towards pragmatic coexistence is visible, emphasizing managing differences rather than complete separation.
6. **Continued Strategic Approach:** Biden's administration deals with China's global rise strategically, with nuanced shifts in handling the complex relationship.
7. **Risk Mitigation in Relations:** Efforts focus on maintaining communication channels to prevent severe misunderstandings and reduce the risk of escalating tensions dangerously.

Mains easy language

The recent summit between U.S. President Joe Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping aimed to address the escalating tensions between the two nations. A crucial outcome was the agreement to reinstate military-to-military communications, crucial in preventing potentially catastrophic misunderstandings between nuclear powers. However, the status of Taiwan remains a significant point of contention, with the U.S. providing security assurances while China asserts its sovereignty over the island.

The economic front reflects ongoing hostility, with both countries engaging in trade disputes and imposing bans and restrictions, particularly in critical technology sectors such as semiconductors and AI. This technological competition underscores efforts by both nations to undermine each other's advancements, further intensifying the rivalry.

Despite these tensions, a subtle shift is observed towards pragmatic coexistence rather than complete disengagement. There's an apparent inclination toward managing differences and reducing risks in the relationship. The Biden administration's strategic approach to China echoes previous policies but shows nuanced shifts, reflecting an ongoing attempt to handle this complex dynamic.

Efforts are underway to maintain communication channels and mitigate risks in bilateral relations. The focus remains on preventing severe misunderstandings that could dangerously escalate tensions between the two superpowers.

The role of special inquiry committees of Parliament-The Hindu Text and Context

Polity

Key takeaways

1. **Ethics Committee's Role:** The Lok Sabha's ethics committee investigates alleged unethical conduct by members. The term 'unethical' isn't explicitly defined, leaving its interpretation to the committee, which presents reports to the Speaker after prima facie inquiries.
2. **Privileges Committees:** Committees like the privileges committee examine serious accusations against members. Past instances, such as the 2005 'cash for query' scam, led to MPs being recommended for expulsion based on committee findings.
3. **Constitutional Grounds for Expulsion:** The Constitution doesn't explicitly state expulsion as a ground for an MP's seat vacation. There's conflicting Supreme Court precedent regarding Parliament's authority to expel members for breach of privilege.





4. **Balancing Privileges and Representation:** Mahua Moitra's 'cash for query' accusation raises concerns about the appropriateness of expulsion as punishment. Balancing the House's privileges with democratic representation is crucial in such cases.
5. **Judicial Oversight and Trial:** Parliamentary proceedings lack the depth of judicial cases. While the ethics committee suggested a legal inquiry and the CBI began a preliminary inquiry, proposing fast-track courts for expedited 60-day trials could ensure a fair resolution.

Mains easy language

The ethics committee of the Lok Sabha recommended the expulsion of Trinamool Congress MP Mahua Moitra, citing alleged unethical conduct and breach of privileges. This committee, established in 2000, investigates complaints of unethical behavior by members and refers reports to the Speaker after initial inquiries. Additionally, privileges committees, such as the one that probed the 2005 'cash for query' scandal, handle serious allegations against members.

However, the Constitution lacks explicit grounds for expulsion, leading to conflicting Supreme Court interpretations regarding Parliament's power to expel members for breaching privileges. The current situation prompts questions about whether expulsion serves as a proportionate response to allegations like 'cash for query', especially concerning its impact on democratic representation.

Amidst this, ensuring fair trials becomes essential. Despite committee recommendations and preliminary inquiries by entities like the CBI, the parliamentary process lacks the depth of judicial proceedings. Suggesting the establishment of fast-track courts for swift 60-day trials could guarantee a balanced resolution that upholds both parliamentary privileges and democratic principles.

Who is responsible for farming's impact on the environment?-The Hindu Science

Economics(agriculture)

Key takeaways

1. **Agriculture's Impact:** International demand for India's agricultural produce strains domestic soil and water resources, while the nation's vast consumer market drives land usage outside its borders.
2. **Trade and Environmental Consequences:** Global trade in agricultural goods displaces environmental impacts, challenging the achievement of sustainability goals.
3. **Production vs. Consumption-based Accounting:** Current methods focus on production-based accounting, but consumption-based approaches attribute impacts to consumers, emphasizing the need for sustainable consumption habits.
4. **Responsibility and Equity:** Consumption-based accounting shifts responsibility from producers to consumers, highlighting the role of developed nations and advocating for fairness in global climate governance.
5. **Supply and Demand Perspectives:** Encouraging cleaner production and higher standards, consumption-based accounting incentivizes producer countries to reduce environmental footprints.
6. **Benefits and Challenges:** Despite aiding in estimating emissions and water use, implementing consumption-based accounting faces hurdles related to oversight and compliance.

Mains easy language

The international demand for agricultural goods places significant strain on India's natural resources, impacting soil and water quality. This demand-driven scenario amplifies both local and global environmental concerns, necessitating an evolved approach in measuring environmental impacts.

Presently, production-based accounting attributes environmental consequences to where products are produced. However, consumption-based accounting offers a different perspective, advocating for attributing impact at the point of consumption. This approach shifts responsibility from producers to consumers, emphasizing the role of developed nations in mitigating environmental impacts.

The consumption-based approach not only underscores the responsibilities of industrialized states but also safeguards developing economies like India from carrying disproportionate burdens. By promoting sustainable consumption practices, this approach creates an opportunity for coordinated global action while allowing developing nations space to enhance their agricultural systems.

Though challenging to implement, consumption-based accounting serves as a diagnostic tool for assessing impactful consumption patterns, both domestically and internationally. Its focus on consumers encourages individual and collective changes in consumption behavior, potentially fostering a more sustainable global agricultural trade system.

Climate change is making the world sick-The Hindu Science

Environment

Key Takeaways:





1. **Climate Change and Health:** Climate change is adversely impacting public health, leading to heat stress, respiratory issues due to wildfire smoke, and the expansion of disease-carrying mosquitoes into new territories.
2. **Global Health Threats:** Climate-driven health threats, including malnutrition, malaria, dengue, diarrhea, and heat stress, are anticipated to elevate global death tolls by 250,000 annually from 2030, as forecasted by the World Health Organization (WHO).
3. **Mosquito-borne Diseases:** Warmer temperatures and heavy rains are facilitating the spread of mosquitoes carrying diseases such as dengue, malaria, West Nile, and Zika. Reported cases of dengue and malaria have significantly increased due to favorable breeding conditions.
4. **Impact on Diseases:** Climate change has disrupted the pattern of diseases like malaria, leading to more cases in previously unaffected regions. Cholera cases, declining for years, have resurged due to environmental factors like cyclones, floods, and droughts.
5. **Erratic Rainfall and Diarrhea:** Climate-induced erratic rainfall contributes to diarrhea cases, a major cause of death among children under 5, affecting more than half a million children annually.
6. **Heat Stress:** Rising temperatures due to climate change have resulted in heat stress for millions of people, with projections indicating a significant increase in heat-related deaths as temperatures continue to climb.
7. **Wildfires and Dryness:** Elevated temperatures have intensified wildfires globally, creating drier conditions in forests and contributing to extensive fire outbreaks.

Mains easy language

Climate change is profoundly impacting public health, evidenced by an array of health challenges like heat stress, increased respiratory issues from wildfires, and the expansion of disease-carrying mosquitoes into new territories. This issue has received unprecedented attention at the annual U.N. climate summit COP28, where government ministers aim to deliberate on strategies to protect communities from climate-driven health threats.

Estimates from the WHO indicate that malnutrition, malaria, dengue, diarrhea, and heat stress could escalate global death tolls by a quarter of a million annually from 2030 onwards. Mosquito-borne diseases have surged due to warmer temperatures, leading to significant increases in reported cases of dengue and malaria. Climate change disruptions have caused a resurgence in cholera cases and amplified diarrhea due to erratic rainfall patterns, especially impacting children under 5 years old.

Rising temperatures have induced heat stress, affecting millions globally, with projections indicating a potential quadrupling of yearly heat-related deaths if temperatures rise by 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. Furthermore, heightened temperatures have exacerbated wildfires across various regions due to increased forest dryness, adding to the multifaceted health risks posed by climate change.

BIGGER & BETTER-Indian Express Editorial

Economy

Key takeaways

1. **India's Economic Growth:** Recent GDP growth at 7.6% suggests a promising medium-term outlook, potentially positioning India as the world's third-largest economy by 2030.
2. **IMF Projections:** India's economy is forecasted to grow from \$3.7 trillion to \$5.9 trillion by 2028, while China's growth is expected to slow down during the same period.
3. **Global Supply Chain Shift:** India, Vietnam, and Mexico are poised to benefit from the global supply chain's diversification away from China, presenting India with a chance to become a major global manufacturing hub.
4. **Infrastructure and Skill Development:** Developing robust logistics infrastructure and enhancing workforce skills, especially by increasing female labor force participation, are crucial for India to capitalize on its demographic dividend.
5. **Emerging Economic Leadership:** India's potential economic ascent positions it among the fastest-growing emerging markets, signifying a significant opportunity for sustained growth and global economic influence.

Mains easy language

India's economic landscape demonstrates promising indicators, highlighted by the recent 7.6% GDP growth, affirming a favorable trajectory for medium-term expansion. Forecasts suggest India may ascend to the world's third-largest economy by 2030, underlining its potential economic ascent. These projections, supported by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), anticipate India's economic growth from \$3.7 trillion to \$5.9 trillion by 2028, juxtaposed against a projected slowdown in China's growth during the same period.

The evolving global dynamics, notably the reshuffling of global supply chains, offer an opportune moment for India, Vietnam, and Mexico to benefit significantly. This presents India with a unique opening to position itself as a pivotal global manufacturing hub. However, leveraging this opportunity requires a concerted effort towards building robust logistics infrastructure and elevating workforce skills. Emphasizing greater





participation of women in the labor force emerges as a pivotal strategy to harness India's demographic dividend, a crucial driver for sustained economic growth.

India's potential economic leadership among the fastest-growing emerging markets underscores its pivotal role in shaping global economic dynamics. This ascent positions India to not only secure sustained growth but also wield considerable influence on the global economic landscape.

Partners in uncertain times-Indian Express Editorial

International relations

Key takeaways

1. **Strengthened Relations:** 2023 witnessed enhanced ties between India and Italy through joint statements, emphasizing collaboration in defense, space, connectivity, and energy transition.
2. **Shared Strategic Goals:** Both nations align strategically in supporting a free and secure Indo-Pacific, with Italy viewing the region as an extension of the Mediterranean.
3. **Maritime and Defense:** A renewed defense agreement and mutual interest in maritime security signify growing collaboration to enhance stability in the Indo-Pacific.
4. **Infrastructure and Trade Boost:** Collaborative projects like the Blue-Raman initiative aim to bridge the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean, while bilateral trade has seen a positive surge.
5. **People and Space Collaboration:** The Mobility Agreement aims to improve people-to-people contact, and joint efforts in space exploration between Italy's ASI and India's ISRO indicate promising collaborations in space science.
6. **Global Engagement:** India and Italy converge on multilateral issues, advocating for a new global agenda to address global concerns and promote stability and sustainability.

Mains easy language

In 2023, India and Italy saw significant advancements in their bilateral relationship, signaling a newfound era of cooperation. Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni's visit to India marked a pivotal moment, establishing a comprehensive framework for collaboration across various sectors. Both nations share strategic viewpoints, particularly in their support for a free and secure Indo-Pacific. Strengthening maritime security and defense ties has become a priority, evident through naval visits and defense agreements.

Infrastructure projects like the Blue-Raman initiative aim to connect the Mediterranean and Indian Ocean digitally, fostering trade and connectivity. Bilateral trade has surged, with mutual interests driving growth in various sectors. Efforts to enhance people-to-people contacts through migration and mobility agreements underline the growing partnership.

In space exploration, collaborations between Italian and Indian space agencies show promising advancements. The alignment on global issues positions both nations as advocates for a new global agenda, emphasizing stability and sustainability. Overall, India and Italy's strengthened relations in 2023 underscore a mutual commitment to shared goals and increased cooperation across diverse domains.

31 years after Babri demolition, how rapid infra development is transforming Ayodhya-Indian Express Explained

Economics(infrastructure)

Key takeaways

1. **Infrastructure Development:** Ayodhya has witnessed rapid infrastructure development since the BJP came to power in 2017, focusing on road, rail, and air connectivity.
2. **Renaming and Municipal Upgrades:** The renaming of Faizabad to Ayodhya and the establishment of the Ayodhya Nagar Nigam boosted infrastructure funding and municipal upgrades.
3. **Ram Temple-Related Development:** Construction of the Ram temple, scheduled to open soon, has spurred development, including new roads and parking spaces for anticipated large footfalls.
4. **Marquee Projects:** Significant projects include the Shri Ram International Airport, road expansions, and an outer ring road to improve connectivity.
5. **Economic Opportunities:** Development projects have generated job opportunities, increased demand for labor, and prompted growth in the hospitality sector, with luxury hotels now in development.





6. **Religious and Cultural Initiatives:** Initiatives like Deepotsav celebrations and funding for Ramayana and Vedic research institutions aim to enhance Ayodhya's cultural significance.
7. **Security Measures:** Measures such as CCTV installations and the establishment of security units (PAC and STF) are planned for enhanced security.
8. **Future Plans:** The government is investing in projects to enhance Ayodhya's appeal, aiming to make it a world-class city.

Mains easy language

Ayodhya, since the Babri mosque demolition in 1992, has experienced a transformative journey marked by significant infrastructural advancements. Under the BJP government, infrastructural projects and initiatives surged, enhancing connectivity, boosting economic prospects, and adding cultural significance to the city. Key developments include the construction of an international airport, road expansions, and cultural celebrations.

The merger of municipal boards in 2017 led to increased funding for Ayodhya's infrastructure. This propelled projects improving air, rail, and road connectivity, including the construction of an international airport along the Lucknow-Gorakhpur highway. Road expansions, an outer ring road plan, and infrastructural developments are tailored to accommodate the expected increase in visitors after the Ram temple's opening.

Ayodhya's economic landscape witnessed a rise in luxury hotels and job opportunities, complemented by cultural initiatives like Deepotsav celebrations and investments in institutions studying Ramayana and Vedic heritage. These efforts aim to balance the city's cultural heritage with modernization, envisioning Ayodhya as a global destination that preserves its rich cultural legacy while advancing infrastructural and economic growth.

[DHANVANTARI IMAGE IN NMC LOGO: WHY ARE DOCTORS PROTESTING NOW?-Indian Express Explained](#)

Governance

Key takeaways

1. **Controversial Logo:** The National Medical Commission (NMC) logo, featuring the deity Dhanvantri, faces criticism from doctors, especially the Indian Medical Association (IMA), due to its religious connotations.
2. **Doctor's Concerns:** Opposition stems from doctors' belief that religious symbols in institutional logos contradict healthcare's fundamental principles of impartial service to all patients, irrespective of their backgrounds.
3. **Religious Symbolism:** While NMC defends Dhanvantri's use as a cultural symbol in medicine, doctors argue for institutional neutrality in medical training bodies.
4. **Visibility Issue:** Protests surged after modifications to the logo emphasized the deity's image, triggering debates on the appropriateness of religious symbols in medical logos.
5. **Controversy Emergence:** Doctor's objections arose when recent changes highlighted Dhanvantri's image, sparking debates on religious symbolism in institutional logos.

Mains easy language

The National Medical Commission (NMC) faced criticism due to its logo featuring the deity Dhanvantri, drawing objections from the Indian Medical Association (IMA). The IMA raised concerns about the logo's religious associations, emphasizing that institutional logos should remain neutral to avoid division among citizens. Doctors expressed opposition, stating that medical institutions' symbols should be free from religious affiliations to align with their commitment to treating all patients equally, regardless of caste or creed.

However, NMC officials defended Dhanvantri's inclusion, citing the deity's significance in Ayurveda and medicine, comparable to symbols from other cultures in medical iconography. The controversy intensified following modifications to the logo that highlighted the deity's image, leading to swift opposition from the medical community. This disagreement underscores the importance of institutional logos maintaining neutrality and avoiding religious affiliations to preserve unity and impartiality within the medical field.

[Chandrayaan-3 propulsion module retraces steps to Earthorbit:why it matters-Indian EXpress Explained](#)

Science and technology

Key takeaways

1. **Return to Earth Orbit:** The Propulsion Module (PM) of Chandrayaan-3, which facilitated the Vikram lander's near-moon landing, has successfully returned to Earth's orbit, deviating from the original mission plan.
2. **Spacecraft Characteristics:** Unlike Chandrayaan-2, Chandrayaan-3's PM was a lightweight module designed specifically to assist the lander's lunar travel. It carried the SHAPE instrument, meant for studying Earth's habitability traits.



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3. **Unexpected Mission Alteration:** The PM's return to Earth's orbit wasn't initially intended but became possible due to fuel conservation during the mission, demonstrating adept mission planning and management by ISRO.
4. **Strategic Manoeuvres:** ISRO's meticulous planning resulted in fuel preservation, allowing the optimization of the PM's trajectory for its return to Earth, which could potentially inform future lunar sample return missions.
5. **Software Development for Space Missions:** This experiment provides valuable insights for ISRO to develop software modules for planning trajectories, gravity-assisted flybys, and ensuring controlled spacecraft disposition.

Mains easy language

The recent return of Chandrayaan-3's Propulsion Module (PM) to Earth's orbit marks a significant achievement for India's space endeavors. The PM, which played a pivotal role in the Vikram lander's endeavor to touch down on the Moon's surface in August, retraced its steps back to Earth's orbit, presenting a significant leap in space mission capabilities.

Chandrayaan-3, unlike its predecessor, utilized a lightweight Propulsion Module rather than a full-fledged orbiter, primarily serving as a transportation system for the lander. Equipped with the SHAPE instrument, this module aimed to examine Earth's habitability signatures. Despite not being part of the mission's original plan, the PM's return to Earth orbit highlighted the remarkable success of the mission's logistical planning and efficient fuel usage.

ISRO's precise planning resulted in significant fuel conservation, prompting the PM's Earth return trajectory optimization. This strategic manoeuvre showcased ISRO's capabilities in executing complex space missions and optimizing trajectory planning for future lunar expeditions. Moreover, this experiment enables ISRO to develop essential software modules for trajectory planning and controlled spacecraft disposition, offering valuable insights for future space exploration missions.

08th December 2023

FARM DOS & DON'TS-Indian Express Editorial

Economics

Key takeaways

1. **Fertiliser Price Controls:** The Indian government has maintained stable maximum retail prices (MRPs) for fertilisers despite international price fluctuations, shielding farmers from sudden price shocks.
2. **Rising Subsidy Outlay:** Stabilizing prices has significantly increased the fertiliser subsidy outlay, causing concerns about fiscal sustainability, with the outlay rising from Rs 81,124 crore in 2019-20 to Rs 2,51,339 crore in 2022-23.
3. **Imbalanced Nutrient Use:** Farmers tend to favor cheaper fertilisers like urea and DAP over potassium, sulfur, and micronutrient-containing options, leading to imbalanced nutrient application, potentially impacting crop quality, soil health, and long-term productivity.
4. **Need for Change:** The government is urged to integrate urea into the nutrient-based subsidy regime, gradually decontrol its maximum retail price, and extend subsidies on a per-hectare basis, incentivizing farmers to use a more diverse range of fertilisers.
5. **Encouraging Innovation:** Implementing changes in the subsidy system could encourage companies to develop region-specific and cost-effective fertiliser products, fostering balanced nutrient application and enhancing agricultural sustainability in the long term.

Mains easy language

The Indian government's efforts to stabilize fertiliser prices have shielded farmers from international price volatility. Despite global fluctuations in fertiliser costs, domestic prices have been kept stable through controls on maximum retail prices (MRPs). However, this stability has resulted in a substantial surge in the fertiliser subsidy outlay, raising concerns about fiscal sustainability.

The fixation on stable prices has inadvertently led to imbalanced nutrient use in farming practices. Farmers, inclined towards cheaper options like urea and DAP, tend to overlook other crucial nutrients essential for soil health and crop productivity. This imbalance, notably in nitrogen and phosphorus application, might have adverse consequences for long-term agricultural sustainability and soil fertility.

To address these challenges, the government must consider pivotal steps. Firstly, incorporating urea into the nutrient-based subsidy regime and gradually decontrolling its MRP, alongside other technically decontrolled fertilisers, could incentivize farmers to explore alternatives beyond urea. Secondly, extending subsidies on a per-hectare basis would empower farmers to choose fertilisers based on their specific needs, encouraging companies to develop region-specific, cost-effective, and beneficial fertiliser products. These measures could potentially promote balanced nutrient application, enhance crop quality, improve soil health, and ensure long-term agricultural sustainability.





CHENNAI ALARM-Indian Express Editorial

Geography

Key takeaways

1. **Cyclone Impact in Chennai:** Cyclone Michaung caused severe floods, disrupting life in Chennai. Over 20 casualties occurred, and essential services, including communication and supplies, were severely affected.
2. **Government Response and Criticism:** Though the state government claims prompt action, there's a need for proactive measures instead of reactive responses. Concerns about electrocution risks in a city aiming to become a smart city persist.
3. **Challenges in City Planning:** Chennai faces a challenge in managing intensified, short-duration rainfall. The incomplete stormwater drainage project leaves much of the city susceptible to flooding.
4. **Infrastructure Upgrades Needed:** Urgency is required in expediting the drainage system revamp to prevent future flooding disasters. Suggestions continue for re-evaluating construction on wetlands to alleviate water scarcity and enhance water absorption.
5. **Proactive City Planning Urgency:** Timely cyclone alerts by meteorological agencies stress the need for proactive measures by city planners to avert similar flood-related disasters in the future.

Mains easy language

The recent havoc caused by Cyclone Michaung in Chennai has resulted in severe flooding, disrupting normal life and causing casualties. While the government claims improved responsiveness compared to previous flood events, there's widespread consensus that reactive responses are insufficient in addressing the city's vulnerabilities.

Chennai's susceptibility to intensified, short-duration rainfall poses a significant challenge. The ongoing stormwater drainage project, still incomplete after several years, underscores the urgent need for immediate action to protect the city from recurrent flooding.

Additionally, reconsidering construction on wetlands has been proposed as a solution to mitigate flooding risks and alleviate Chennai's water scarcity issue. Despite earlier recommendations after the 2015 floods, little progress has been made in this regard.

This calamity serves as a critical call for city planners to take proactive steps in addressing vulnerabilities, expediting infrastructure projects, and heeding meteorological warnings. Adopting a proactive approach is imperative to prevent future flood-induced catastrophes in Chennai.

Google Gemini: what is it, and is it better than ChatGPT 4?-Indian Express Explained

Science and technology

Key takeaways

1. **Google Gemini Introduction:** Google introduces Gemini, its new multi-modal AI model, available on select platforms and Google Pixel 8 Pro phones, aimed at rivaling ChatGPT's generative AI.
2. **Versatile Capabilities:** Gemini operates across text, code, audio, image, and video, excelling in benchmarks and handling tasks like code generation and language understanding.
3. **Variant Offerings:** Available in Ultra, Pro, and Nano sizes, catering to varying complexities: Ultra for select users, Pro for regular users/developers, and Nano empowering Pixel 8 Pro features.
4. **Impact on Google Services:** Google plans Gemini integration into Search, Ads, Chrome, and Duet AI, showing initial enhancements in Search and aiming to elevate user experiences.
5. **Addressing Challenges:** Despite impressive capabilities, Gemini faces challenges in accuracy and safety. Google is actively working on accuracy improvements and implementing safety measures.
6. **Potential Impact on Google Search:** Gemini's integration into Search promises faster and improved Search Generative Experiences (SGE), significantly reducing latency in English in the US.
7. **Comparison with ChatGPT:** While still inconclusive, Gemini's versatility, offline usage capability, and free accessibility give it an edge over ChatGPT, accessible only to paying users, yet Gemini's full superiority remains unclear.

Mains easy language

Google introduces Gemini, its latest multi-modal AI model, designed to rival ChatGPT's generative AI capabilities. Available in three variants—Ultra, Pro, and Nano—Gemini operates across diverse formats including text, code, audio, image, and video. While Ultra is limited to select users for testing, Pro caters to regular users and developers, and Nano powers on-device features for Pixel 8 Pro.



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The integration of Gemini into Google's services such as Search, Ads, Chrome, and Duet AI signifies a potential enhancement in user experiences. Initial tests reveal promising improvements in Search, with faster and higher-quality Search Generative Experiences (SGE), offering a 40% reduction in latency in English in the US.

However, challenges persist in Gemini's accuracy and safety, necessitating ongoing efforts by Google to enhance accuracy and implement safety measures. The comparison between Gemini and ChatGPT remains unclear, but Gemini's flexibility, offline capabilities, and free accessibility could offer it a competitive edge over ChatGPT, currently accessible only to paying users. Despite this, Gemini's full superiority over ChatGPT remains undetermined.

[The melody in India-Italy ties-Indian Express Explained](#)

International relations

Key Takeaways:

1. **Renewed Harmony:** The recent social media interaction between PM Modi and Italian PM Giorgia Meloni signifies the improved ties between India and Italy after facing several challenges.
2. **Historical Ties:** India and Italy have ancient connections dating back 2,000 years, visible through trading links and historic visits by significant figures from both countries.
3. **Setbacks:** The India-Italy relationship faced setbacks due to various issues, including the Italian marines case and allegations surrounding the AgustaWestland deal, causing strains in diplomatic ties.
4. **Efforts for Repair:** Efforts to mend relations began in 2018, leading to high-level exchanges and the adoption of the 2020-2025 Action Plan during a Virtual Summit between the nations.
5. **Strategic Partnerships:** Recent developments, including elevating bilateral ties to a Strategic Partnership, emphasize defense cooperation and collaboration between Indian and Italian companies.
6. **Trade and Strategic Interests:** Italy stands as India's 4th largest trading partner in the EU, and its strategic interest in defense collaboration and reconsideration of ties with China adds significance to the bilateral relationship.
7. **Italy's Rethink on China:** Italy's reconsideration of its participation in China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) underscores a strategic realignment, aligning closer to India's perspective on China.

Mains easy language

India and Italy have recently revitalized their relationship after facing setbacks. A friendly interaction between PMs Narendra Modi and Giorgia Meloni at COP28 showcased this rejuvenation. Both nations share a 2,000-year-old history marked by trade and historic visits.

Despite challenges like the Italian marines case and AgustaWestland allegations, diplomatic efforts began in 2018, leading to a Strategic Partnership. This partnership emphasizes defense collaboration, trade, and joint ventures. Italy's reconsideration of China's Belt and Road Initiative aligns its strategic interests more closely with India.

Trade between the two countries thrives, with Italy as a significant trading partner for India in the EU. Recent high-profile visits and efforts toward economic, defense, and cultural collaboration highlight the strengthened ties.

In summary, India and Italy's renewed camaraderie signifies a resurgent relationship, overcoming historical challenges through shared strategic interests and increased bilateral engagements

[Mining for critical minerals:what is the auction process,why is it important?-Indian Express Explained](#)

Geography

Key Takeaways:

1. **Critical Mineral Auction:** 20 blocks, including lithium, nickel, copper, and rare earth elements (REEs), are on auction for private sector mining. These minerals are vital for vehicle batteries, energy storage, electronics, and industrial processes.
2. **Block Details:** Spread across eight states, the blocks are available for Mining Licenses (ML) and Composite Licenses (CL). ML blocks permit immediate mining, while CL blocks allow geological exploration.
3. **Clearances Needed:** Prior to commencing operations, licensees must acquire 15 clearances, including forest and environmental clearances, and consent from local bodies.
4. **Estimated Reserves:** Blocks vary in reserves; inferred reserves in Jammu & Kashmir and Chhattisgarh contain lithium and other minerals. Some blocks in Bihar, Gujarat, and Odisha have nickel and copper reserves.





5. **Current Import Scenario:** India heavily relies on imports for lithium, nickel, and copper—being 100% reliant for lithium and nickel and 93% for copper.
6. **Future Auctions:** The ongoing auction marks the government's initiative to mine critical minerals by amending laws and specifying new royalty rates. A second tranche of auctions is expected, possibly including new lithium reserves in Rajasthan and Jharkhand.
7. **Exploration Initiatives:** The Geological Survey of India has undertaken numerous projects to explore critical mineral reserves, indicating a focus on self-sufficiency in critical minerals.

Mains easy language

The ongoing auction of 20 blocks containing critical minerals is a significant step by India towards self-reliance in crucial resources. These minerals, including lithium, nickel, copper, and rare earth elements (REEs), are integral components in diverse industries such as electronics, energy storage, and vehicle batteries. The auction involves rights for Mining Licenses (ML) and Composite Licenses (CL), where licensees can either commence immediate mining or conduct geological exploration.

This marks the first time lithium ore rights are being offered to private entities, highlighting the government's emphasis on reducing import dependence and securing indigenous sources of critical minerals. The bidding process, ongoing until January 22, involves blocks spread across eight states, each necessitating various clearances before operations begin.

India's reliance on imports for these minerals is evident, with 100% dependence on lithium and nickel and 93% for copper. With the current auction, the government aims to leverage domestic resources to bolster the country's self-sufficiency in these essential minerals.

Additionally, the auction sets the stage for future explorations and mining initiatives, with expectations of subsequent auction tranches and endeavors to explore more reserves, indicating a robust focus on securing critical minerals within the nation's borders.

Overall, the auction represents a pivotal move towards reducing import reliance and harnessing indigenous resources, signifying India's strategic shift towards self-sufficiency in critical minerals essential for technological progress and industrial growth.

ARTICLE 99 OF UN CHARTER-Indian Express Explained

International relations

Key takeaways

1. **Article 99 Invocation:** UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres invoked Article 99 of the UN Charter due to the humanitarian crisis caused by Israel's attacks on Gaza.
2. **UN Charter's Article 99:** This rarely used provision allows the Secretary-General to bring to the Security Council's attention matters threatening international peace and security.
3. **Previous Invocations:** Article 99 has been invoked in historical instances, such as during the upheaval in the Republic of the Congo in 1960 and Tunisia's demands against French attacks in 1961.
4. **Purpose of Invocation:** Guterres invoked Article 99 due to severe humanitarian suffering, destruction, and trauma across Israel and the Occupied Palestine Territory, calling for a ceasefire.
5. **Humanitarian Crisis:** Gaza's healthcare system collapse, difficulties in providing humanitarian aid, displacement issues, and civilian casualties are the consequences of the ongoing military operations.
6. **Resolution Draft:** The UAE has presented a draft resolution demanding an immediate humanitarian ceasefire to the UNSC based on Guterres' invocation.
7. **Council's Response:** The resolution needs support from at least nine votes and no vetoes by the five permanent members for adoption, yet achieving unanimous support seems uncertain due to varying positions among key permanent members.
8. **Unlikely Unanimous Support:** Given the US and the UK's support for Israel's actions, unanimous backing for the resolution is unlikely.

Mains easy language

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres invoked Article 99 of the UN Charter amid the Gaza crisis, calling for a ceasefire. This rare provision allows him to highlight issues threatening international peace and security to the UN Security Council. Guterres urgently appealed for a humanitarian ceasefire to prevent further suffering, emphasizing the collapse of Gaza's healthcare system and the plight of civilians, particularly children.

The invocation prompted the UAE to present a resolution demanding an immediate humanitarian ceasefire to the UNSC. However, achieving unanimous support among permanent members remains uncertain due to differing positions, notably the US and the UK's support for Israel.

This move emphasizes the need for swift action to address the dire humanitarian situation in Gaza, stressing the urgency of a ceasefire and humanitarian aid for affected civilians.





India's growing neighbourhood dilemmas-The Hindu Editorial

International relations

Key takeaways

1. **Foreign Policy Challenges:** India's ambitions in foreign policy face hurdles, notably in its immediate neighborhood. Despite aspiring for global leadership, neighboring nations appear hesitant to align with India, hindering its aspirations.
2. **Neighborhood Dilemmas:** India grapples with dilemmas in its immediate surroundings, from anti-India sentiments in some neighboring countries to China's increasing presence via initiatives like the Belt and Road Initiative, posing structural challenges.
3. **Geopolitical Isolation Risk:** Without innovative strategies, India risks isolation in an unfriendly South Asia. Addressing regional challenges and leveraging diplomatic strategies is critical to prevent such isolation.
4. **Causes of Dilemmas:** Complex geopolitical architecture, China's presence, and India's normative approach contribute to the neighborhood dilemmas, while previous assumptions haven't played out as anticipated.
5. **Policy Stance and Engagement:** India's policy focusing mainly on regional capitals limits its engagement with diverse actors. Adopting a strategy inclusive of various power centers is crucial for comprehensive diplomatic engagement.
6. **Adapting to Changes:** India needs to acknowledge China's rising influence and engage proactively with external actors to navigate regional shifts effectively.
7. **Diplomatic Personnel Shortage:** India faces a shortage of diplomats, impacting the effective implementation of its foreign policy, highlighting the need to address this shortfall as its global role expands.

Mains easy language

India's foreign policy faces significant challenges, particularly in its neighborhood. Despite its global aspirations, India encounters hurdles in garnering support from neighboring nations. The rise of anti-India sentiments in some countries, coupled with China's expanding influence through initiatives like the Belt and Road Initiative, poses structural challenges. These dilemmas risk India's isolation within an unfriendly South Asia if innovative strategies aren't adopted.

The causes behind these dilemmas include complex regional geopolitics, China's ascendancy, and India's normative approach. Previous assumptions about regional dynamics, like engaging South Asia without Pakistan and relying on cultural connections, haven't yielded the expected results.

India's policy approach largely engaging with ruling authorities neglects other power centers, potentially excluding vital perspectives. Acknowledging China's growing dominance, proactively involving external actors, and adopting a more flexible diplomatic strategy are critical. Furthermore, India faces a shortage of diplomats, hindering its ability to implement foreign policy effectively as its global role expands. Addressing this shortfall is imperative for India to navigate the challenges and opportunities in its neighborhood.

Regulating deepfakes and AI in India -The Hindu Text and Context

Science and Technology

Key takeaways

1. **Deepfake Threats:** Deepfakes, created using AI, have emerged as a significant threat, especially in the dissemination of misinformation and political propaganda.
2. **Political Misuse:** Instances like manipulated videos of political leaders, such as BJP's Manoj Tiwari and Madhya Pradesh Congress's Kamal Nath, highlight the potential dangers of deepfakes in political campaigns.
3. **Technology Origins:** Deepfakes, utilizing AI and machine learning, blur reality and fiction, with origins traced back to a Reddit user in 2017. While beneficial in various fields, they also pose risks in cybercrimes, particularly against women.
4. **Legal Response:** India lacks specific laws for deepfakes but provisions under the Information Technology Act and Indian Penal Code offer some recourse. However, experts argue for a more comprehensive legislative framework.
5. **Centre's Efforts:** The government plans to introduce draft regulations after public consultation to address the emerging crisis of deepfakes. However, experts stress the need for a broader approach that considers the nuances of AI.
6. **Global Response:** Other countries like the US and the EU have taken measures to manage deepfake risks, introducing bills and strengthening regulations around AI and deepfake technology.
7. **Nuanced Regulation:** India's approach should balance safety and innovation, considering the unique economic context, and establishing standards for safety and awareness without stifling technological progress.





8. **Comprehensive Framework:** The regulatory response necessitates a detailed understanding of the potential risks of AI and deepfakes, while also fostering an environment conducive to technological growth.

Mains easy language

The article delves into India's mounting apprehension surrounding deepfake technology, spotlighting its perils, particularly in political contexts, technological advancements, regulatory shortcomings, and government responses.

AI-driven deepfakes pose a grave danger by disseminating false information, especially within the political landscape. The manipulation of videos featuring political figures raises concerns about their potential to sway public opinion and impact crucial electoral processes.

This technology, powered by AI and machine learning, blurs the lines between reality and falsification. Despite its educational and entertainment merits, deepfakes pose significant challenges, including cybercrimes and gender-based violence, compounded by the difficulty in accurately identifying them.

India's current legal framework falls short in addressing deepfake concerns, relying on existing provisions within the Information Technology Act and the Indian Penal Code, which offer limited redress against these digital fabrications. Experts stress the imperative for a comprehensive legislative framework and heightened awareness to counter the threats posed by AI-generated content.

The Indian government plans to introduce regulations post public consultation to combat deepfake challenges. However, experts emphasize the necessity for a holistic approach, urging a balanced strategy to tackle evolving technological threats while fostering an environment conducive to innovation and economic growth.

6% of cough syrup samples fail export quality test-The Hindu Science

Science

Key takeaways

1. **CDSCO Findings:** Around 6% of cough syrup samples from 54 Indian manufacturers failed quality tests by the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO), sparking concerns over pharmaceutical standards.
2. **Pre-Export Testing:** Following quality concerns, mandatory pre-export testing for medicines, especially cough syrups, was enforced to prevent substandard products from entering global markets.
3. **Global Impact:** Reports of fatalities in children who consumed these cough syrups prompted Gambia, Uzbekistan, Cameroon, and the WHO to raise red flags, leading to regulatory actions by the Indian government.
4. **Contamination Issues:** Contaminants like glycol and ethylene glycol were found in some Indian-manufactured syrups, prompting regulatory measures, including the halting of manufacturing for non-compliant firms and joint investigations.
5. **Indian Pharma Industry:** India's pharmaceutical sector contributes significantly to the nation's GDP and has a global market presence. However, maintaining high-quality standards is crucial to preserve its international reputation.
6. **WHO Alert and Reputation:** A specific batch of Guaifenesin Syrup faced a WHO medical product alert, emphasizing the need for India's pharmaceutical industry to ensure stringent quality measures to uphold its global image.

Mains easy language

Recent findings by India's Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) revealed that 6% of cough syrup samples from 54 Indian manufacturers failed quality tests. This raised concerns about substandard pharmaceuticals in the country's export market. The CDSCO, regulating pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, and medical devices, mandated pre-export testing following reports from Gambia, Uzbekistan, Cameroon, and the WHO regarding fatalities linked to Indian-manufactured cough syrups.

Contaminants like glycol and ethylene glycol found in some Indian syrups were deemed harmful, especially to children. Consequently, the government took measures to halt production at non-compliant firms and conducted joint investigations with State Drugs Authorities. This situation underscored the importance of stringent quality standards in India's pharmaceutical industry, given its significant contribution to the country's GDP and global demand for generic drugs.

The incident emphasized the necessity for the industry to ensure compliance with quality checks and regulations. Upholding stringent quality standards is vital to preserve India's reputation as a reliable provider of pharmaceuticals globally.

09th December 2023

A continuing pause-Indian Express Editorial

Economy

Key takeaways



| Clear your doubts now.



1. **RBI Policy:** Recent RBI policy held rates and stance as expected, considering various influencing factors.
2. **Inflation Worries:** Inflation concerns persist despite a slight dip. Consumer prices are still above the 4% target. Food inflation remains high due to weather disruptions and global risks.
3. **Global Influence:** Signals of higher rates from major central banks indirectly affect RBI's decisions to curb inflation.
4. **Rate Hike Challenges:** Rate hikes haven't uniformly affected lending rates. RBI uses liquidity tools for better transmission.
5. **Credit Growth Risks:** Robust bank credit growth raises concerns about risky segments like unsecured consumer credit, posing risks to financial stability.
6. **Stability Measures:** RBI uses regulatory actions, like increasing risk weights, to stabilize high-risk credit flows and enhance financial stability.
7. **Economic Outlook:** Revised growth forecasts upward but expect a slowdown due to global factors and rising rates affecting domestic demand.
8. **Future Expectations:** RBI likely to maintain current stance short-term, with potential rate cuts expected in the next fiscal's first quarter. Focus remains on managing inflation and financial stability using diverse tools.

Mains easy language

The recent RBI Monetary Policy Committee meeting maintained existing rates and policy stance, reflecting concerns about inflation, which, despite a downward trend, still exceeds the desired 4% target. Factors like persistent food inflation due to weather disruptions and global supply risks are contributing to this cautious approach. Global signals of higher interest rates, particularly from major central banks, indirectly shape RBI's policies, influencing its decisions.

Incomplete transmission of past rate hikes by the RBI presents challenges, with lending rates across financial instruments and banks remaining uneven. The central bank is using liquidity tools to ensure better transmission. While credit growth remains robust, concerns arise about risky credit flow, especially into segments like unsecured consumer credit, prompting regulatory measures like increased risk weights to stabilize such flows and maintain financial stability.

Looking ahead, the RBI is likely to maintain its current stance in the short term, with potential rate cuts anticipated in the first quarter of the upcoming fiscal year. The focus remains on managing inflation within the target range and ensuring financial stability, utilizing diverse tools beyond interest rate adjustments to strike a balance between economic growth and stability in the financial system.

[STAYING PUT-Indian Express Editorial](#)

Economy

Key takeaways

1. **Interest Rates Unchanged:** RBI's Monetary Policy Committee maintained the interest rate at 6.5% as expected, with a focus on an actively disinflationary policy, voting 5-1 to withdraw accommodation.
2. **Inflation Trends:** Inflation, measured by the consumer price index, declined from 7.44% in July to 4.87% in October, largely due to reduced food inflation. However, uncertainties remain, especially concerning food prices due to climate-related impacts on the Rabi crop.
3. **Inflation Projections:** RBI projects a slow decline in inflation from 5.6% in Q3 to 5.2% in Q4, aiming for around 4.3% in the upcoming year as per the target.
4. **Optimistic Growth Outlook:** Despite concerns about private consumption, the RBI remains optimistic, foreseeing a resilient economy, a potential rural demand turnaround, and sustained investment activity supported by government spending. GDP forecast revised to 7% for the year, with a slowdown expected in the second half.
5. **Future Policy Decisions:** The committee's future policy decisions will rely on how the growth-inflation trajectory aligns with RBI expectations, determining the timing of potential policy rate adjustments.

Mains easy language

The RBI maintained interest rates at 6.5% and focused on an actively disinflationary policy stance in its recent Monetary Policy Committee meeting. While witnessing a steady decline in inflation in recent months, uncertainties prevail, particularly concerning food prices due to climate-related uncertainties affecting crop yields. The RBI anticipates a gradual easing of inflation in the upcoming quarters, aiming for it to align with the central bank's target next year.

Optimism surrounds India's economic resilience, with the RBI highlighting a resilient economy despite concerns about private consumption. The central bank expects a turnaround in rural demand and continued support for investment activities driven by government spending. Though the GDP forecast for the year was revised upwards to 7%, a slowdown is projected in the second half of the fiscal year.





Future policy decisions will depend on how the growth-inflation trajectory evolves and whether it aligns with the RBI's expectations. This alignment will determine when the committee might consider easing policy rates.

GARBA FOR ALL-Indian Express Editorial

Art and culture

Key takeaways

1. **UNESCO Acknowledgement:** Garba, Gujarat's folk dance, earned a place on UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage list, standing among other esteemed Indian traditional dances.
2. **Inclusivity at its Core:** Garba's strength lies in its inclusive nature, uniting individuals of diverse ages, genders, and skill levels in celebratory dance around a symbolic earthen pot.
3. **Adaptive Tradition:** Garba's endurance is rooted in its adaptability across generations, seamlessly blending traditional and contemporary elements to stay relevant.
4. **Recent Challenges to Inclusivity:** Reports of restricting participation based on religion and incidents of assaults on Dalits attending Garba events pose challenges to its inclusive spirit.
5. **Resilient Cultural Heritage:** While Garba isn't under immediate threat, preserving its inclusive essence is vital for maintaining its vibrancy and cultural significance.
6. **Symbol of Community and Celebration:** Garba symbolizes unity, earth's fertility, and festive celebrations, serving as an integral part of various occasions in Gujarat's cultural fabric.

Mains easy language

Garba, Gujarat's cherished folk dance, recently gained UNESCO recognition, an honor that underscores its cultural importance alongside other prominent Indian traditional dances. It holds a central place in Gujarat's cultural tapestry, acting as a unifying force in celebrations, spanning weddings, births, and notably, the revered Navratri festival. The dance's essence lies in its inclusive nature, transcending age, gender, and skill levels, bringing people together around a symbolic earthen pot, representing universal origins and the earth's fertility.

What sets Garba apart is its adaptability across generations. It seamlessly weaves together traditional tunes and movements with contemporary elements, ensuring its relevance and resonance with each new era. However, recent incidents have challenged Garba's inclusive spirit. Reports of religious-based participation restrictions and instances of assaults on Dalits attending these events contradict its foundational ethos of inclusivity and community participation.

While Garba's existence isn't immediately threatened, safeguarding its inclusive character is imperative. Preserving its vibrancy ensures its continuation as a cherished cultural heritage, symbolizing unity and festivity. The dance's resonance lies not only in its UNESCO recognition but also in its integral role in Gujarat's cultural and celebratory landscape, signifying unity, fertility, and shared celebrations among its people.

HER CHOICE-Indian Express Editorial

Sociology

Key takeaways

1. **Policing Personal Choices:** Politicians like Dharambir Singh and Kaushal Kishore advocate for laws regulating non-traditional relationships like live-ins, reflecting deep-rooted patriarchal anxieties and a reluctance to accept women's autonomy in decision-making.
2. **Anxiety over Autonomy:** The inclination to control choices, including partner selection, education, careers, and attire, reveals a pervasive patriarchal anxiety. This arises amid the increasing presence of women in influential positions, challenging traditional norms.
3. **Clash with Evolving Aspirations:** Calls for tradition as a determinant of choice contradict the changing aspirations of many, particularly women seeking self-determination and independence.
4. **Reality of Crime Data:** Recent statistics from the National Crime Records Bureau highlight a rise in crimes against women, particularly by intimate partners or family members, challenging the belief that adherence to tradition ensures successful relationships.
5. **Embracing Progress:** India's low divorce rate doesn't guarantee relationship success. Shifting away from outdated sexist beliefs and accepting evolving traditions is essential for societal growth and empowerment.

Mains easy language

Demands for legislative control over non-traditional relationships reflect deep-seated patriarchal anxieties, resisting women's autonomy in personal choices. This stems from a prevailing reluctance to accept changing societal norms, especially as women take on more influential roles.





This clash between tradition dictating choices and women's aspirations for autonomy highlights the evolving societal landscape. Additionally, rising crimes against women, notably by close relations, challenge the belief in tradition ensuring successful relationships, calling for a reevaluation of societal beliefs.

Embracing change and shedding outdated patriarchal beliefs is vital for societal growth and empowering women's autonomy. Encouraging progressive attitudes that align with evolving societal dynamics is crucial for fostering inclusivity and empowerment.

HAMAS ATTACK, IN PERSPECTIVE-Indian Express Editorial

International relations

Key takeaways

1. **Attack Scale:** The Hamas assault on Israel surpasses the 26/11 Mumbai attacks in both perpetrators and victims, involving over 1,500 gunmen and claiming more than 1,400 lives.
2. **Population Impact:** Despite different areas, the Hamas attack affected about 1% of the region's population, illustrating significant devastation in the targeted area. A hypothetical Mumbai scenario amplifies potential casualties based on its population.
3. **Hypothetical Scenario:** Imagining a Lashkar-e-Toiba-like entity near Mumbai, firing rockets and housing terrorists, reflects Israel's complex situation facing threats from Hamas and Hezbollah.
4. **Israeli Challenge:** Israel faces threats from Hamas and Hezbollah, posing ongoing risks to civilian safety, prompting unified efforts to eliminate the Hamas threat.
5. **Global Support:** Support from countries like India and the US aligned with Israel could potentially shorten the Gaza conflict, contrasting with efforts prolonging it by advocating for an unconditional Israeli ceasefire or justifying Hamas actions.
6. **Trauma Depth:** Comparing a hypothetical Mumbai scenario to Israel's actual suffering sheds light on the immense shock and trauma experienced by Israelis, indicating the impact of the attack on the nation's psyche.

Mains easy language

The comparison between the recent Hamas attack on Israel and the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks highlights a stark contrast in scale. With over 1,500 assailants and 1,400 lives lost, the Hamas assault surpasses Mumbai's tragedy in both perpetrators and victims. Despite different areas, the Hamas attack affected about 1% of the region's population, emphasizing significant devastation in the targeted area. A hypothetical scenario amplifies potential casualties based on Mumbai's population, giving a glimpse into the immense impact.

Envisioning a terrorist entity near Mumbai mirrors Israel's challenges with constant hostilities from Hamas and Hezbollah. Israel aims to eliminate the Hamas threat to protect civilians. The narrative suggests that support from countries aligning with Israel could potentially shorten the Gaza conflict, contrasting with efforts prolonging it.

Comparing a hypothetical Mumbai scenario with Israel's ordeal showcases the profound shock and trauma experienced by Israelis, indicating the immense impact on the nation's psyche.

An icy warning-The Hindu Editorial

Geography

Key takeaways

1. **Glacial Decline:** Glaciers globally are thinning rapidly, diminishing by about a meter annually from 2011 to 2020, showing consistent shrinkage across regions.
2. **Impending Disappearance:** Glaciers in various regions, including Africa's Rwenzori Mountains and Mount Kenya, are predicted to vanish by 2030-2040, leading to the formation of pro-glacial lakes and increased risks of glacier-related floods.
3. **Catastrophic Events:** Recent disasters like the 2013 Uttarakhand floods and the 2023 Chungthang dam destruction in Sikkim, linked to glacial melting, underscore the urgent need to address glacier-related risks.
4. **Accelerated Melting:** In the Hindu Kush Himalayas, glaciers are melting 65% faster in the 2010s than the previous decade, highlighting the severe consequences of ongoing greenhouse gas emissions.
5. **Freshwater Scarcity:** Predictions suggest a significant reduction in glacier volume due to emissions, potentially causing freshwater scarcity by 2050, posing critical challenges to water supply.
6. **Monitoring and Risk Assessment:** Immediate action is necessary to establish comprehensive monitoring systems and risk assessments for glaciers, similar to early warning systems for natural disasters.





7. **Infrastructure Development:** Developing infrastructure in vulnerable regions must prioritize high standards of care to mitigate challenges from glacier decline and associated environmental threats.

Mains easy language

The recent World Meteorological Organization report unveils the alarming decline of glaciers globally, marking a consistent pattern of significant thinning over the past decade. Projections indicate the imminent disappearance of glaciers across various regions, signifying an impending environmental crisis. Catastrophic events triggered by glacier-related disasters, such as the Uttarakhand floods and the Chungthang dam destruction in Sikkim, emphasize the urgency to address these threats.

The accelerated pace of glacial melting in the Hindu Kush Himalayas serves as a warning, highlighting the dire consequences of continued global greenhouse gas emissions. The forecasted reduction in glacier volume poses a critical risk, leading to freshwater scarcity by 2050. To mitigate these risks effectively, there's an urgent need for robust monitoring systems and comprehensive risk assessments dedicated to glaciers, paralleling early warning systems for other natural calamities. Authorities must elevate the threats posed by shrinking glaciers to the same level of risk as cyclones, floods, and earthquakes. Prioritizing cautious infrastructure development and mapping vulnerable regions becomes imperative to address the challenges arising from glacier contraction.

Bridge this deficit between India and Sri Lanka-The Hindu Editorial

International relations

Key takeaways

1. **Land Connectivity Proposal:** Sri Lanka's President, Ranil Wickremesinghe, revived a two-decade-old vision for a land bridge linking Rameswaram in Tamil Nadu and Talaimanar in Sri Lanka's Northern Province to boost regional economic integration.
2. **Past Challenges:** Previous proposals faced opposition from Sinhalese-Buddhist groups, while funding offers for the bridge in 2015 were met with criticism, stalling progress on expanded connectivity plans.
3. **Recent Affirmations:** Despite past setbacks, Wickremesinghe and Prime Minister Narendra Modi reaffirmed plans for a feasibility study on land connectivity, signaling their ongoing commitment to explore this economic integration.
4. **Infrastructure and Trade Issues:** Limited progress in infrastructure, such as the bilateral grid memorandum signed 13 years ago, and stagnant growth beyond the 1998 India-Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement, presents challenges in mutual development.
5. **Recent Positive Developments:** Initiatives like the resumption of air and ferry services between Chennai and Jaffna showcase potential for improved relations, hinting at future opportunities.
6. **Progressive Focus Needed:** Sri Lanka must transcend historical challenges to foster mutually beneficial ties, akin to India-Bangladesh relations, to enhance its economic stability and standards of living.

Mains easy language

The renewed proposal by Sri Lanka's President, Ranil Wickremesinghe, to establish a physical link between Rameswaram in Tamil Nadu and Talaimanar in Sri Lanka's Northern Province comes as a timely initiative. Two decades ago, Wickremesinghe had proposed this bridge concept as part of a broader vision for regional economic integration. Despite previous hindrances due to opposition from certain groups and mixed responses to funding offers in the past, the commitment to explore this connectivity has persisted.

While discussions have continued on regional economic integration, progress between India and Sri Lanka in infrastructure development hasn't reached its potential. Efforts to connect electricity networks, a proposal dating back to 1970, have not seen the transmission of even a single unit of electricity. In comparison, India has effectively exported energy to Bangladesh. Similarly, bilateral economic ties, despite efforts, haven't fully flourished beyond the 1998 Free Trade Agreement, although India remains a significant importer for Sri Lanka.

Recent positive strides, such as the recommencement of transport services and collaborative ventures, hint at a promising future. Despite facing opposition forces and historical setbacks, Sri Lanka can learn from India-Bangladesh relations and strive for mutually beneficial economic ties. These developments underscore the need for sustained momentum and collaboration, presenting an opportunity for Sri Lanka to elevate its economic stability and living standards.

India's alarming 'fixed dose combination' problem-The Hindu Editorial

Science

Key Takeaways:

1. **Alarming Statistics:** A recent study highlights a significant proportion of unapproved (60.5%) and banned (9.9%) Fixed Dose Combinations (FDCs) of antibiotics being sold in India, posing a serious concern due to the rise of antibiotic resistance.





2. **FDCs for Improved Compliance:** While FDCs can enhance patient adherence by combining multiple medications into a single dose, their formulation involves complexities that need scientific evaluation.
3. **Pharmaceutical Industry's Exploitation:** Pharmaceutical companies in India often create FDCs without medical rationale, exploiting loopholes in laws to avoid price regulations and quality standards.
4. **Market Strategy for Profit:** FDCs provide companies with grounds to charge higher prices by introducing combinations as new products, allowing them to escape market competition.
5. **Regulatory Issues:** The problem of unapproved FDCs has been evident since 1978, with successive committees identifying the issue, yet regulatory frameworks have failed to curb their sale effectively.
6. **Failure in Regulatory Enforcement:** State drug controllers often overlook laws and continue issuing licenses for unapproved FDCs, bypassing regulations, leading to a lack of proper prosecution for violating laws.
7. **Impact on Antibacterial Resistance:** The proliferation of unregulated FDCs could potentially contribute to the growing issue of Antibacterial Microbial Resistance (AMR), necessitating immediate action from health authorities.

Mains easy language

A recent study exposed a concerning trend in India's pharmaceutical industry—over 60% of Fixed Dose Combinations (FDCs) of antibiotics sold were unapproved, and nearly 10% were banned. This poses a grave risk by potentially worsening antibiotic resistance in the country. FDCs, meant to enhance patient compliance by combining medications into a single dose, need rigorous scrutiny for safety. However, the study highlighted a significant number of these combinations being sold without proper approval, posing serious threats to public health due to antibiotic resistance.

Indian pharmaceutical companies exploited regulatory gaps by creating FDCs without valid medical reasons, primarily to evade price regulations. This practice allows them to charge higher prices, sidestepping quality assessments due to the absence of standardized regulations. Despite clear legislation prohibiting unapproved drugs, state drug controllers continued to issue licenses for such FDCs, highlighting a regulatory framework riddled with shortcomings. This laxity extends beyond economic concerns, potentially exacerbating the Antibacterial Microbial Resistance (AMR) crisis in India.

The study's findings underscore an urgent need for stringent regulations and their effective implementation to curb the unregulated sale of FDCs in India. This issue not only impacts the pharmaceutical industry but also poses significant risks to public health, particularly regarding antibiotic resistance. Immediate action from health authorities is imperative to prevent the proliferation of unapproved and banned FDCs, averting a severe threat to public health.

10th December 2023

[What does a special package mean for PVTGs?-The Hindu FAQ](#)

Sociology

Key takeaways

1. **PVTGs Definition:** Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) are marginalized tribes with declining populations, limited technology use, economic challenges, low literacy, and they live in remote areas.
2. **Distribution:** There are 75 PVTGs spread across 18 States and Union Territories, concentrated in states like Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Gujarat.
3. **Population Data:** The last comprehensive count was in 2001, estimating a total population of around 27.6 lakh for all 75 PVTG communities.
4. **PM-JANMAN Scheme:** The government allocated ₹24,000 crore for infrastructure, healthcare, education, and basic needs for PVTGs to uplift these communities.
5. **Challenges:** Insufficient data, inadequate fund allocation, potential implementation hurdles due to multi-ministerial involvement, and incomplete execution of recommendations remain significant challenges.
6. **Data Gaps:** Despite recommendations, there's a lack of updated information on PVTG population, socio-economic status, and specific needs.
7. **Holistic Development:** While PM-JANMAN aims to provide basic facilities, challenges in data availability, fund allocation, and effective implementation hinder comprehensive development for PVTGs.

Mains easy language





The condition of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) in India, consisting of 75 marginalized communities across 18 regions, remains a concern due to the absence of recent demographic data. The last comprehensive census conducted in 2001 estimated their total population at approximately 27.6 lakh, highlighting the substantial gap in updated information on their socio-economic status and needs.

In response to these challenges, the government launched the ambitious ₹24,000 crore Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan (PM-JANMAN) initiative. This program aims to uplift PVTGs by directing resources toward infrastructure development, healthcare, education, and essential amenities. However, the effective implementation of this initiative encounters hurdles.

These obstacles include the persistent lack of current data on PVTG populations, which impedes a nuanced understanding of their requirements. Additionally, challenges in fund allocation adequacy and coordination among various ministries pose significant barriers to the scheme's successful execution.

Addressing these impediments becomes pivotal in ensuring the comprehensive upliftment and holistic development of these vulnerable tribal communities. Overcoming data gaps, enhancing fund allocation efficacy, and streamlining multi-ministerial efforts are crucial steps toward fulfilling the objectives of the PM-JANMAN scheme and ensuring the sustained progress of PVTGs across India.

[Why did Michaung bring so much rain?-The Hindu FAQ](#)

Geography

Key Takeaways:

1. **Cyclone Formation:** Cyclone Michaung formed from a well-marked low-pressure area identified in the southwest Bay of Bengal on November 29. It gradually intensified, becoming a cyclonic storm by December 3 and subsequently moved northward toward the Andhra Pradesh coast.
2. **Impact on Tamil Nadu:** Michaung caused heavy rainfall in north Tamil Nadu, including Chennai and its surrounding areas, leading to local flooding and disruptions. The storm slowed down as it approached Chennai, dumping significant rainfall and causing power outages.
3. **Intensification Factors:** The cyclone intensified into a super-cyclonic storm on December 4 due to warm sea surface temperatures and moisture accumulation. The process of condensation releasing heat contributed to its intensification, aided by factors like the Madden-Julian oscillation (MJO).
4. **Intensification's Impact:** Intensification of cyclones is associated with climate change, drawing heat from the sea and potentially leading to stronger cyclones making landfall with more energy, causing greater devastation.
5. **Landfall and Dissipation:** Cyclone Michaung made landfall near Bapatla, Andhra Pradesh, on December 5, with sustained winds causing damage to trees and electric poles. It weakened into a cyclonic storm and further devolved into a well-marked low-pressure area by December 6.

Mains easy language

Cyclone Michaung originated from a low-pressure area in the Bay of Bengal and intensified into a cyclonic storm, eventually making landfall near Bapatla, Andhra Pradesh. Its formation and intensification were due to warm sea temperatures and moisture accumulation, coupled with meteorological phenomena like the Madden-Julian oscillation.

The cyclone caused heavy rainfall and disruptions in north Tamil Nadu, especially Chennai, before its landfall. Its intensification underscored concerns about climate change's potential influence on cyclone strength and impact. Michaung's landfall led to damage in Andhra Pradesh before dissipating into a low-pressure area.

Understanding the factors contributing to cyclonic storms and their intensification is crucial in predicting their trajectories and potential impact on vulnerable regions, emphasizing the need for advanced forecasting and preparedness measures in high-risk areas.

[Are crimes against women on the rise?-The Hindu FAQ](#)

Sociology

Key takeaways

1. **Rise in Crimes Against Women:** Despite an overall decrease in the crime rate in 2022, crimes against women escalated by 4% compared to the previous year, reflecting concerning societal trends.
2. **Nature of Offenses:** Predominant crimes against women include cruelty by husbands or relatives, abduction, assault with intent to outrage modesty, and instances of rape, highlighting deep-rooted issues within a patriarchal society.
3. **Increased Reporting:** Over 4.45 lakh cases of crimes against women were registered in 2022, indicating nearly 51 FIRs filed per hour. This rise, while reflective of greater reporting confidence among women, doesn't necessarily signify a surge in actual criminal incidents.





4. **Challenges in Law Implementation:** Despite existing laws for women's safety, implementation hurdles persist due to inadequate policing, slow judicial processes, a dearth of trained investigators, and a low representation of women in the police force.
5. **Underrepresented Women in Policing:** The representation of women in the police force remains low at 11.7% of the total state police force, leading to excessive workloads on female officers and hindering effective handling of crimes against women.
6. **Systemic Issues in Justice:** Inefficiencies in investigation, prolonged court proceedings, and inadequate training for officers contribute to delayed justice, with cases taking years to conclude, undermining the intent and effectiveness of laws aimed at safeguarding women.

Mains easy language

The National Crime Records Bureau's annual report for 2022 revealed a 4% increase in crimes against women despite an overall decline in the crime rate. Categories like cruelty by relatives, kidnapping, assault, and rape were among the predominant offenses reported.

Experts and activists attribute the rise in reported cases to increased awareness among women, enabling them to approach authorities confidently. However, this surge doesn't necessarily correlate to an actual escalation in crimes, but rather indicates an enhanced willingness to report incidents.

The implementation of laws focused on women's safety faces significant challenges. Issues such as poor policing, prolonged judicial processes, inadequate investigation due to a lack of trained officers, and a scarcity of women in the police force hinder effective execution of laws. The low representation of women in the police exacerbates workloads, leading to slower progress in charge-sheeting and convictions.

Enhancing the implementation of laws aimed at women's safety requires concerted efforts to address systemic issues within law enforcement and judicial systems, ensuring adequate representation and specialized training to handle cases of crimes against women effectively.

Green turtles nesting range expands under warming climate-The Hindu Science

Environment

Key takeaways

1. **Enlarged Nesting Habitat:** Green turtles' nesting range in the Mediterranean might increase by 60%, extending to coastlines of North Africa, Italy, and Greece due to climate change.
2. **Climate's Impact:** The global rise in temperatures affects marine life significantly. Green turtles, particularly vulnerable due to their offspring's sex determination by temperature, face heightened risks.
3. **Research Focus:** Despite extensive climate studies on sea turtles, minimal attention has been given to understanding the impacts of climate change specifically on the Mediterranean's green turtle population.
4. **Key Factors:** Suitable nesting areas along the Mediterranean coast rely on factors such as sea temperature, salinity, and human population density, influencing nesting site selection for these turtles.
5. **Projected Changes:** Severe climate scenarios forecast substantial expansions in turtle nesting areas by 2100, posing significant implications for their habitats and interactions with human-populated regions.
6. **Potential Risks:** The turtles' expanded nesting zones into populated areas raise concerns. Increased human interaction and urban development might negatively affect nesting success and the species' overall survival.

Mains easy language

A Scientific Reports study indicates that green turtles' nesting range in the Mediterranean Sea could significantly expand by over 60% due to rising global temperatures from climate change. This expansion might encompass coastlines across North Africa, Italy, Greece, and the Adriatic Sea.

The impact of climate change on marine life, particularly sea turtles like the green turtle, could be substantial. The sex determination of turtle offspring is temperature-dependent, making them vulnerable to temperature shifts caused by climate change.

Despite considerable research on the global impact of climate change on sea turtles, the Mediterranean green turtle population has received limited attention.

The study's predictive model highlights influential factors affecting suitable nesting sites, such as sea surface temperature, salinity, and human population density along the Mediterranean coastline.

Modeling different greenhouse gas emission scenarios suggested that more severe climate scenarios could lead to significant expansions in the turtles' nesting range by 2100. However, concerns arise due to the potential risks associated with increased human interactions and urbanization along these extended nesting areas, potentially impacting nesting success negatively.





'Compensation should not incentivise risk-taking'-The Hindu Science

Science

Key takeaways

1. **ICMR's Stand:** The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) advocates fair compensation in human challenge studies (CHIS). Payment should account for wage loss, incidental expenses, and the time and effort participants invest.
2. **Higher Compensation Proposals:** A study suggested a payment of \$20,000 for a six-month hepatitis C virus CHIS in the U.S., considerably higher than typical compensations provided in similar studies.
3. **Ethical Concerns:** Disproportionate payments that could act as incentives for participation in CHIS are a subject of ethical debate. The ethical implications of high compensation influencing participation are questioned.
4. **Differing Perspectives:** Opinions vary on whether compensation should primarily consider the risk involved or align with the time, commitment, and inconvenience faced by participants. This debate questions the ethical boundaries of payment influence on participation.
5. **Compensation Framework:** Researchers and participants argue that compensation should reflect the invested time and effort, focusing less on incentivizing risk-taking. Policies strive to ensure fair remuneration without encouraging undue risks.
6. **Ethical Guidelines:** Ethical frameworks and guidelines govern compensation structures, emphasizing the need to prevent inducements for participation in potentially risky studies while ensuring fair payment for participants' contributions.

Mains easy language

A growing discourse surrounds the ethical compensation practices in human challenge studies (CHIS), particularly concerning the payment amount's influence on participation. The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) stresses the need for fair compensation that considers various factors like wage loss, expenses, and effort in CHIS participation. However, a study suggested a considerably higher compensation of \$20,000 for a hepatitis C virus CHIS in the U.S., raising concerns about incentivizing participation.

Opinions diverge on the ethical implications of compensation. Some argue that the amount should reflect the time, commitment, and inconvenience rather than primarily focusing on the risk factor. Meanwhile, the debate continues regarding whether high compensation inherently leads to unethical participation or if informed consent processes and ethical reviews should determine compensation.

Various researchers, including those involved in CHIS, assert that compensation should align with effort and time invested rather than serving as an incentive for risk-taking. However, ethical frameworks and guidelines govern the payment structure, aiming to ensure fair remuneration while preventing inducement for participation in potentially risky studies.

The Grand Vizier of COP-28 -The Hindu Profiles

Environment

Key Takeaways:

1. **Sultan Ahmed Al Jaber's Role:** Holding multiple positions including COP-28 President, UAE's Industry Minister, and CEO of Abu Dhabi National Oil, Al Jaber aims to bring together industrialists to phase out fossil fuels in climate talks.
2. **COP-28 in Dubai:** Described as a bustling hub of climate discussion, COP-28 hosts pavilions, exhibits, and meetings to address climate change issues.
3. **UNFCCC and Country Classifications:** The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) categorizes countries as 'Annex' and 'Non-Annex,' influencing their roles and responsibilities in combating climate change.
4. **President's Role at COP:** The COP President oversees discussions, ensures procedural adherence, and aims to attain consensus among country delegations on crucial climate-related matters.
5. **Controversy Surrounding Al Jaber:** Criticism arises due to Al Jaber's role in an oil company, raising concerns about his ability to advocate for the elimination of fossil fuels.
6. **Al Jaber's Stance:** Al Jaber justifies his role, highlighting his attempts to involve the oil industry in climate talks and commitments to phase out fossil fuels.
7. **Achievements and Challenges:** Al Jaber claims success in securing funds for the Loss and Damage Fund and commitments from oil companies to achieve 'net zero' carbon emissions. However, challenges persist in navigating diplomatic tensions and finalizing agreements.
8. **President's Neutrality:** Despite the President's involvement in international climate initiatives, neutrality and transcending national interests are expected.



| Clear your doubts now.



Mains easy language

Sultan Ahmed Al Jaber, the COP-28 President and an influential figure in the energy sector, spearheads efforts to engage industrialists in climate talks aimed at phasing out fossil fuels. The COP-28 event in Dubai serves as a vibrant center for global discussions on climate change, hosting various pavilions and meetings. The UNFCCC categorizes countries, influencing their roles in combating climate change. The President's responsibility at COP involves facilitating discussions and achieving consensus among country delegations.

However, Al Jaber faces criticism due to his ties to an oil company, raising doubts about his advocacy for fossil fuel elimination. Despite this, he emphasizes involving the oil industry in climate discussions and commitments toward phasing out fossil fuels. Amid achievements like securing funds for climate-related initiatives and commitments from oil companies, challenges persist in addressing diplomatic tensions and finalizing agreements. Throughout this process, maintaining neutrality and focusing on global climate goals remain crucial for the COP President.

Race of chatbots-The Hindu Profiles

Science and technology

Key Takeaways:

1. **Google's Gemini AI Model:** Launched as Google's response to OpenAI's ChatGPT, Gemini stands out due to its multimodal capabilities, understanding both images and audio.
2. **Google's Catch-up Efforts:** Google was seen lagging behind OpenAI but finally released Gemini after encountering delays, aiming to leverage the uncertainty surrounding OpenAI due to internal issues.
3. **Gemini's Uniqueness:** Unlike traditional models, Gemini was trained on multiple modalities from scratch, termed "natively multimodal," enabling it to understand images and audio in a comprehensive manner.
4. **Impressive Demonstrations:** Gemini showcased impressive abilities in demo videos, such as recognizing a dot-to-dot picture as a crab before completion and tracking objects like a paper ball or performing sleight-of-hand tricks.
5. **Training and Availability:** Google used tensor processing units (TPUs) for Gemini's training, aiming to release three versions—Nano, Pro, and Ultra—for various platforms and tasks, with Ultra expected to launch next year after safety checks.
6. **Market Integration and Criticism:** Gemini's integration within the Google ecosystem makes it more product-oriented, but some criticisms arose regarding the exaggerated claims in demo videos and comparisons with existing models like ChatGPT-4.

Mains easy language

Google's Gemini AI model was launched as a response to OpenAI's ChatGPT, aiming to surpass it by exhibiting multimodal capabilities—understanding both images and audio. Google, initially trailing behind OpenAI, struggled but finally released Gemini amid delays and internal issues faced by its competitor.

Gemini's uniqueness lies in its native multimodal training approach, allowing it to comprehend images and audio comprehensively, leading to impressive demonstrations in demo videos. Despite some impressive feats, criticisms arose regarding Google's marketing strategies, where some claims made in demo videos were found to be exaggerated. Additionally, comparisons with existing models like ChatGPT-4 revealed competitive performances.

While Gemini marks a significant leap in AI capabilities, its demo video controversies highlighted the necessity for transparency and realistic expectations regarding its capabilities and performance.

12th December 2023

A conjuring trick-Indian Express Editorial

Polity

Key takeaways

1. **Legal Validation:** The Supreme Court's decision upholding the abrogation of Article 370 signifies a substantial legal victory for the Narendra Modi government's approach towards Jammu and Kashmir.
2. **Complex History:** The history of Jammu and Kashmir is riddled with betrayal, suffering, and violence, where legalities, promises, and political processes have often failed to address ground realities.
3. **Article 370 Evolution:** Originally intended to safeguard Kashmir's autonomy, Article 370 gradually lost its purpose due to various internal and external factors, ultimately leading to its abrogation in 2019.





4. **Uncertainty in Ruling:** While the Court upheld the abrogation, it left unanswered questions regarding the constitutional validity of the government's procedures, especially the downgrading of Jammu and Kashmir to a Union Territory.
5. **Constitutional Concerns:** The judgment raises concerns about the Court's endorsement of significant changes without explicitly addressing their constitutionality, casting doubts on the integrity of the process.
6. **Need for Reconciliation:** Justice Kaul's suggestion for a Truth and Reconciliation Commission highlights the necessity for an honest evaluation of the suffering endured, emphasizing the absence of a unifying political force capable of facilitating genuine reconciliation.
7. **Future Outlook:** The abrogation of Article 370 marks a significant shift in history, attempting to address longstanding issues. However, uncertainties persist regarding its effectiveness, impact on Indian politics, and the region's future stability.

Mains easy language

The Supreme Court's recent decision upholding the abrogation of Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir represents a significant legal victory for the Modi government. However, it has generated numerous questions about the implications of this judgment. The history of Jammu and Kashmir is marked by complex and often violent dynamics, where legalities, promises, and political processes have struggled to address the ground realities. Article 370, initially designed to protect the region's autonomy, had gradually eroded over time. The Supreme Court's judgment reaffirmed the transitory nature of Article 370 and clarified that the entire Indian Constitution applies to Jammu and Kashmir. Nevertheless, it left key questions unanswered regarding the constitutionality of the government's actions, particularly the downgrading of the region to a Union Territory. This has raised doubts about the Court's role in endorsing such significant changes without explicitly addressing their constitutionality, leading to concerns about the integrity of the process. Justice Kaul's proposal for a Truth and Reconciliation Commission highlights the pressing need for an honest reckoning with the suffering endured in Jammu and Kashmir and the absence of a unifying political force capable of fostering genuine reconciliation. While the abrogation of Article 370 signifies a significant shift in the region's history, its impact on Indian politics and the integrity of the Indian Constitution remains uncertain, leaving lingering questions about the Supreme Court's role in facilitating the government's new approach to Kashmir.

ALL THAT CAN BE SAVED-Indian Express Editorial

Environment

Key takeaways

1. **Emissions Gap Report:** The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) released its 14th Emissions Gap Report, which assesses the disparity between planned climate mitigation and adaptation measures and the required actions to limit global temperature rise.
2. **Greenhouse Gas Impact:** The report emphasizes that human activities, including energy production, industry, agriculture, and waste management, are generating significant greenhouse gas emissions, leading to a rise in Earth's average temperature.
3. **Carbon Dominance:** Carbon dioxide (CO₂) is the dominant greenhouse gas, with long-lasting effects, while methane, though more potent, has a shorter lifespan.
4. **Climate Consequences:** The increase in Earth's mean temperature, about 1 degree Celsius compared to pre-industrial levels, has resulted in extreme weather events like floods, droughts, storms, and cyclones.
5. **CO₂ Emissions Sources:** The majority of CO₂ emissions originate from fossil fuel combustion, primarily in power generation, transportation, manufacturing, construction, and industry.
6. **Renewable Energy Transition:** To mitigate emissions, transitioning to renewable energy sources such as solar and wind is vital in the power generation sector. Electric and hydrogen-based vehicles are needed to address emissions in transportation.
7. **Challenges in High-Intensity Industries:** Industries requiring high-intensity heat, like iron and steel manufacturing, present challenges for renewable energy adoption, as renewables may not provide the necessary heat.
8. **Climate Finance and COP28:** Developing countries need financial and technological support from developed nations to transition away from fossil fuels, adhering to the "polluter pays" principle. The COP28 meeting addresses key climate issues, including equity and fossil fuel phase-out, with ongoing discussions on the global stock take report and progress made on the loss and damage fund.

Mains easy language

The 14th Emissions Gap Report by the United Nations spotlights a significant disparity between the planned actions to combat climate change and the necessary measures to prevent catastrophic global warming. Human activities, such as energy production and industry, are driving the rise in greenhouse gas emissions, resulting in a disturbing increase in Earth's average temperature and severe weather disruptions.





A critical contributor to these emissions is carbon dioxide (CO₂), which has a long-lasting impact, along with methane, a potent but short-lived greenhouse gas. The world has already experienced a 1-degree Celsius temperature rise compared to the pre-industrial era, leading to unprecedented weather events, including floods, droughts, storms, and cyclones.

A closer examination reveals that a significant portion of emissions stems from fossil fuel combustion in electricity generation, transportation, industry, construction, and manufacturing. Transitioning to cleaner energy sources like solar and wind power is imperative. However, some industries, particularly those requiring high-intensity heat, face challenges in adopting renewable energy.

Developing nations face financial and technological barriers to reducing fossil fuel reliance, emphasizing the principle that historically high-emitting developed nations should provide assistance. The COP28 meeting is addressing climate equity and the phase-out of fossil fuels, with the global stock take report being a contentious issue that will shape future climate efforts.

Key aspects of Article 370 verdict: From 'sovereignty' of J&K to 'temporary' nature of Article 370: this is what the Constitution Bench said in its unanimous ruling - Indian Express Explained

Polity

Key takeaways

1. **Unanimous Ruling:** The Supreme Court unanimously upheld the government's abrogation of Article 370, which granted special status to Jammu and Kashmir.
2. **Sovereignty of Jammu and Kashmir:** The Court rejected the argument that Jammu and Kashmir retained sovereignty when it joined the Indian Union in 1947, asserting that its integration was similar to other princely states.
3. **Temporary Nature of Article 370:** The Court affirmed that Article 370 was always meant to be temporary, serving as an interim measure during wartime circumstances.
4. **Legality of Abrogation:** The government's legal approach for abrogating Article 370 involved Presidential Orders CO 272 and CO 273. Justice Kaul upheld this process, while Chief Justice Chandrachud suggested a simpler approach.
5. **Action During President's Rule:** The Court referred to the SR Bommai case to define the scope of powers during President's rule, emphasizing that actions must not be malicious or irrational and should consider advisability and necessity.

Mains easy language

The Supreme Court's unanimous ruling on the abrogation of Article 370 has addressed several crucial aspects of the constitutional and legal framework surrounding Jammu and Kashmir. The Court refuted the argument that Jammu and Kashmir retained sovereignty distinct from other princely states upon joining the Indian Union. It highlighted constitutional provisions that established the state's integration into India, emphasizing the temporary nature of Article 370.

The legal route taken for abrogating Article 370 involved Presidential Orders CO 272 and CO 273, which were subject to debate. While Justice Kaul upheld this process, Chief Justice Chandrachud suggested that the President could have directly abrogated Article 370 after the state's Constituent Assembly dissolved.

The Court also addressed the extent of powers during President's rule, referring to the SR Bommai case. It emphasized that the President's actions must not be motivated by malice or irrationality and should consider the advisability and necessity of the action.

Overall, the Supreme Court's ruling provides clarity on the constitutional validity of the abrogation of Article 370, settling significant legal and governance questions related to Jammu and Kashmir's status within the Indian Union.

Harvest the Odisha story to ensure food security - The Hindu Editorial

Economics (agriculture)

Key takeaways

1. **Odisha's agricultural transformation:** Over the last two decades, Odisha has shifted from importing rice to becoming a significant food grain producer, with a focus on small and marginal farmers.
2. **Tripling rice yield:** Despite stable crop areas, Odisha has tripled its average rice yield, contributing to increased food production.
3. **Climate resilience:** Odisha, a state vulnerable to climate change, has proactively developed a Climate Change Action Plan, addressing vulnerabilities in various sectors, including agriculture.
4. **Bottom-up approach:** Climate resilience efforts in Odisha are developed through community involvement, with regular monitoring and adaptation measures for adverse weather conditions.





5. **Crop diversification:** Odisha has promoted non-paddy crops and diversified agricultural practices to enhance climate resilience and food security.
6. **Partnership with the United Nations:** Collaboration between Odisha and the United Nations World Food Programme has led to innovative schemes for improving food and nutrition security.
7. **Unique development model:** Odisha's journey from food scarcity to surplus, combined with climate-proofing, smallholder protection, and crop diversification, serves as a valuable model for addressing global climate change challenges.

Mains easy language

In recent years, Odisha has made significant strides in achieving food security and climate resilience. This transformation is marked by a shift from being a net rice importer to a surplus producer of 13.6 million tonnes of food grains in 2022. Key factors in this success include a focus on small and marginal farmers, adoption of modern agricultural practices, and tripling of rice yields.

Odisha's proactive Climate Change Action Plan addresses climate challenges across sectors. It emphasizes bottom-up approaches, involving local communities and experts in monitoring and responding to climate impacts.

Collaboration with the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) has led to innovative food security and nutrition schemes, enhancing the state's top-ranking position in the National Food Security Act State Ranking Index for 2022.

Overall, Odisha's journey from food scarcity to surplus production, along with its climate-resilient agriculture, crop diversification, and social protection initiatives, serves as a valuable model for other states to tackle climate change while ensuring food security and sustainable livelihoods.

Decoding Putin's dramatic visit to the Gulf-The Hindu Editorial

International relations

Key takeaways

1. **Strategic Significance:** Putin's visits to the Gulf capitals were marked by mutual goodwill and affirmations of strong ties. The discussions centered on topics such as oil policy, conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza, humanitarian aid, and enhancing bilateral relations.
2. **OPEC+ Cooperation:** Cooperation within the "OPEC+" group, led by Saudi Arabia and Russia, has effectively stabilized oil prices. This cooperation has run counter to U.S. interests, as it ensures production cuts are adhered to.
3. **Shift Towards Russia and China:** The UAE and Saudi Arabia, traditional U.S. allies, are increasingly asserting their strategic autonomy by strengthening ties with Russia and China. The UAE is now Russia's key trade partner in the Gulf.
4. **Iran-Russia Partnership:** Both Russia and Iran, targeted by Western sanctions, aim to challenge Western global leadership. They have forged substantial relations in energy and military sectors, enhancing their capabilities.
5. **Regional Stability:** Putin likely assured Gulf leaders that Russia could help maintain regional stability, preventing the spread of conflicts. Iran's role in restraining groups like Hezbollah and the Houthis was discussed.
6. **Regional Alignment:** Putin sought deeper alignment between Gulf Cooperation Council states and Iran, projecting Russia and China as guarantors of regional peace. China's pivotal role in regional politics was emphasized.
7. **Exclusion of the U.S.:** Gulf leaders, in collaboration with Russia and China, may form a united front to address regional challenges while excluding the U.S. The U.S.'s unwavering support for Israel has reduced its credibility in the region.
8. **Continuity in Russian Leadership:** Putin informed his Gulf counterparts of his intention to seek re-election in 2024, assuring them of continuity in Russia's regional approach.

Mains easy language

Russian President Vladimir Putin's recent visits to Abu Dhabi, Riyadh, and Moscow hold geopolitical significance. These visits signify Russia's pursuit of stronger Gulf ties, challenging Western dominance in the region.

Discussions during these visits covered vital topics like "OPEC+" oil policies, Ukraine, Gaza conflicts, humanitarian aid, and deepening political and economic relations. This demonstrates Russia's commitment to bolstering ties with its Gulf partners.

Notably, the UAE and Saudi Arabia, traditionally aligned with the United States, are now prioritizing relations with Russia and China. Russia's growing partnership with the UAE, its top Gulf trade partner, disrupts U.S. dominance in the region.





Russia and Iran, both facing Western sanctions, are strengthening energy and military cooperation, challenging Western leadership and advocating for a multipolar world order. Putin's visits also imply support for Saudi Arabia's civilian nuclear program, enhancing Russia's regional role.

Putin's agenda includes ensuring regional stability by restraining Hezbollah and the Houthis in Yemen through Iran's influence. He seeks a strategic alignment between Gulf Cooperation Council states and Iran, presenting Russia and China as guarantors of regional peace.

These visits signal that Russia is not isolated and has strong Gulf allies that were once staunch U.S. supporters. They highlight Russia's active role in shaping regional politics and reducing U.S. influence. Overall, Putin's Gulf diplomacy reinforces the Sino-Russian alliance's role in challenging U.S. hegemony and reshaping West Asian politics.

Can Bihar increase its reservation pool?-The Hindu Text and Context

Polity

Key takeaways

1. **Bihar's Increased Reservations:** Bihar has passed laws increasing reservations in jobs and education to 75%, including 20% for Scheduled Castes, 2% for Scheduled Tribes, 18% for Other Backward Classes, 25% for Extremely Backward Classes, and 10% for economically weaker sections.
2. **Supreme Court's 50% Reservation Limit:** The Supreme Court of India has historically upheld that reservations in jobs or education should not exceed 50% of total seats/posts.
3. **Exception to the 50% Rule:** While the 50% limit is generally maintained, the Supreme Court has recognized exceptions allowing states to exceed it in special circumstances. These exceptions apply to communities from remote areas or those kept out of the social mainstream.
4. **Challenges for Bihar Government:** Bihar's government must justify breaching the 50% limit by demonstrating that the communities receiving reservations meet the exception criteria. The Supreme Court emphasizes "adequate" representation over proportionate representation.
5. **Precedents in Other States:** Several states like Chhattisgarh (72%), Tamil Nadu (69%), and northeastern states like Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram, and Nagaland (80%) have already exceeded the 50% reservation limit, excluding the EWS quota.
6. **Legal Challenges Likely:** The breach of the 50% ceiling limit in Bihar's new laws is likely to face legal challenges, potentially leading to a reevaluation of the 50% reservation limit by the Supreme Court.

Mains easy language

On November 17, Bihar's Governor approved two laws that significantly increased reservations in jobs and education within the state. These new laws raised the quota to 75%, with allocations of 20% for Scheduled Castes, 2% for Scheduled Tribes, 18% for Other Backward Classes, 25% for Extremely Backward Classes, and 10% for economically weaker sections (EWS). This move has sparked debates on the permissible limits of reservations in India, especially in light of the Supreme Court's historic "50%" limit set in the Mandal Commission case (Indra Sawhney, 1992). The Supreme Court has consistently maintained that reservations should not exceed 50% of total seats/posts, emphasizing the concept of "adequate" representation rather than "proportionate" representation.

However, the Bihar government's new laws blatantly breach this 50% (now 60% due to EWS reservations) ceiling. To defend this breach, Bihar will need to demonstrate that the communities receiving reservations belong to remote areas or have been marginalized in society. Chief Minister Nitish Kumar argued that these laws aim to increase reservations based on the results of a caste census, but the Supreme Court has repeatedly ruled that reservation quantum cannot be determined solely based on population proportion.

Several other states, including Chhattisgarh, Tamil Nadu, and northeastern states, have already exceeded the 50% limit, albeit excluding the EWS quota. Legal challenges are anticipated, potentially prompting the Supreme Court to reevaluate the 50% reservation limit.

What are FSB's concerns about crypto asset intermediaries? -The Hindu Text and Context

Science and technology

Key takeaways



| Clear your doubts now.



1. **FSB's Concerns:** The FSB is concerned about multi-function crypto-asset intermediaries (MCIs) and their potential impact on financial stability. They emphasize the need for better cross-border cooperation among regulators.
2. **Defining MCIs:** MCIs, like Binance and Coinbase, offer various crypto services, mainly focused on trading. They aim to be one-stop shops for crypto-related services and generate revenue from transaction fees.
3. **Transparency Challenges:** Transparency is a significant issue in the MCI sector. Many MCIs operate opaquely as private entities, limiting regulatory oversight. This lack of transparency may be strategic to evade scrutiny.
4. **Risk Management and Misconduct:** The report highlights the importance of sound risk management within MCIs. Weak risk practices can lead to insider misconduct, as recent allegations against Binance have shown.
5. **Spillover Effects:** While the immediate threat to global financial stability from MCI failures is limited, concerns arise from concentrated deposit exposures to crypto-related firms. Events like the collapse of crypto-friendly banks highlight the risks of deposit outflows and broader financial consequences.

Mains easy language

The Financial Stability Board (FSB) recently released a report addressing concerns about multi-function crypto-asset intermediaries (MCIs) and their potential impact on global financial stability. MCIs, such as Binance and Coinbase, provide a range of crypto-related services and are increasingly seen as one-stop shops for all things crypto. However, the lack of transparency surrounding their operations and business models poses risks.

One major issue is the limited disclosure of corporate structures by MCIs, which hinders regulatory oversight. This lack of transparency may be deliberate, aimed at evading regulatory scrutiny. Poor risk management within MCIs can also lead to insider misconduct, as seen in recent allegations against Binance.

While the report suggests that the immediate threat to global financial stability from MCI failures is limited, there are concerns about concentrated deposit exposures to crypto-related firms. The collapse of crypto-friendly banks earlier this year demonstrated the potential spillover effects on the broader financial system.

In summary, the FSB report underscores the need for better cross-border cooperation among regulators to effectively monitor and regulate MCIs. Transparency and sound risk management are crucial for ensuring the stability of the crypto ecosystem and preventing potential financial disruptions.

Understanding web browsers: how do they work?-The Hindu Text and Context

Science and technology

Key takeaways

1. **Role of Web Browsers:** Web browsers are our digital portals to the internet, translating complex code into the web pages we interact with daily.
2. **Evolution of Browsers:** From early browsers like 'WorldWideWeb' and 'Mosaic' in the '90s to the "Browser Wars" and innovations by Firefox and Chrome, browsers have come a long way.
3. **Core Components of Modern Browsers:** Modern browsers consist of multiple complex components, including request/response systems, rendering engines, and data management tools like cookies and cache, all while prioritizing security.
4. **Future Trends in Browsing:** Browsers are adapting to new technologies like WebAssembly, VR, AR, and improved privacy features to stay relevant and offer enhanced experiences.
5. **Appreciating Browsers' Role:** Understanding the intricate processes behind browsers reveals the magic of how they bring the online world to our fingertips.

Mains easy language

Web browsers are the gateways to our digital world, simplifying the complexities of the internet by converting code into the web pages we interact with daily. These browsers have undergone significant evolution, from early versions that allowed basic interactions to the modern, feature-rich applications we use today.

Modern browsers consist of several core components, each with its own intricacies. They manage the entire process, from sending and receiving requests to rendering web pages, handling data storage, and ensuring security. Browsers use encryption protocols to protect data during transmission and offer warnings against malicious websites to safeguard users' online experiences.





Looking ahead, web browsers continue to evolve. They are embracing cutting-edge technologies like WebAssembly and are gearing up to support virtual and augmented reality experiences, promising immersive online interactions. Additionally, browsers are enhancing privacy features to give users greater control over their digital footprint.

Understanding the complexities behind web browsers allows us to appreciate the seamless experience they provide with every click. These unsung heroes of our digital world orchestrate a symphony of processes to bring the vast expanse of the internet to our fingertips, making our online journeys effortless and enjoyable.

Mosquito fossil has blood-sucking surprise-The Hindu Science

Science

Key takeaways

1. **Ancient Mosquito Fossils:** Researchers found 130-million-year-old mosquito fossils in Lebanon. Surprisingly, these ancient males had blood-feeding mouthparts similar to modern females.
2. **Unusual Blood-Feeding Behavior:** This discovery challenges the common belief that only female mosquitoes feed on blood. Today, males and unfertilized females primarily consume plant nectar, while females require blood for egg development.
3. **Insights into Mosquito Evolution:** These fossils suggest mosquitoes evolved from non-blood-feeding insects. Their mouthparts, initially for plant-piercing, adapted for blood-feeding. This shift might relate to the rise of flowering plants during the Cretaceous Period.
4. **Preserved Anatomy:** The fossils exhibit well-preserved anatomy, revealing sharp jaws and elongated structures with tooth-like projections.
5. **Relevance for Disease Vectors:** Understanding mosquito evolution and feeding habits is essential due to their role in disease transmission. These ancient specimens provide insights into the distant history of mosquitoes, illuminating their transformation into disease vectors.

Mains easy language

Researchers have discovered the oldest-known mosquito fossils, dating back 130 million years to the Cretaceous Period, shedding light on the evolutionary history of mosquitoes. Surprisingly, these fossils are male mosquitoes, and they possessed elongated, piercing-sucking mouthparts typically seen only in modern female mosquitoes, which feed on blood. This discovery challenges the common belief that only female mosquitoes are blood-feeders, as males and unfertilized females usually feed on nectar from plants. The fossils, found in amber near Lebanon, belong to an extinct species that resembles modern mosquitoes, with shorter mouthparts for obtaining blood.

This finding suggests that mosquitoes evolved from insects that did not consume blood. The researchers hypothesize that these mouthparts originally evolved for piercing plants to access nutritious fluids, and the shift to bloodsucking came later in their evolutionary history. Plant evolution, particularly the emergence of flowering plants, might have influenced this feeding divergence between male and female mosquitoes.

Understanding the ancient origins of mosquitoes and their feeding habits provides valuable insights into the evolutionary development of these disease-spreading insects, which continue to pose health risks to humans today.

13th December 2023

Eye on Kashmir -Indian Express Editorial

Polity

Key takeaways

1. **Supreme Court's Decision:** Validates the abolition of Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir, marking a significant shift in India's legal and strategic approach.
2. **India's Sovereignty Affirmed:** The decision emphasizes that India's relationship with Kashmir is not subject to external negotiation, reinforcing national sovereignty.
3. **Continued External Challenges:** Despite legal closure on the sovereignty issue, interference from Pakistan and China persists, requiring stronger national power and deterrence.
4. **Influence of International Perceptions:** Global attitudes towards Kashmir have historically been influenced by support from Western and Islamic countries. Building peace and prosperity in the region is crucial for changing these perceptions.





5. **Shifting Regional Power Dynamics:** India's economic growth outpaces Pakistan's, leading to a widening power gap that influences the regional geopolitical landscape.
6. **India's Strategic Stance:** The government's current strategy involves a firm stance on Kashmir's sovereignty and focuses on development and peace initiatives in the region.
7. **International Support with Challenges:** While there is support from some Western and Islamic countries, challenges include potential disruptions from Pakistan and its alignment with China.

Mains easy language

The Supreme Court of India's decision to uphold the abolition of Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir marks a significant shift in India's approach, reinforcing its sovereignty over the region and signaling an end to its previously defensive strategy. This move is seen as internally solidifying India's stance, although it faces challenges from neighboring Pakistan and China.

Efforts to enhance India's national power and reduce external influences in Kashmir are crucial in dealing with these challenges. Internationally, changing the long-standing perceptions about Kashmir is key, which India aims to achieve by promoting peace and prosperity in the region.

Economically, India's growing dominance over Pakistan is altering regional power dynamics, influencing the Kashmir issue. The Indian government's current strategy is focused on asserting sovereignty, reducing external negotiations, and prioritizing development within Kashmir.

Despite international support, notably from the United States and some Islamic countries, India must navigate ongoing challenges from Pakistan and its alliance with China. A stable and prosperous Kashmir is central to India's strategy for maintaining positive global perceptions and attitudes.

The go-to nation-Indian Express Editorial

Economy

Key takeaways

1. **India's Global Opportunity:** India's current GDP is comparable to China's in 2007, presenting an opportunity to become a major global player, as China did during the global financial crisis.
2. **Global Influence Potential:** With major economies like Europe and the U.S. facing internal challenges, India has the chance to step up as a new source of global growth and stability.
3. **Additionality Concept:** India's growth trajectory, suited for a green and digital future, positions it to add significant value to the global order, similar to China's impact with its mass manufacturing base.
4. **Development Finance Corporation:** India needs an outward-focused finance entity to catalyze global projects, mirroring the role of China's development bank.
5. **Global Development Investment:** If India allocates a portion of its GDP to development cooperation, it could become a significant global source of development finance.
6. **India's Role in the Global South:** India is positioned to be both a voice and a financier for the Global South, enhancing its geopolitical influence.
7. **External Engagement Strategy:** The article emphasizes the importance of India developing a clear strategy for global infrastructure and development projects to mark its presence in key regions.

Mains easy language

India is at a pivotal point similar to China's in 2007, with the potential to become a significant global economic player. This opportunity arises as traditional powers like Europe and the U.S. face internal challenges, and India's economy shows robust growth.

The concept of 'additionality' underlines India's unique potential in the global economy, driven by its green and digital growth, unlike China's earlier mass manufacturing-driven expansion.

India's next strategic step is to establish a development finance corporation to catalyze global projects, mirroring China's approach but focusing on broader corporate needs beyond just trade.

By allocating a small portion of its GDP to development cooperation, India could emerge as a major source of global development finance, enhancing its role in the Global South.





The need for an outward-focused global engagement strategy is emphasized. India should plan and execute infrastructure and development projects internationally, marking its presence and influence in key global regions.

In summary, the article sees India's current economic status as an opportunity to assert significant influence in global affairs, following a unique path of strategic development and international cooperation.

Food vs fuel: case of sugar-Indian Express Explained

Economy

Key takeaways

1. **Ethanol Blending:** The Indian government has restricted the use of sugar for ethanol production, affecting the Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) program.
2. **Rise in Ethanol Blending:** Ethanol blending has significantly increased in India, rising from 1.6% in 2013-14 to 11.8% in 2022-23.
3. **Diversification of Feedstock:** The success of the EBP program is attributed to diversifying ethanol feedstocks, including 'B-heavy' molasses, sugarcane juice, rice, and maize.
4. **Differential Pricing:** The government's differential pricing policy encourages the use of alternative feedstocks by offering higher prices for ethanol produced from sources other than 'C-heavy' molasses.
5. **Recent Directive:** A directive issued on December 7, 2023, prohibits mills and distilleries from using sugarcane juice/syrup for ethanol production, impacting certain companies.
6. **Supply and Sugar Concerns:** The government's decision to limit ethanol production from sugarcane juice/syrup is driven by concerns over low sugar stocks and uncertainty regarding sugar production in the upcoming 2023-24 season.
7. **Sugar Market Impact:** This directive is expected to introduce an additional 15 lakh tonnes of sugar into the market, potentially stabilizing sugar prices and meeting domestic demand more effectively.

Mains easy language

The article discusses the Indian government's recent decision to restrict the use of sugar for ethanol production and its impact on the Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) program. Over the years, India has seen a significant increase in ethanol blending with petrol, driven by diversification in feedstock sources and a differential pricing policy that incentivized alternative feedstock use.

However, a directive issued in December 2023 prohibits mills from using sugarcane juice/syrup for ethanol production, which has raised concerns for certain companies. This decision is rooted in concerns over low sugar stocks and uncertainty regarding sugar production for the upcoming year.

The article also highlights the potential impact of this directive on the sugar market, with an estimated 15 lakh tonnes of additional sugar entering the market. This influx could help stabilize sugar prices and address domestic demand.

Ultimately, the government's decision underscores its commitment to prioritizing domestic food supply, consumers, and food security over fuel production, reflecting a preference for securing food availability within India.

THE GOLDFISH:A CUTE PET IN A BOWL GIANT THREAT WHEN FREE IN A LAKE-Indian Express Explained

Environment

Key takeaways

1. **Invasive Goldfish Threat:** Goldfish, often kept as pets in fishbowls, can become a significant environmental threat when released into natural water ecosystems, such as lakes and rivers.
2. **Ecological Impact:** Despite their small size when kept as pets, goldfish can grow to large sizes in the wild and disrupt fragile ecosystems. They pose a danger to native marine wildlife and can harm valuable ecosystems.
3. **Adaptability and Prolific Breeding:** Goldfish are highly adaptable, can tolerate a wide range of water temperatures, and reach sexual maturity quickly. They are also prolific breeders, making them formidable invaders in new environments.
4. **Versatile Diet:** Goldfish have a diverse diet, including algae, aquatic plants, eggs, and invertebrates. This versatility in their diet allows them to thrive in various environmental conditions.
5. **Global Issue:** The problem of invasive goldfish is not limited to one region; it has been observed in multiple countries, including Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States.





6. **Climate Change Impact:** Climate change may exacerbate the issue as goldfish can adapt to warming and poorly oxygenated waters, potentially increasing their invasive capabilities.

Mains easy language

The article highlights the often underestimated ecological threat posed by pet goldfish when released into natural water ecosystems. Goldfish, typically kept as small and harmless pets in fishbowls, can grow significantly in the wild, turning into invasive species that disrupt delicate ecosystems and harm native marine wildlife. Their adaptability, quick maturity, and prolific breeding make them formidable invaders, while their versatile diet allows them to thrive in various environmental conditions.

This is not a localized issue; it's a global concern observed in countries like Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Additionally, climate change may exacerbate the problem as goldfish can adapt to warming waters and environments with low oxygen levels.

To address this issue and protect native ecosystems, effective management and control measures are crucial. Recognizing the ecological impact of goldfish and the need for proactive steps can help preserve the health and biodiversity of natural environments.

Going after touts: the change in Advocates Act-The Hindu Editorial

Polity

Key takeaways

1. **Advocates (Amendment) Bill, 2023:** The Advocates (Amendment) Bill, 2023, passed in Lok Sabha during the Winter Session, received Presidential assent on December 8, 2023.
2. **Aim of the Amendment:** The amendment's primary goal is to eliminate 'touts' from the legal system by repealing outdated laws.
3. **Definition of 'Tout':** The repealed Legal Practitioners Act of 1879 introduced the definition of a 'tout' as a person who procures clients for a legal practitioner in exchange for remuneration.
4. **Support for the Amendment:** Congress MP Karti Chidambaram welcomed the Bill, emphasizing that touts thrive due to the complexity of the legal system.
5. **The Advocates Act of 1961:** The 1961 Act was enacted to regulate the legal profession, establish Bar Councils, and provide for an All-India Bar.
6. **The Advocates (Amendment) Act, 2023:** The 2023 amendment introduces Section 45A, allowing High Courts and district judges to create and publish lists of touts, while imposing penalties on those acting as touts while their names are on the list.

Mains easy language

The article discusses the recent passage of the Advocates (Amendment) Bill, 2023, in India. This bill aims to tackle the issue of 'touts' in the legal system, individuals who procure clients for legal practitioners. The bill, initially introduced in Rajya Sabha and later passed during the Winter Session in Lok Sabha, received Presidential assent on December 8, 2023.

The key objective of the amendment is to eliminate these touts, who exploit the complexity of the legal system, particularly affecting individuals with limited access to education and resources.

The amendment repeals the outdated Legal Practitioners Act of 1879 and amends the Advocates Act of 1961, which regulates the legal profession.

The recent change introduces Section 45A, enabling High Courts and district judges to compile and publish lists of touts. Individuals listed can challenge their inclusion. Those found to be touts while on the list face penalties, including imprisonment and fines.

In summary, the Advocates (Amendment) Bill, 2023, aims to enhance fairness and transparency in the legal profession by addressing the issue of touts in India's legal system.

An anti-terror law and its interference with liberty-The Hindu Editorial

Internal security

Key takeaways

1. **Journalist's Release:** Journalist Fahad Shah was released by the Jammu and Kashmir High Court on November 17, 2023, after being detained on various charges, including under the UAPA.





2. **UAPA's Criticism:** India's primary anti-terrorism law, the UAPA, has faced criticism for its broad interpretation, leading to arrests in situations unrelated to actual violence.
3. **Wide Net of UAPA:** The UAPA's vague language and Section 18 allow for broad interpretations, while Section 43-D(5) restricts bail based on 'prima facie true' allegations, contributing to Fahad Shah's arrest.
4. **High Court's Ruling:** The Jammu and Kashmir High Court's November 17 judgment stressed the need for cautious enforcement of the UAPA, given its significant impact on personal liberty.
5. **Defamation as Terrorism:** The government argued that publishing an article could be an act of terrorism, but the High Court rejected this notion, emphasizing the distinction between defamation and terrorism.
6. **Arrest and Detention:** The High Court questioned whether Section 43-D(5) of UAPA should automatically deny bail based on 'prima facie true' allegations, highlighting the difference between genuine threats and coerced actions.

Mains easy language

The article discusses the recent release of journalist Fahad Shah following a judgment by the Jammu and Kashmir High Court. Mr. Shah had been detained under various charges, including those under the UAPA, a key anti-terrorism law in India.

The UAPA has been critiqued for its broad interpretation and use in cases unrelated to actual violence. In Mr. Shah's case, Section 43-D(5) of UAPA restricted bail based on 'prima facie true' allegations. However, the High Court's judgment emphasized that the UAPA's significant interference with personal liberty requires careful enforcement.

The government argued that publishing an article could be considered an act of terrorism, damaging India's reputation. Nevertheless, the High Court rejected this interpretation, emphasizing that defamation should not be equated with terrorism.

While this judgment may not bring revolutionary changes, it serves as a reminder of the need for accountability in the face of oppressive laws. It underscores the importance of questioning state actions and ensuring they align with the Constitution's principles of personal liberty.

Patent exclusions — Madras High Court shows the way-The Hindu Editorial

Science and technology

Key takeaways

1. **Clarity in Pharmaceutical Patents:** Clarity about the scope of patent protection is crucial for pharmaceutical patents, allowing innovation and accessibility. India's Patents Act's Section 3 outlines exclusions to patentability, demanding precise interpretation.
2. **Recent Madras High Court Judgments:** Justice Senthilkumar Ramamoorthy's recent Madras High Court judgments provide insights into patent exclusions. These rulings clarify the extent of patent protection.
3. **Section 3(e) Clarification:** In *Novozymes vs. Assistant Controller of Patents*, the court addressed Section 3(e), which excludes mere component aggregations. Known aggregates aren't excluded, but evidence is vital to prove innovation beyond aggregation.
4. **Section 3(i) Examination:** In *Hong Kong and Shanghai University vs. Assistant Controller of Patents*, Section 3(i) excludes inventions related to treatments. The court clarified that not all diagnostic processes are barred, proposing a diagnostic capability test.
5. **Need for Clear Rules:** Given high pharmaceutical research costs, clear, consistent rules are crucial. Bright-line rules simplify patent decisions, benefiting inventors and civil society groups opposing patents.
6. **Judiciary's Role:** The Madras High Court suggests legislative considerations and compulsory licensing to address exclusions. Courts balance competing interests and interpret patent laws considering India's socio-economic context, contributing to public health.

Mains easy language

The recent judgments by Justice Senthilkumar Ramamoorthy of the Madras High Court shed light on critical aspects of patent exclusions under India's Patents Act, with significant implications for pharmaceutical patents. These rulings provide much-needed clarity regarding the scope of patent protection, which is essential for promoting both innovation and accessibility to medicines.

In the case of Section 3(e), the court clarified that mere component aggregations are not excluded from patent protection, particularly if the individual components meet patent eligibility criteria. However, the court emphasized the importance of providing evidence to demonstrate that the invention extends beyond a simple aggregation.

Regarding Section 3(i), which deals with inventions related to treatments, the court established a diagnostic capability test to determine eligibility. If a test can diagnose a disease, even if not definitively, it would be ineligible for a patent.





These judgments underscore the need for clear and consistent rules in patent decisions, benefiting inventors, civil society groups opposing patents, and ultimately contributing to innovation and public health. Furthermore, they highlight the judiciary's vital role in interpreting patent laws within India's socio-economic context, promoting a balanced approach to protect both innovation and public interests.

India's extreme rainfall 'corridor' -The hindu Text and Context

Geography

Key takeaways

- 1. Impact of Global Warming on Indian Monsoon:**Global warming has disrupted various aspects of the Indian monsoon, including its onset, withdrawal, intensity, and overall seasonal rainfall patterns.
- 2. Challenges in Predicting Extreme Rainfall Events:**While forecasting methods have improved, predicting extreme rainfall during the monsoon season remains a complex task due to multiple influencing factors.
- 3. Discovering a Stable "Rainfall Corridor":**A recent study identified a consistent geographical corridor for large-scale extreme rainfall events, spanning from West Bengal and Odisha to Gujarat and Rajasthan. This corridor's stability has persisted from 1901 to 2019.
- 4. Potential for Improved Predictions:**The identification of this stable corridor offers an opportunity for enhanced process understanding and more accurate predictions of synchronized extreme rainfall events, which can significantly benefit disaster preparedness and management.
- 5. Network Analysis Reveals Synchronicity:**In-depth analysis of rainfall data highlighted specific nodes with high synchronicity, indicating patterns in the monsoon's behavior that can be leveraged for more precise forecasting.
- 6. Emphasizing Dynamics over Resolution:**Instead of solely focusing on increasing model resolution or computational costs, the study suggests that understanding the dynamics of synchronization within the monsoon system could lead to more effective forecasts and risk reduction in sectors like agriculture, water management, energy, transportation, and health.

Mains easy language

Global warming has left no aspect of the Indian monsoon untouched, impacting its timing, intensity, and overall behavior. While the India Meteorological Department has made advancements in monsoon forecasting, predicting extreme rainfall events remains challenging due to complex interactions. However, a recent study has identified a remarkable discovery – a stable "corridor" for large-scale extreme rainfall events extending from West Bengal and Odisha to Gujarat and Rajasthan, unchanged since 1901. This finding provides hope for improved predictions and process understanding.

By analyzing rainfall data, researchers uncovered nodes with high synchronicity, suggesting that the monsoon's behavior follows specific patterns, even amidst climate change. This revelation offers the potential for enhanced forecasts and risk reduction in critical sectors. Importantly, it emphasizes that addressing dynamics and synchronization, rather than increasing computational costs, may hold the key to better monsoon predictions and disaster mitigation.

In the chaos of turbulence, scientists chase glimpses of hidden order-The Hindu Science

Science

Key takeaways

- 1. Turbulence in Everyday Life:** Turbulence, characterized by chaotic and unpredictable fluid motion, is a common phenomenon encountered in everyday life, from rising smoke plumes to stirring beverages and even exhaled breath on cold days.
- 2. Balancing Forces:** Turbulence arises due to a balance between inertia, which promotes motion, and viscous friction, which opposes it. Inertia becomes dominant at higher speeds and larger scales, leading to turbulent flow.
- 3. Navier-Stokes Equations:** The behavior of turbulent flow is described by the Navier-Stokes equations, which account for both laminar and turbulent flow. These equations are challenging to solve, particularly for long-term predictions, due to their nonlinear nature.
- 4. Chaos and Sensitivity:** Turbulence exhibits chaotic behavior, where small initial perturbations grow rapidly, limiting long-term predictions. Sensitivity to initial conditions makes short-term weather forecasts feasible but long-term forecasts challenging.
- 5. Order Amid Chaos:** Surprisingly, turbulence also reveals hidden order within its chaos. Andrei Kolmogorov's theory explains a relationship between the size and energy of turbulent eddies, which holds true for various types of flows.





6. **Coherent Structures:** Turbulent flows often contain pockets of coherent motion, such as Jupiter's Great Red Spot, challenging the perception that turbulence is entirely random. This suggests that turbulence hides a deeper level of organization yet to be fully understood.

Mains easy language

Turbulence, characterized by its chaotic and unpredictable fluid motion, is a phenomenon encountered in everyday life, from swirling smoke plumes to stirred beverages. It arises from a delicate balance between inertia, which promotes motion, and viscous friction, which opposes it. The Navier-Stokes equations, describing both laminar and turbulent flow, remain challenging to solve due to their nonlinear nature.

Turbulence exhibits chaotic behavior, making long-term predictions difficult, but short-term weather forecasts remain feasible. Surprisingly, turbulence also reveals hidden order within its chaos. Andrei Kolmogorov's theory explains a consistent relationship between the size and energy of turbulent eddies across various flows.

Additionally, turbulence often contains pockets of coherent motion, challenging the perception of complete randomness. For example, Jupiter's Great Red Spot is a long-lasting coherent structure within turbulent flows. This enigmatic interplay of chaos and order continues to captivate and challenge scientists from various disciplines, emphasizing that nature's mysteries extend beyond particle colliders and telescopes.

14th December 2023

DEBATE THE CODE-Indian Express Editorial

Polity

Key takeaways

1. **New Legislation Introduction:**The Indian government introduced three bills to reform the criminal justice system. These include Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023; Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), 2023; and Bharatiya Sakshya (BS) Bill, 2023, to address long-standing issues.
2. **Legislative Process Concerns:**There are concerns about the quick introduction of these bills during the Monsoon Session, with limited transparency in stakeholder consultations and questions about the selection of experts.
3. **Parliamentary Review:**A parliamentary committee led by BJP MP Brij Lal reviewed the bills. While it acknowledged the government's efforts, concerns were raised about the scope of organized crime. However, the revised bills made few changes.
4. **Implications of New Criminal Code:**The new code broadens ordinary criminal law to include terrorism, corruption, and organized crime, raising concerns about personal liberty and extended police custody times. The government's emphasis on "indigenisation" and "decolonisation" is noted, but some contentious provisions, like sedition, remain largely unchanged.
5. **Call for Thorough Debate:**The article stresses the need for a comprehensive and transparent debate on the bills, urging caution in the legislative process. Revising century-old laws affecting common citizens requires a measured approach to address issues while protecting fundamental rights and principles.

Mains easy language

The Indian government has introduced three significant bills aimed at reforming the country's criminal justice system. These bills, including Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) 2023, Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) 2023, and Bharatiya Sakshya (BS) Bill 2023, are seen as essential to address persistent issues within the system. However, concerns have arisen due to the rapid legislative process and limited transparency in stakeholder consultations during the pandemic.

A parliamentary committee, led by BJP MP Brij Lal, acknowledged these concerns but made only minor adjustments to the bills, leaving critical issues largely unaddressed. The broadening of ordinary criminal law to cover areas like terrorism and corruption has raised fears regarding personal liberties and the potential misuse of police powers.

While the government's emphasis on "indigenisation" and "decolonisation" in criminal law is commendable, some contentious provisions, such as sedition, have seen nominal changes rather than substantial reform. In light of these concerns, the article underscores the need for comprehensive and transparent debates to ensure that the reforms effectively tackle pressing issues in the criminal justice system while upholding fundamental rights and principles.

Power play in Ladakh-Indian Express Editorial

Polity



| Clear your doubts now.



Key takeaways

1. **Supreme Court's Verdict on Ladakh:**The Supreme Court's recent verdict upheld Ladakh's status as a separate Union Territory. While this judgment has been met with positive reactions in Leh, it has also stirred discontent in Kargil, highlighting the complex nature of this regional change.
2. **Historical Background and Demands:**Ladakh's demand for statehood and Sixth Schedule status has historical roots dating back to the time of Maharaja Hari Singh. Despite its vast territorial size, Ladakh has long felt overlooked within the larger framework of the state.
3. **Concerns Over Demographic Changes:**The transition to Union Territory status has raised concerns about potential demographic shifts in Ladakh. These concerns revolve around how changes in population dynamics might impact the region's unique cultural and social identity.
4. **Ladakh's Aspiration for Power and Autonomy:**Central to Ladakh's political aspirations is its desire for greater autonomy and legislative power. This would enable Ladakh to have a more active role in shaping its own future.
5. **Debate Over Legal Safeguards:**Within this context, there is a call for legal safeguards to protect Ladakh's cultural heritage and land. However, some questions have arisen regarding the demand for protection under tribal laws, such as the Sixth Schedule.
6. **Government's Handling and Clarity:**Criticism has been directed at the government's handling of the Ladakh issue, primarily due to a perceived lack of clarity and articulation in its approach. The ongoing debates about Ladakh's political status, including discussions about statehood and the pursuit of protectionist paths, underscore the ongoing challenges.
7. **Geopolitical Implications:**The status of Ladakh carries significant geopolitical implications, particularly concerning relations with neighboring countries, most notably China. China's concerns about India's actions in Ladakh have added layers of complexity to the region's dynamics and have the potential to impact broader international relations.

Mains easy language

The Supreme Court's recent verdict upholding the creation of a separate Union Territory for Ladakh has brought constitutional clarity and a roadmap for its future. While residents of Leh have welcomed the judgment and called for early statehood and Assembly polls, some in Kargil have expressed discontent and desire to remain part of Jammu and Kashmir. The demand for statehood and Sixth Schedule status for Ladakh is rooted in historical grievances, including neglect despite its significant territorial size.

The move to Union Territory status has raised concerns about potential demographic changes and identity issues in Ladakh. Ladakh's demand for power and legislative autonomy has been a significant driver of its political aspirations, and there is a call for legal safeguards for its culture and land.

However, the government's handling of the Ladakh issue has been characterized by a lack of clarity and articulation, contributing to lingering discontent. The future of Ladakh's political status remains uncertain, with debates about statehood, Sixth Schedule status, and protectionist paths continuing. Additionally, the issue has geopolitical implications, as Ladakh's status affects relations with neighboring countries, particularly China.

[How two men leapt into Lok Sabha, what the House security rules say - Indian express Explained](#)

Polity

Key takeaways

1. **Unauthorized Entry into Lok Sabha:**Two individuals breached security protocols in the Lok Sabha by gaining entry into the visitors' gallery using passes issued on the recommendation of a BJP MP from Mysore, Prathap Simha.
2. **Rules Governing Visitors' Entry:**The admission, withdrawal, and removal of visitors in the Lok Sabha are governed by specific Rules (386, 387, and 387A) outlined in the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha.
3. **Speaker's Authority:**The Speaker of the Lok Sabha has the authority to regulate the admission of strangers (visitors) to portions of the House not reserved for exclusive use by members. The Speaker can also order the withdrawal of strangers who violate regulations.
4. **Entry Process:**Members of Parliament (MPs) can apply for visitors' cards only for individuals they personally know well. MPs must certify that they know the visitors personally and take full responsibility for them.





5. **Submission of Visitor Requests:** Requests for admission cards should ideally be submitted by 1600 hours on the working day before the required date. However, same-day visitor cards can be issued under specific conditions, subject to space availability.
6. **Types of Galleries:** Lok Sabha has two types of galleries - public gallery and Speaker's gallery. MPs can facilitate the entry of four people daily in the public gallery and two people in the Speaker's gallery.
7. **Security Checks:** All visitors must undergo security checks, including passing through metal detectors. Their visitor cards and details are cross-checked with approved lists.
8. **Visitor Guidelines:** Guidelines ensure that visitors maintain decorum in the gallery by not engaging in any disruptive behavior like shouting slogans or attempting to distribute objectionable items. Security staff and supervisors in the gallery oversee visitor conduct.
9. **Similar Rules for Rajya Sabha:** Rajya Sabha has similar rules and procedures for the entry of visitors, with its own security protocols and guidelines.

Mains easy language

The unauthorized entry of two individuals into the Lok Sabha visitors' gallery highlights the importance of adherence to security rules and protocols. Rules governing visitors' entry, as outlined in the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha, grant the Speaker the authority to regulate and control the admission and behavior of strangers (visitors) within the House.

Members of Parliament (MPs) can recommend visitors for entry, but they must personally know the visitors and take full responsibility for them. Requests for admission cards should ideally be submitted in advance, but same-day cards can be issued under specific conditions.

Security checks, including metal detector scans, are mandatory for all visitors, and guidelines ensure that visitors maintain decorum in the gallery. Rajya Sabha has its own rules and procedures for visitor entry, mirroring those of the Lok Sabha.

This incident underscores the need for vigilance and strict adherence to security measures within the Parliament premises to prevent unauthorized access and maintain the dignity and security of the House

[COP28: Much done, but still not enough-indian Express Explained](#)

Environment

Key takeaways

1. **COP28 Outcomes:** COP28 achieved significant outcomes, including acknowledging the need to move away from fossil fuels, promises to reduce methane emissions, operationalizing the loss and damage fund, and agreeing on global adaptation goals.
2. **COP28 Falling Short:** Despite these achievements, COP28 fell short of expectations, seen as a last chance to keep global warming within the 1.5-degree Celsius threshold.
3. **Global Stocktake (GST):** COP28's main agenda was the Global Stocktake (GST), assessing progress in fighting climate change. It's mandated by the Paris Agreement as a periodic exercise.
4. **Challenges with Outcomes:** COP28 had challenges, such as no specific schedules or targets for fossil fuel phase-out, unclear tripling of renewable energy, and no methane emission targets for 2030.
5. **Loss and Damage Fund:** The operationalization of the Loss and Damage Fund was significant, with several countries committing funding to help vulnerable nations recover from climate-induced disasters.
6. **Global Goal on Adaptation:** COP28 adopted a global adaptation framework, but it currently lacks financial provisions, requiring future strengthening.

Mains easy language

COP28 delivered some important milestones in the global fight against climate change, including recognizing the urgency to shift away from fossil fuels, pledging to reduce methane emissions, and establishing a Loss and Damage Fund to aid vulnerable nations. Additionally, the adoption of global adaptation goals was a significant step forward.

However, COP28 faced criticism for not meeting the high expectations set for immediate climate action. The absence of specific targets and schedules for fossil fuel phase-out, uncertainty surrounding the tripling of renewable energy capacity, and the lack of methane emission reduction targets by 2030 were major shortcomings.





COP28 was deemed crucial in the effort to limit global warming to the 1.5-degree Celsius threshold, but it was unable to provide the necessary acceleration of climate action in the short term. The challenges ahead include strengthening the global adaptation framework and addressing the financial provisions required for its implementation.

Revised criminal reform Bills in Parliament: What has changed, and why-Indian express explained

Polity

Key takeaways

1. **Revised Criminal Reform Bills:** The Centre introduced updated criminal reform Bills in Lok Sabha, replacing earlier versions introduced in August 2023, with the aim of replacing the Indian Penal Code, Code of Criminal Procedure, and the Indian Evidence Act.
2. **Incorporation of Suggestions:** A Parliamentary Standing Committee on Home Affairs proposed several changes to the Bills, which were incorporated into the new versions. These changes include restrictions on handcuffs' use for persons accused of "economic offenses" and making handcuff usage more discretionary.
3. **Mercy Petitions:** The revised Bills removed the provision allowing mercy petitions to be forwarded to the Home Department of the state government or the Centre, and they make Governor's orders under Article 161 unappealable.
4. **Preventive Detention Powers:** The Bills clarify the time frame for preventive detention, specifying that detained individuals must be taken to a magistrate or released within 24 hours. The term "judicial magistrate" has been replaced by "Magistrate."
5. **Addressing Concerns:** The revised Bills aim to address concerns and recommendations made by the Parliamentary Standing Committee, providing greater clarity and introducing restrictions in certain aspects of criminal justice reform.

Mains easy language

The Centre has introduced revised criminal reform Bills in Lok Sabha, replacing earlier versions introduced in August 2023. These Bills aim to replace significant components of India's criminal justice system, including the Indian Penal Code, Code of Criminal Procedure, and the Indian Evidence Act. A Parliamentary Standing Committee on Home Affairs had proposed several changes to the Bills, and these changes have been incorporated into the new versions.

Some key changes include restrictions on the use of handcuffs, which were welcomed by the Parliamentary Standing Committee, with a recommendation to restrict their use to heinous crimes rather than economic offenses. Additionally, the Bills removed the provision allowing mercy petitions to be forwarded to the Home Department of the state government or the Centre, and they make Governor's orders under Article 161 unappealable.

The Bills also clarify the time frame for preventive detention, specifying that detained individuals must be taken to a magistrate or released within 24 hours. The term "judicial magistrate" has been replaced by "Magistrate."

In summary, the revised criminal reform Bills aim to address concerns and recommendations made by the Parliamentary Standing Committee, providing greater clarity and introducing restrictions in certain aspects of criminal justice reform. These Bills will likely undergo further debate and scrutiny as they proceed through the legislative process.

Gaza, a new pointer to India's changed world view-The Hindu Editorial

International relations

Key takeaways

1. **Evolution of India's Foreign Policy:** India's foreign policy has evolved significantly over time, transitioning from a non-aligned and anti-colonial stance to a more dynamic and strategic approach.
2. **Palestine-Israel Relations:** India initially opposed the partition of Palestine into Israel and Palestine but eventually recognized Israel. It maintained consular-level relations for decades while supporting the Palestinian cause.
3. **Growing India-Israel Relations:** In recent years, India's relations with Israel have strengthened, especially in defense and intelligence cooperation due to shared security concerns.
4. **India's Stance on Israeli-Palestinian Conflict:** India advocates a two-state solution for Israel and Palestine, emphasizing peaceful coexistence within recognized borders.
5. **UN Vote Controversy:** India faced criticism for abstaining from a UN resolution during the Israel-Gaza conflict, leading to questions about its alignment in the conflict.
6. **Changing Foreign Policy Under Modi:** Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India's foreign policy has undergone significant changes, including a closer relationship with the United States and a shift in regional geopolitical priorities.



| Clear your doubts now.



Mains easy language

The changing dynamics of India's foreign policy in the context of the Israel-Gaza conflict reveal a notable evolution. Historically, India pursued a policy of non-alignment, emphasizing strategic autonomy and neutrality during the Cold War. However, recent years have seen a shift in this approach. India's deepening relationship with Israel, marked by defense and security cooperation, highlights changing priorities, particularly in the face of shared security challenges such as terrorism.

During the Israel-Gaza conflict, India initially expressed strong support for Israel but later called for direct negotiations between Israel and Palestine. This shift indicates a growing concern for humanitarian aspects of conflicts. However, India's abstention from a UN resolution for an immediate ceasefire raised questions about its alignment and priorities.

Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India's foreign policy has witnessed changes, including closer ties with the United States, reflecting a broader reorientation to address emerging global geopolitical realities. These developments underscore India's transition toward a more dynamic and strategic foreign policy approach.

Row over hate speech in U.S. universities-The Hindu Text and Context

International relations

Key takeaways

1. **Resignation Following Hearing:** University of Pennsylvania President Liz Magill resigned after criticism for her testimony during a U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Education hearing on rising anti-Semitic and Islamophobic incidents on campuses.
2. **Congressional Inquiry:** University presidents, including those from Harvard and MIT, faced questions about their institutions' codes of conduct regarding hate speech, raising debates on free speech limitations.
3. **Department of Education Investigations:** The U.S. Department of Education initiated investigations into anti-Semitic incidents at several universities amid an increase in reports of discrimination.
4. **University Responses:** Some universities, like Harvard and Tulane, have taken measures to support hate crime victims, bolstering campus security and offering anti-Semitism training.
5. **Concerns Over Disparity:** Palestinian students and their supporters argue that Islamophobia on campuses has garnered less attention compared to anti-Semitism. Recent shootings targeting Palestinian students have amplified these concerns.
6. **Free Speech vs. Hate Speech:** The balance between safeguarding free speech and addressing hate speech on campuses remains contentious, with varying views on setting boundaries.

Mains easy language

The recent controversy surrounding university presidents' testimonies at a U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Education hearing highlights the complex issue of hate speech on college campuses. After facing criticism for their responses to questions about campus codes of conduct regarding hate speech, one university president resigned, while others faced backlash for seemingly prioritizing free speech over addressing anti-Semitic and Islamophobic incidents.

The U.S. Department of Education has launched investigations into allegations of anti-Semitism at multiple universities, reflecting the nationwide rise in reports of discrimination. Some institutions have taken steps to support victims of hate crimes, including enhancing campus security and providing anti-Semitism training.

However, concerns persist about the disparity in addressing Islamophobia compared to anti-Semitism, with Palestinian students and their supporters emphasizing the need for greater attention to this issue. The debate over protecting free speech while combatting hate speech on campuses remains a complex and divisive challenge.

How Islam got tangled in the web of global warfare-The Hindu text and context

International relations

Key takeaways

1. **Impact of the Iranian Revolution:** The 1979 Iranian Revolution, led by Shiite Islam, had far-reaching consequences in reshaping the Muslim world.
2. **Unintended Consequences of U.S. Involvement:** U.S. support for Afghan resistance fighters during the Soviet-Afghan War inadvertently led to the rise of radical Islamist groups like Al-Qaeda and the Taliban.
3. **Saudi Arabia's Promotion of Wahhabi-Salafism:** Saudi Arabia's promotion of rigid Wahhabi-Salafi Islam and the funding of mosques worldwide contributed to the spread of an intolerant interpretation of Islam.





4. **Sectarian Fault Lines:** Deep divisions between Saudi Arabia and Iran emerged after 1979, exacerbating tensions in the Muslim world.
5. **Lack of Nuance in Western Understanding:** Western nations often oversimplify and misunderstand the complexities and differences within the Muslim world.
6. **Need for Dialogue and Nuanced Understanding:** To address the challenges facing the Muslim world, there is a pressing need for dialogue and a more nuanced understanding of Islam.

Mains easy language

The article delves into the far-reaching consequences of the Iranian Revolution of 1979 on the Muslim world and global geopolitics. This pivotal event, driven by Shiite Islam and led by Ayatollah Khomeini, not only resulted in the overthrow of Iran's monarchy but also inspired religious fervor and movements worldwide. It significantly impacted regional politics and even influenced U.S. presidential elections.

Furthermore, the article highlights the subsequent rise of Saudi Arabia's promotion of Wahhabi-Salafism, a fundamentalist Sunni ideology, which has had a profound impact on the interpretation of Islam worldwide. Saudi Arabia's financial support for mosques and religious institutions disseminating this ideology has contributed to the spread of religious intolerance.

The article also underscores the deep-seated sectarian divisions in the Muslim world, particularly the rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran, which has fueled conflicts and radicalization.

In conclusion, the article calls for a more nuanced and empathetic understanding of the complexities within the Muslim world, emphasizing the importance of informed dialogue and diplomacy in addressing the region's challenges and promoting peace.

The limitations of CCS and CDR and their grip on future climate-The Hindu Science

Science

Key Takeaways:

1. **Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) and Carbon-Dioxide Removal (CDR):** CCS involves capturing carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions at their source before release into the atmosphere, while CDR encompasses methods like afforestation, direct air capture, and bioenergy with carbon capture and storage (BECCS) to remove CO₂ from the environment.
2. **Usage in Climate Mitigation:** The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) heavily relies on CDR in its projections to limit global temperature increases to 1.5 degrees Celsius. Without substantial CDR, achieving this goal through direct emissions reduction would be extremely challenging.
3. **Challenges with CCS:** Effective CCS requires capturing 90-95% of emissions with permanent storage and minimal methane emissions. However, CCS faces difficulties in scaling, high costs, and energy requirements.
4. **Limitations of CDR:** CDR methods, particularly land-based ones like afforestation and BECCS, face land constraints and can raise equity concerns, affecting indigenous communities and biodiversity.
5. **Room for Emission Reductions:** Concerns exist that CCS and CDR can create room for more greenhouse gas emissions, potentially delaying the necessary transition away from fossil fuels.
6. **Global South Concerns:** Large-scale CDR projects in the Global South can raise land rights and equity issues, potentially impacting agriculture and food security.
7. **Funding and Viability:** The next decade is crucial in determining the viability and scalability of CDR methods. However, financing and cost-sharing for large-scale CDR remain uncertain.

Mains easy language

The article discusses the significance and limitations of Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) and Carbon-Dioxide Removal (CDR) technologies in mitigating climate change. These technologies are essential components of climate mitigation efforts, especially in scenarios aimed at limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

CCS aims to capture CO₂ emissions at their source, while CDR includes various methods to remove CO₂ from the atmosphere. Both are vital for achieving ambitious climate goals. However, they face significant challenges.

CCS struggles with scaling, high costs, and energy requirements, while CDR methods, particularly land-based ones, can raise land rights and equity concerns. Additionally, there is a concern that relying too heavily on CCS and CDR may create room for more greenhouse gas emissions, potentially hindering the transition away from fossil fuels.





The next decade will be crucial in determining the viability and scalability of these technologies, but questions remain about funding and cost-sharing, particularly between developed and developing countries. The article underscores the need for a balanced approach to climate mitigation that combines emissions reduction with effective CCS and CDR strategies.

15th December 2023

The nature of the future-Indian Express Editorial

Environment

Key takeaways

1. **Inadequate Progress:** The stocktake at COP28 reveals that current NDCs would only lead to a 2% reduction in global emissions by 2030, far from the required 50% to limit temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius by 2050.
2. **Climate Finance:** Promised \$100 billion/year in climate finance by developed countries has not been met, raising doubts about the actual support provided.
3. **Financial Gap:** Developing countries need \$800 billion/year for NDCs and \$215-\$387 billion/year for adaptation, far exceeding available funds.
4. **Sustainability Focus:** COP28 emphasized transitioning away from fossil fuels to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050 but acknowledged the role of "transitional fuels."
5. **Renewable Energy and Efficiency:** Targets set for tripling renewable energy capacity and doubling energy efficiency gains by 2030; India recognized as a leader.
6. **Diverse Energy Sources:** Nuclear energy, green, and blue hydrogen were introduced as clean energy sources, aligning with India's efforts.
7. **International Initiatives:** Various alliances and groups formed to accelerate climate progress, including the Powering Past Coal Alliance and Nuclear Power Group.
8. **Cross-Domain Approach:** COP28 recognized the interconnectedness of climate change with health, food security, and biodiversity loss, promoting a holistic approach to environmental challenges.

Mains easy language

COP28 addressed key challenges in the fight against climate change. It revealed that current commitments fall far short of the necessary reductions, with NDCs only leading to a 2% reduction in emissions by 2030.

Climate finance remained a pressing issue, as the promised \$100 billion/year by developed countries was not met, creating skepticism and hindering the efforts of developing nations.

Financial challenges were exacerbated by the substantial funding required. Developing countries need about \$800 billion/year for NDCs and \$215-\$387 billion/year for adaptation, yet current pledges are insufficient.

COP28 did have positive aspects, including a focus on sustainability, with an emphasis on transitioning from fossil fuels to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050. Ambitious targets were set for renewable energy and energy efficiency, with India leading in these areas.

Diverse energy sources like nuclear energy, green hydrogen, and blue hydrogen were recognized as clean options, aligning with India's priorities. International initiatives also gained traction.

The conference acknowledged the interconnectedness of climate change with health, food security, and biodiversity loss, promoting a cross-disciplinary approach to address these global challenges. COP28, despite its challenges, sets the stage for a more holistic approach to climate and ecological concerns.

Reservation is oxygen-Indian Express Editorial

Sociology

Key takeaways

1. **Complexity of Reservation Debate:** The article highlights the complexity of the debate surrounding reservations in India, emphasizing that it goes beyond mere controversy.
2. **Reservations as a Lifeline:** Reservations have served as a lifeline for marginalized communities, enabling them to overcome generations of discrimination and disadvantage.





3. **Affirmative Action:** Reservations, as guaranteed by the Indian Constitution, are a form of affirmative action aimed at addressing chronic disadvantages faced by certain communities.
4. **Misconceptions about Reservations:** The article challenges misconceptions that view reservations as devoid of merit and as perpetuating mediocrity in education, the economy, and administration.
5. **Reservation as a Commitment:** Reservations are not seen as "freebies" but rather as a solemn commitment to building an inclusive society that addresses historical injustices.
6. **Identity and Discrimination:** Individuals from marginalized communities often face discrimination and stigmatization, even referred to as "quota kids," highlighting the need to maintain and restore their dignity.
7. **Role of Caste:** The article underscores the entrenched role of caste in Indian society, affecting various aspects of life, both in the public and private spheres.
8. **Continuation of Reservations:** While the debate on reservation reform is valid, the article stresses the importance of reservations continuing until there is a more equitable sharing of social, cultural, and economic capital in society.

Mains easy language

The article delves into the contentious issue of reservations in India, arguing that the debate surrounding this policy is more complex than a mere controversy. It emphasizes the critical role that reservations have played as a lifeline for marginalized communities, enabling them to overcome generations of discrimination and disadvantage.

Reservations, enshrined in the Indian Constitution, are described as a form of affirmative action designed to address the chronic disadvantages faced by specific communities. The article challenges misconceptions that reservations promote mediocrity and lack merit. Instead, it asserts that reservations are a solemn commitment to rectify historical injustices and foster an inclusive society.

Caste, deeply ingrained in Indian society, is recognized as a pervasive force that influences various aspects of life, both in the public and private spheres. The article contends that while discussing reservation reform is valid, it is crucial to acknowledge the persistence of discrimination and inequality affecting historically oppressed communities. Reparations, in the form of reservations, should continue until societal discrimination is eradicated.

In essence, the reservation debate transcends a simple discussion of policy change; it addresses deeply rooted social inequalities and seeks to ensure the dignity and respect of all individuals in India. It calls for a nuanced understanding of caste dynamics and a commitment to creating a more equitable society.

[At the heart of current market rally, push from retail investors-Indian Express Explained](#)

Economy

Key takeaways

1. **Market Rally Driven by Retail Investors:** India's stock market rally, characterized by a 22.5% surge in the BSE Sensex over the past nine months, is primarily attributed to active participation from retail investors through mutual funds and direct investments.
2. **Record Demat Accounts:** The number of active demat accounts on the CDSL platform has crossed 10 crore, indicating a significant influx of new retail investors into the market.
3. **Positive Economic Indicators:** Higher-than-expected GDP growth of 7.6% in the September 2023 quarter and expectations of an early rate cut by the US Federal Reserve have boosted market sentiment.
4. **Political Stability:** The anticipation of political stability following the 2024 Lok Sabha elections is viewed positively, ensuring policy continuity and long-term growth prospects.
5. **Caution Advised:** While the market rally is encouraging, experts advise caution, especially for new investors, as rich market valuations and potential overvaluation of small-cap stocks pose risks. Investors should remain vigilant and make informed decisions considering both opportunities and risks in the market.

Mains easy language

The recent surge in India's stock market, with the BSE Sensex surging 22.5% over the past nine months, is primarily fueled by retail investors. This trend is reflected in the significant increase in active demat accounts, which crossed 10 crore on the CDSL platform. Positive economic indicators, such as a higher-than-expected GDP growth of 7.6% in the September 2023 quarter, have contributed to market optimism.

The anticipation of political stability following the 2024 Lok Sabha elections is also seen as a positive factor for market continuity and long-term growth. However, caution is advised, especially for new investors, as rich market valuations and potential





overvaluation of small-cap stocks pose risks. It is essential for investors to remain vigilant, make informed decisions, and be aware of both the opportunities and risks in the market.

Additionally, while retail investors have played a significant role in supporting the market, experts emphasize the need for prudent investment choices to avoid potential pitfalls in a volatile market environment.

Art 370 verdict and the world-Indian Express Explained

International relations

Key takeaways

1. **Supreme Court's Endorsement:** The Supreme Court's recent endorsement of constitutional changes in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) has not triggered significant international reactions.
2. **Pakistan's Response:** Pakistan refuses to acknowledge India's constitutional changes in J&K and challenges India's sovereignty over the region.
3. **China's Position:** China expressed concerns about India's creation of a union territory in Ladakh, calling for restraint and prudent actions.
4. **OIC's Stance:** The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) reiterated its call to reverse unilateral measures in J&K taken by India since August 2019.
5. **Western Powers' Reaction:** Western nations had advised against traveling to J&K before August 5, 2019. The United States expressed concerns about detentions, calling for peace and stability.
6. **Diplomatic Strategy:** India's diplomatic strategy, asserting J&K as an internal matter, has been largely accepted. The challenge is to protect human rights in J&K and avoid tensions with Pakistan amid upcoming elections.

Mains easy language

The recent Supreme Court endorsement of constitutional changes in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) has had limited international reactions, with Pakistan and China expressing reservations while others maintain a cautious stance. Pakistan has not acknowledged India's constitutional changes in J&K, and China raised concerns about Ladakh's status. The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) called for reversing changes made since August 2019, and Turkey and Malaysia criticized India.

Western powers advised their citizens to avoid traveling to J&K before August 5, 2019, and the United States expressed concern over detentions and restrictions while calling for peace and stability. The European Union called for dialogue between India and Pakistan, while Russia supported India's actions within its constitution.

India's diplomatic efforts to communicate that J&K is its internal matter have been largely accepted, with the challenge now being to protect the human rights of J&K residents and avoid escalating tensions with Pakistan. The Supreme Court's directive for elections in J&K by September 2024 and upcoming national elections in both India and Pakistan may provide a window for engagement between the two countries.

ASYMMETRIC FEDERALISM-Indian Express Explained

Polity

Key takeaways

1. **Quasi-Federal Structure:** India's governance structure is quasi-federal, blending elements of federalism with a strong central authority.
2. **Constitutional Lists:** The Seventh Schedule of the Constitution categorizes legislative subjects into Union, State, and Concurrent lists, determining which level of government can make laws on specific matters.
3. **Special Provisions:** Certain Indian states, including Jammu and Kashmir, have special provisions and varying degrees of autonomy, contributing to asymmetric federalism.
4. **Temporary Provisions:** These special provisions, under the "Temporary, Transitional, and Special Provisions" section of the Constitution, address regional concerns without explicit expiration dates.
5. **Supreme Court Clarification:** The Supreme Court ruled that Article 370 represents asymmetric federalism but does not grant states internal sovereignty, settling a legal debate surrounding its abrogation.

Mains easy language





India's governance structure is characterized by quasi-federalism, where states enjoy a degree of autonomy, but the central government retains significant authority. The Constitution delineates legislative subjects into Union, State, and Concurrent lists, determining which level of government can legislate on specific matters. This quasi-federal structure accommodates the country's diversity and regional variations.

Several Indian states benefit from special provisions and varying levels of autonomy, contributing to asymmetric federalism. For instance, Article 370, which governed Jammu and Kashmir's relationship with India, exemplified asymmetric federalism. Additionally, other states like Nagaland and Mizoram enjoy negotiated autonomy, safeguarding their religious, social practices, and control over land and natural resources.

Despite the "temporary" tag associated with these special provisions, there are no explicit expiry dates, raising questions about their permanence. In recent legal disputes, the Supreme Court clarified that Article 370 represents asymmetric federalism but does not grant states internal sovereignty.

India's complex federal structure continues to evolve, balancing regional interests with the overarching national framework. Asymmetric federalism remains a dynamic feature of India's constitutional governance.

Authenticity' in a post-authentic world-The Hindu Editorial

Key takeaways

1. **Evolution of Authenticity:** The concept of authenticity has evolved over time, from emphasizing independence from others' approval to recognizing the role of external influences in shaping individuals.
2. **Modern Authenticity:** Today, authenticity is closely tied to celebrity culture, identity, and social media. It is also influenced by technology, including AI and deep fakes, blurring the line between what is considered "real" and "fake."
3. **Challenges of the Post-Truth Era:** The post-truth era, characterized by fake news and misinformation, presents significant challenges to authenticity. Advances in technology, especially AI, have made it easier to create and distribute fake content.
4. **Infocalypse and Eroding Trust:** The term "Infocalypse" describes a looming information and communications crisis, where trust becomes a major casualty. The boundary between mainstream and social media is increasingly blurred.
5. **The Liar's Dividend:** The "liar's dividend" phenomenon allows anyone to cast doubt on information by questioning its authenticity, eroding trust in common civic endeavors.
6. **Data Integrity Concerns:** The rise of AI raises concerns about data and information integrity, with allegations of falsified or incorrect data on important topics such as GDP, employment, and COVID-19 statistics.
7. **Blurry Lines:** The distinction between truth and falsehood, right and wrong, love and hate, and war and peace has become increasingly blurred in the post-truth era.

Mains easy language

The article "Authenticity' in a post-authentic world" explores the evolving concept of authenticity in our modern, technology-driven era. While historical notions of authenticity emphasized independence from external influences, today's authenticity is deeply intertwined with celebrity culture, identity, and social media. It raises important questions about what it means to be authentic when advanced technologies like AI create deep fakes and blur the lines between the real and the fake.

The post-truth era presents significant challenges to authenticity. The rise of fake news and the ease of producing and distributing misinformation have contributed to a crisis of trust. Doubt and skepticism have become prevalent, giving rise to what is known as the "liar's dividend," where individuals can cast doubt on anything, regardless of its authenticity.

Furthermore, concerns about data integrity have grown with the increasing capabilities of AI. Researchers and journal editors worry about the falsification of data and text, especially in areas crucial to the public, such as economic indicators and health statistics.

In this era of blurred lines between truth and falsehood, trust is eroding, and society grapples with the need for a trustworthy and illuminating future. Authenticity, once a hallmark of identity, is now a complex and elusive concept in a world where trust is under siege.

Is India doing enough to tackle climate change?-The Hindu Editorial

Environment

Key takeaways



| Clear your doubts now.



1. **COP28 Consensus:** All 198 signatories at COP28 adopted an agreement to "transition away" from fossil fuels in their energy systems, signaling global recognition of the climate crisis.
2. **India's Role:** India, which played a pivotal role in changing coal language at COP26, supported "transitioning away" from oil and gas at COP28, aligning with its energy needs.
3. **Transition Challenges:** Transitioning from fossil fuels is complex, particularly for developing countries like India, balancing decarbonization with economic growth and energy access.
4. **Economic Paradigm Shift:** To address climate change, there's a need to shift from a GDP-centric growth model to one emphasizing environmental sustainability and equity.
5. **India's Contribution:** India should contribute financially and share knowledge with other developing economies, focusing on regional development and disaster management.
6. **Environmental-Centered Growth:** The discourse on de-growth is emerging, highlighting the importance of making the environment central to the growth paradigm.

Mains easy language

In a conversation moderated by Kunal Shankar, Karthik Ganesan and Harjeet Singh discuss the outcomes of COP28 and India's role in addressing climate change. They reflect on the historic "transition away" consensus reached at the conference, replacing the earlier "phasing down" of coal. While acknowledging this progress, they express concern about the lack of stronger commitments, particularly in phasing out fossil fuels.

The discussion touches upon the challenges developing countries like India face in decarbonizing their economies while ensuring energy access and economic growth. It underscores the need for India to redefine its growth paradigm, placing environmental sustainability at the center.

Harjeet Singh highlights the operationalization of the Loss and Damage Fund (LDF) and the inclusion of 1.5°C references in the energy section, emphasizing the importance of climate justice. The conversation concludes by emphasizing India's responsibility to contribute not only financially but also through knowledge sharing, soft power, and regional development efforts.

Overall, the discussion delves into the complexities of transitioning away from fossil fuels, India's role on the global stage, and the imperative for balancing economic growth with environmental sustainability.

Is Russia winning the Ukraine war?-The Hindu text and context

International relations

Key Takeaways:

1. **Ukraine's Counteroffensive Challenges:** Ukraine's much-anticipated counteroffensive, backed by advanced weapons and Western training, has not resulted in significant battlefield breakthroughs.
2. **Stalemate on the Frontline:** Despite launching offensives on multiple fronts, particularly in the south to cut off Russia's land bridge to Crimea, Ukrainian forces have struggled to breach Russia's strong defensive lines.
3. **Russia's Defensive Strength:** Russia, initially met with resistance, has fortified its defensive positions along the frontline, even conducting a partial mobilization and increasing defense production.
4. **Diversified Energy Trade:** Western sanctions have impacted Russia's economy and energy ties with Europe. However, Russia has managed to diversify its energy trade with China and India, ensuring economic stability.
5. **Waning Western Support:** Support for Ukraine, especially in the United States, is facing challenges, with declining public support and debates over aid. Upcoming elections and political dynamics further complicate the situation.
6. **Putin's Objectives:** Russian President Putin emphasized that peace with Ukraine would only happen once Russia achieves its objectives, indicating a lack of urgency for negotiations.
7. **Uncertain Future:** Ukraine's prospects are closely tied to ongoing Western aid and its ability to devise a new strategy to break the gridlock. The conflict remains highly complex and uncertain, with no end in sight.

Mains easy language

The article discusses the developments in the Russia-Ukraine war over the past six months. Ukraine's counteroffensive, supported by advanced weaponry and training from Western allies, has struggled to make significant progress. Despite initial optimism, the frontline remains mostly unchanged.





Russia, on the other hand, has strengthened its defensive positions and its military industrial base, increasing its defense production. Western sanctions have affected the Russian economy but not its energy trade with Asian markets.

Support for Ukraine in the West, particularly the United States, is facing challenges, with declining public support and debates over aid. President Putin's recent statement suggests that Russia is in no hurry to engage in peace talks.

The article concludes that Ukraine's prospects depend on continued Western aid and its ability to formulate a new strategy to break the gridlock. While the conflict continues, the situation remains highly complex and uncertain.

[Did COVID vaccination have a positive impact on mental health?-The Hindu Science](#)

Science

Key takeaways

1. **Persistent Mental Health Challenges:** Post-COVID-19, there have been reports of persistent mental health issues, including anxiety and depression. Survivors of COVID-19 hospitalization have been found to experience mental health challenges lasting at least one year.
2. **Reduced Risk Among Vaccinated Individuals:** A study in the UK involving 17 million people revealed that individuals who were vaccinated experienced fewer mental health problems compared to those who were unvaccinated.
3. **Decreased Severity of COVID-19:** The improved mental health outcomes among vaccinated individuals were attributed to the decreased severity of COVID-19 experienced by this group. This reduction in disease severity indirectly impacted their mental health.
4. **Anxiety Reduction:** Vaccination was associated with a reduction in anxiety and an increased sense of safety among individuals. Studies have shown decreased anxiety and depression across different demographics among those who received the vaccine.
5. **Challenges in Measuring Mental Health:** Unlike physical health, mental health is challenging to measure and often understudied. There are no definitive lab tests or scans to diagnose mental illnesses, and diagnosis relies on expert evaluation.
6. **Economic Impact:** Mental ill-health has significant economic repercussions, affecting productivity, absenteeism, and job attrition. The pandemic led to a 25% increase in costs to employers in the UK due to poor mental health among employees.
7. **Age and Vulnerability:** The benefits of vaccination on mental health were more pronounced among older and clinically vulnerable individuals. This may be because older individuals were more prone to severe forms of COVID-19.
8. **Complex Relationship:** While vaccination reduced depression and anxiety overall, it led to increased symptoms of depression and anxiety in some individuals, particularly those with a prior history of COVID-19.

Mains easy language

The article discusses the impact of COVID-19 vaccination on mental health, shedding light on a less-explored aspect of the pandemic. The article highlights key findings from a study in the UK, which examined medical records of 17 million individuals, comparing mental health outcomes among the vaccinated and unvaccinated populations.

The study revealed that vaccinated individuals experienced fewer mental health problems following COVID-19 compared to their unvaccinated counterparts. The additional risk of depression at 6 months post-COVID was significantly lower among those who had been vaccinated. The decreased severity of COVID-19 among the vaccinated and the reduced anxiety associated with vaccination are considered factors contributing to these improved mental health outcomes.

Mental health, unlike physical health, is challenging to measure and often underreported. It has significant implications for quality of life, individual productivity, and the economy. The economic impact of poor mental health includes increased costs to employers and reduced overall productivity.

The study also considered various demographic factors, such as age and prior COVID-19 history, in understanding the relationship between vaccination and mental health. While older and clinically vulnerable individuals benefited more from vaccination in terms of mental health outcomes, there were complex interactions observed among different groups.

In summary, the article highlights the critical importance of mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic and the potential positive impact of vaccination in reducing mental health challenges. It underscores the need for continued research in this area to better understand the intricate relationship between vaccination and mental well-being.

16th December 2023

[Opportune moment to rediscover Chennai's hydrology-The Hindu Editorial](#)

Sociology(urbanization)



| Clear your doubts now.



Key takeaways

1. **Increasing Frequency of Floods:** Chennai has experienced heavy rainfall and subsequent floods in 2005, 2015, and 2023, with the 2023 flood being the worst in 47 years. This raises concerns about the city's vulnerability to such events.
2. **Responsibility for Floods:** The article questions to what extent these floods are caused by historical human errors and blunders and whether climate change is being used as an excuse for past mistakes.
3. **Lessons from the Past:** It highlights the importance of learning from past extreme events and adopting corrective measures to prevent future disasters.
4. **Chennai's Hydrology:** The article emphasizes the need to decode Chennai's urban and peri-urban hydrology, including the study of interconnected hydrological conditions, mapping of water bodies, and protection of these water bodies from encroachments.
5. **Upstream and Downstream Watersheds:** Chennai has numerous irrigation tanks that are currently neglected, silted up, and encroached upon. The article calls for the restoration of these water bodies to increase water storage capacity and reduce runoff.
6. **Drainage Systems:** The city's drainage systems, including rivers and canals, are in poor condition due to encroachments, sludge, and silt deposits. It suggests the need for year-round attention and maintenance of these waterways.
7. **Urban Expansion:** Chennai's rapid urban expansion has resulted in the loss of water bodies and ecological hotspots. The article urges the protection of these areas and the designation of "no development zones" in the city's master plans.
8. **Turning Disaster into Opportunity:** The article concludes by stating that Chennai can be saved from floods and provided with round-the-clock water supply even in drought years if the suggested measures are implemented scientifically.

Mains easy language

The article examines the recurrent flood issue in Chennai, India, questioning whether climate change alone is to blame or if human errors also contribute. It stresses the importance of learning from past flood events and taking corrective actions to build flood resilience in the city. Frequent and devastating floods in 2005, 2015, and 2023, with the 2023 flood being the worst in nearly five decades, have raised concerns about Chennai's vulnerability.

The article raises doubts about whether these floods stem from historical human errors and highlights the need to draw lessons from past extreme events. It underscores the necessity of understanding Chennai's hydrology, including interconnected water systems and protection of water bodies from encroachments, as well as restoring neglected irrigation tanks.

Additionally, the deteriorating condition of the city's drainage systems, including rivers and canals, due to encroachments and silt deposits, is emphasized, urging year-round maintenance.

Lastly, the rapid urban expansion in Chennai and the loss of ecological hotspots necessitate responsible urban planning and the designation of "no development zones" to safeguard water bodies and wetlands. The article concludes that by implementing these measures, Chennai can become flood-resilient and ensure round-the-clock water supply even during droughts.

[A time-honoured connect that will help bridge the Gulf-The Hindu Editorial](#)

International relations

Key takeaways

1. **Historic Visit:** Sultan Haitham bin Tarik of Oman's state visit to India marks an important diplomatic event, highlighting the enduring relationship between the two nations.
2. **Strategic Significance:** Oman's geographic location, with ports along the Arabian Sea and the Gulf of Oman, holds great strategic importance for India, making it a vital partner in the Gulf region.
3. **Strong Historical Connections:** The article emphasizes the historical ties between the ruling family of Oman and India, fostering economic cooperation and people-to-people relations.
4. **Diplomatic Role:** Oman has played a consistent and constructive diplomatic role in the region, mediating in conflicts and maintaining a policy of moderation and neutrality.
5. **India-Oman Strategic Partnership:** The strategic partnership between India and Oman, initiated in 2008, encompasses various facets, including defense, security, trade, and commerce.
6. **Defense and Security Collaboration:** Both countries have a strong defense and security cooperation, conducting joint exercises and collaborating on maritime security in the Indian Ocean.
7. **Economic Engagement:** Bilateral trade between India and Oman has flourished, with substantial investments and joint ventures, making Oman a significant economic partner.





Mains easy language

The article discusses Sultan Haitham bin Tarik's visit to India, highlighting the strong historical ties and cooperation between the two nations. Oman's strategic significance in the Gulf region, due to its strategic location along the Arabian Sea and Gulf of Oman, is emphasized.

Historical connections have fostered economic collaboration and people-to-people relations. Oman's role as a mediator in regional conflicts and its policy of moderation are highlighted.

The India-Oman strategic partnership, established in 2008, covers defense, security, trade, and commerce. Defense and security cooperation, along with joint exercises and maritime security efforts, are key elements.

Economically, bilateral trade is robust, with substantial investments and joint ventures. Oman is a vital economic partner, particularly in terms of crude oil exports to India.

Both countries are exploring future cooperation in space, rare earth metals, and infrastructure projects like the India-Middle-East-Europe Connectivity Corridor (IMEEC). Oman's role as India's gateway to West Asia is crucial for India's energy security and trade interests in the region. Sultan Haitham's visit reaffirms the enduring friendship and shared values between India and Oman.

Acceleration foretold-The Hindu Editorial

Economy

Key takeaways

1. **Inflation Surges in India:** In November, India experienced a notable increase in retail inflation, driven primarily by soaring food prices, particularly in cereals and vegetables.
2. **Vegetable Price Escalation:** Vegetable prices, including tomatoes, saw a substantial year-on-year inflation, with tomato prices surging by 41% compared to the previous month.
3. **Ongoing Concerns About Onion Prices:** Onion prices remained a significant concern, with year-on-year inflation reaching 86%, and a substantial sequential increase of 48%.
4. **Worries in Pulses and Sugar Sectors:** Pulses and sugar also faced high inflation rates, exceeding 20% and 6.55%, respectively, highlighting supply-related challenges.
5. **Government Intervention Vital:** To curb rising food prices, the government must take effective measures promptly, as prolonged inflation could negatively impact consumption and overall economic growth.

Mains easy language

In November, India witnessed a surge in retail inflation, primarily driven by escalating food prices, particularly in cereals and vegetables. The year-on-year inflation rate for vegetables, especially tomatoes, soared, with tomato prices rising by a significant 41% compared to the previous month. Onion prices remained a significant concern, with year-on-year inflation reaching a staggering 86%, and a substantial sequential increase of 48%. Additionally, the pulses and sugar sectors faced high inflation rates, exceeding 20% and 6.55%, respectively, highlighting supply-related challenges.

This inflationary trend poses a risk to consumption and economic growth in India. To mitigate these risks, the government must take timely and effective measures to curb rising food prices. Prolonged inflation could have adverse effects on consumption patterns and the overall economic outlook, making it imperative for policymakers to address these challenges promptly.

A paradox in Palestine-Indian Express Editorial

International relations

Key takeaways

1. **Humanitarian Crisis in Gaza:** The Gaza conflict has resulted in a grave humanitarian crisis, characterized by a high death toll, extensive injuries, infrastructure damage, and mass displacement of the civilian population.
2. **Talks Over Action:** International discussions surrounding the conflict often overshadow concrete efforts to halt the war, leading to a sense of unreality regarding the crisis.
3. **Erosion of Liberal Values:** The Gaza conflict has strained global liberal values, revealing ideological divisions and weakening unity among Western nations.





4. **German Response:** Germany's cancellation of a political thought prize for discussing Gaza reflects a broader reluctance in Europe to engage in political discourse.
5. **U.S. Campus Debates:** In the United States, debates on college campuses, particularly concerning free speech, risk diverting attention from the primary goal of ending the conflict.
6. **Emphasis on Realism:** The article advocates for a realistic approach, urging the United States to reshape its policy, potentially halting settlements, and being willing to criticize Israel when necessary. It also emphasizes the importance of exploring regional settlements, possibly involving Iran, for a lasting resolution.
7. **Need for Regional Cooperation:** To comprehensively address the Palestine issue, a region-wide understanding involving key powers such as Iran, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Qatar is essential. This approach would replace proxy conflicts with cooperative efforts, promoting peace and stability in the Middle East.

Mains easy language

The ongoing Gaza conflict, sparked by Hamas' attack on Israel, has evolved into a dire humanitarian crisis. The toll includes a high number of casualties, extensive injuries, infrastructure destruction, and mass displacement. Paradoxically, international discussions seem to prioritize topics unrelated to ending the war, fostering a sense of unreality. The Gaza crisis has also strained global liberal values and Western unity.

Germany's cancellation of a political thought prize for discussing Gaza reflects Europe's reluctance to engage in political discourse. In the United States, campus debates, especially concerning free speech, risk diverting attention from the conflict's resolution.

A realistic approach is urged, including reshaping U.S. policy, potentially halting settlements, and exploring regional settlements involving Iran. Comprehensive regional cooperation is vital, involving key powers such as Iran, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Qatar, to replace proxy conflicts with peace initiatives.

These takeaways emphasize the urgency of addressing the Gaza crisis, prioritizing practical actions, and promoting regional cooperation for lasting Middle East peace.

PATIENCE AND VIGILANCE-Indian Express Editorial

International relations

Key takeaways

1. **Maldives Ends Hydrographic Survey Agreement:**The Maldives government's decision not to renew the 2019 agreement allowing India to conduct hydrographic surveys in its territorial waters is a concerning development.
2. **Domestic Politics Influence External Orientation:**Domestic politics in South Asian countries increasingly shape their foreign policy orientations, often leading to shifts in external relations.
3. **Leveraging Geopolitical Competition:**Smaller nations like the Maldives and Sri Lanka leverage their geographical advantage to play major powers against each other in an era of renewed geopolitical competition.
4. **Sacrificing Long-term Interests for Short-term Gains:**The current government in the Maldives, led by President Mohamed Muizzu, is sacrificing long-term common interests for short-term political gains.
5. **India's Role and Challenges:**India, given its geographical proximity and historical ties with the Maldives, must be both patient and vigilant in its approach. And talking about challenge, India faces the challenge of contending with China's growing interests in the region and must carefully navigate this dynamic.
6. **Balancing Engagement and Non-interference:**India must tread a fine line between engagement and non-interference in the Maldives, drawing clear redlines vis-a-vis China, particularly on military presence, while acknowledging nationalistic sentiments.
7. **Diplomatic Finesse is Key:**Diplomatic finesse is essential for India to maintain its influence in the Indian Ocean region while respecting the complexities of regional geopolitics and nationalistic sentiments.

Mains easy language

The decision by the Maldives government to not renew the 2019 agreement allowing India to conduct hydrographic surveys in its territorial waters raises concerns. This move seems to be more influenced by domestic politics, particularly an anti-India stance adopted by President Mohamed Muizzu's government. In South Asian countries, domestic politics plays a significant role in shaping foreign policy, impacting external orientations.





Smaller nations like the Maldives and Sri Lanka leverage their geographical advantages to manipulate major powers amid renewed geopolitical competition, often sacrificing long-term common interests for short-term political gains. India, with its historical ties and geographical proximity, must exercise patience and vigilance while navigating its evolving role in the region.

Balancing engagement and non-interference, especially concerning China's growing interests, is a challenge for India. It must draw clear boundaries while respecting nationalistic sentiments. Diplomatic finesse is crucial for India to uphold its influence in the Indian Ocean region while adapting to the complexities of regional geopolitics and shifting dynamics.

A journey for organs-Indian Express Editorial

Science

Key Takeaways:

- 1. Altruism and Progress:** Organ transplantation in India combines altruistic donations with scientific advancements, showcasing acts of selflessness and significant progress in the field.
- 2. Scandals and Illegality:** Alongside uplifting stories, there are disturbing scandals involving illegal organ trade, targeting vulnerable individuals, including street children.
- 3. Legal and Moral Concerns:** The global ban on organ trade, including in India, aims to protect vulnerable individuals' rights, emphasizing the legal and moral dimensions.
- 4. Role of Private Healthcare:** India's private healthcare sector, focusing on tertiary care, has facilitated organ transplantation growth, making it accessible to some Indians and attracting medical tourists.
- 5. Challenges in Medical Tourism:** Medical tourism for organ transplantation presents challenges, including donor-recipient relationships and distinguishing paid from voluntary donations, involving agents and conflicts of interest.
- 6. Trust and Donation Impact:** Trust in India's transplant system, crucial for deceased organ donation, can be affected by news of foreigners receiving transplants, potentially reducing domestic donations.
- 7. Future of Transplantation:** The future lies in deceased organ donation, requiring India to promote altruism, ensure accessibility, and address ethical concerns effectively.

Mains easy language

The world of organ transplantation in India is a mixed bag of heartwarming acts of altruism and disturbing tales of illegal organ trading. While many Indians selflessly donate organs from deceased family members, reports of vulnerable individuals being exploited for kidney donations tarnish the field. Organ trade, illegal in most of the world, serves as a reminder of the commodification of the human body.

Private healthcare facilities in India have fueled the growth of organ transplantation, making it accessible to a segment of the population previously excluded. However, this also attracted medical tourists from other countries, raising complex challenges such as establishing donor-recipient relationships and distinguishing between paid and voluntary donations.

The trust in India's transplant system, especially deceased organ donation, is crucial for its success. However, news of foreigners receiving transplants in India can negatively impact domestic donations. The future of organ transplantation lies in deceased organ donation, but India must address ethical concerns and ensure accessibility for those in need while promoting altruism among its citizens.

17th December 2023

Additional organic molecules found in Enceladus's plume- The Hindu Science Tech

Science Tech

Key Takeaways:

- 1. Molecules Present in Gaseous Plumes from Enceladus:** The reanalysis of data from the Cassini mission suggests the presence of various molecules in the gaseous plumes emitted from Saturn's moon Enceladus. These molecules include methanol, ethane, and oxygen.
- 2. Discovery of Large Plumes from Enceladus:** The Cassini spacecraft first discovered large plumes of material escaping into space from Enceladus's southern hemisphere in 2005. These plumes appear to be coming from a subsurface ocean through fissures in the moon's icy surface.



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3. **Analysis of Data from Cassini's INMS:** Analyses of data from Cassini's Ion and Neutral Mass Spectrometer (INMS) collected during flybys in 2011 and 2012 determined the presence of water, carbon dioxide, methane, ammonia, and molecular hydrogen in the samples.
4. **Presence of Newly Identified Hydrocarbons:** The reanalysis of the data suggests the presence of newly identified hydrocarbons, including hydrogen cyanide, acetylene, propylene, and ethane, as well as traces of methanol and molecular oxygen.
5. **Potential for Supporting Microbial Communities:** The study suggests that the compositionally diverse chemical reservoir under the surface of Enceladus may be consistent with a habitable environment. This environment could potentially support microbial communities or drive complex organic synthesis leading to the origin of life.
6. **Dependency on Dilution in Enceladus's Subsurface Ocean:** The ability of these compounds to support life on Enceladus depends largely on how diluted they may be in the moon's subsurface ocean.

Easy Explanation

The article reports on a reanalysis of data from the Cassini mission, which revealed the presence of specific molecules in the gaseous plumes emitted from Saturn's moon Enceladus. These molecules include methanol, ethane, and oxygen. The discovery of these compounds is significant because they could potentially support microbial communities or drive complex organic synthesis, which are essential for the origin of life. However, the effectiveness of these compounds in supporting life on Enceladus depends on their concentration in the moon's subsurface ocean.

Significance of an influenza A (H1N2)v case in the U.K- The Hindu Science

Science Tech

Key Takeaways

1. **First Human Case in the UK:** The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) reported the first known human case of influenza A (H1N2)v in the UK, a variant of the influenza virus not previously known to cause infections in humans.
2. **Patient Recovery and Genome Sequencing:** The patient, a 75-year-old individual, fully recovered and presented with mild respiratory and flu-like symptoms. Genome sequencing revealed that the virus belonged to a distinct clade 1B.1.1 of influenza viruses.
3. **Limited Human-to-Human Transmission:** Instances of human-to-human transmission of the virus have not yet been detected, but the detection of the virus in a case with no direct contact with animals suggests limited and undetected human-to-human transmission may have occurred.
4. **Previous Cases and Low Risk:** Sporadic human infections with A(H1N2)v have been detected previously, with almost 50 cases reported worldwide since 2005. The variant influenza virus presents a low risk to the general public, but people with direct regular exposure to pigs may be at a higher risk of acquiring this virus.
5. **Potential for Spillover and Preparedness:** The influenza virus has the potential to spill over into human populations and cause severe illnesses, but the variant virus detected in the UK does not show characteristics suggestive of pandemic potential. Comprehensive surveillance of pathogens, particularly rapidly evolving respiratory viruses like influenza, and the ability to rapidly characterize viral variants using genome sequencing are crucial for public health action and preparedness to mitigate the risk of a global outbreak.

Easy Explanation

In the UK, the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) found the first known human case of a specific type of flu virus. A 75-year-old person got sick with mild flu symptoms but got better. Scientists studied the virus and found it was a type they hadn't seen before. They think the virus might have spread from animals to people, but they're not sure if it can spread from person to person. There have been a few other cases of this type of flu around the world, but it's not very common. People who work closely with pigs might be more likely to catch it. The virus isn't likely to cause a big outbreak, but scientists are watching it closely to make sure it doesn't become a bigger problem. They're studying the virus to be ready in case it changes and becomes more dangerous.



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Junta down but not out- The Hindu Profiles

International relations

Key takeaways

- 1. Military Junta's Persistent Rule:** The Tatmadaw in Myanmar orchestrated a coup in February 2021 to maintain absolute power, leading to the establishment of the State Administration Council (SAC).
- 2. Backlash and Resistance:** The coup sparked severe opposition, marked by the formation of the National Unity Government (NUG) and the People's Defense Forces (PDF), engaging in guerrilla warfare against the junta.
- 3. Ethnic Armed Groups' Involvement:** Various ethnic armed groups, historically in conflict with the Tatmadaw, joined forces with the NUG, forming the National Unity Consultative Council (NUCC) and contributing to the escalation of a civil war.
- 4. International Involvement and Arms Supply:** The military's repression, including war crimes, received international condemnation. Arms worth \$1 billion were used, with major supplies from Russia, China, and Singapore.
- 5. Coordinated Attacks and Setbacks:** On October 27, 2023, three ethnic armed groups launched coordinated attacks, termed 'Operation 1027,' causing significant setbacks for the junta in northern Shan State.
- 6. Tatmadaw's Strength and Challenges:** Observers differ on the Tatmadaw's vulnerability, with some seeing it as an existential threat, while others, like Bertil Lintner, consider it the most effective fighting force in Myanmar.
- 7. Historical Context of Military Rule:** The Tatmadaw's history traces back to the Burma Independence Army in 1941, leading to a series of coups and military-dominated regimes, including the SPDC and the SAC.
- 8. Failed Attempts at Democratization:** Attempts by the National League for Democracy (NLD) to restrict military powers were thwarted, leading to the military's absolute control in 2021.
- 9. Challenges to Junta's Rule:** Despite international sanctions and opposition, the junta uses ethnic divisions effectively, maintaining hegemony and presenting challenges for pro-democracy forces.
- 10. Prolonged War of Attrition:** Observers like Bertil Lintner suggest that Myanmar is likely facing a prolonged war of attrition unless there's an internal split within the Tatmadaw, posing challenges for building a post-junta federal and democratic Myanmar.

Easy Explanation

In 2021, the military in Myanmar seized control through a coup, establishing the State Administration Council (SAC) to wield absolute power. This move triggered widespread opposition, with the formation of the National Unity Government (NUG) and the People's Defense Forces (PDF), which employed guerrilla tactics against the military's rule. The conflict expanded as various ethnic groups, historically at odds with the military, joined forces with the NUG, forming the National Unity Consultative Council (NUCC) and intensifying a civil war. Global condemnation followed the military's harsh actions, including war crimes, with weapons worth \$1 billion predominantly sourced from Russia, China, and Singapore. On October 27, 2023, ethnic groups launched coordinated attacks, labeled 'Operation 1027,' dealing significant blows to the military in northern Shan State. While experts differ on the military's vulnerability, some see it as the strongest force, adept at using ethnic divisions to maintain control. Myanmar's history is marked by military dominance, dating back to 1941, with coups and military-led regimes such as the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) and SAC. Attempts by groups like the National League for Democracy (NLD) to limit military power were unsuccessful, resulting in total military control in 2021. Despite international opposition, the military's effective use of ethnic differences poses challenges for those advocating democracy, and some experts predict a prolonged period of conflict unless there's internal division within the military, making the establishment of a democratic Myanmar post-military rule a formidable task.

Is the world closer to phasing out fossil fuel?- The Hindu FAQ

Environment

Key Takeaways

- 1. Dubai Consensus at COP:** The 28th edition of the Conference of Parties (COP) in Dubai concluded with 198 countries agreeing to transition away from fossil fuels in a just, orderly, and equitable manner to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050.





2. **Acknowledgment of Fossil Fuel Impact:** The Dubai Consensus marks the first formal acknowledgment since 1995 that emissions from fossil fuels are the primary cause of global warming, despite previous agreements addressing "greenhouse gas emissions" in general.
3. **Phasing Down Coal:** The COP in Glasgow in 2021 saw countries agreeing to "phase down" coal use, recognizing it as a major contributor to global warming.
4. **Inclusion of All Fossil Fuels:** The Dubai Consensus includes all fossil fuels, emphasizing the need to eliminate them to prevent a 1.5-degree Celsius temperature rise, bringing parity among fuels.
5. **Challenges in Immediate Replacement:** The article highlights the challenges in immediately replacing fossil fuels, citing the well-established infrastructure for coal, oil, and gas, and the intermittent nature of solar and wind power.
6. **National Electricity Plan in India:** India's National Electricity Plan aims to add substantial fresh coal-fired capacity in the coming years, indicating continued reliance on fossil fuels.
7. **Transition Fuels and Natural Gas:** The Dubai Consensus suggests that "transition fuels" could aid in the energy transition while ensuring security, with natural gas considered a contender, despite concerns about methane emissions.
8. **Record Oil Production in the U.S.:** The U.S. witnessed record levels of oil production in the current year, emphasizing the continued importance of oil and gas in some regions.
9. **Dubai Consensus on Methane:** The agreement recognizes the significance of reducing methane emissions globally by 2030 to prevent a temperature rise beyond 1.5 degrees Celsius, with the Global Methane Pledge signed by numerous countries.
10. **India's Approach to Methane:** India resists pressure to cut methane emissions, citing the agricultural sector as a major contributor, but unveils plans to enhance energy production efficiency to reduce methane release.

Easy Explanation

The recent global meeting (COP) in Dubai ended with nearly 200 countries agreeing that we need to move away from using fossil fuels like coal, oil, and gas. They want to do this in a fair and organized way to reach zero net emissions by 2050.

This is a big deal because, for the first time since 1995, countries officially admitted that burning fossil fuels is the main reason the Earth is getting warmer. Usually, these meetings just talked about reducing "greenhouse gas emissions" in general.

However, it doesn't mean we're stopping the use of fossil fuels right away. In the past COP meeting in 2021, there was an agreement to gradually use less coal, which is a major contributor to global warming.

Countries like India and China, with large populations, argue that they still need fossil fuels to improve living standards and provide energy. The Dubai Consensus now includes all fossil fuels, acknowledging they all need to be phased out to prevent a significant rise in global temperatures.

Replacing fossil fuels isn't easy because we've been using them for a long time, and there's a well-established system for using them in power plants and other places. Renewable sources like solar and wind are good, but they aren't always available when we need them.

India has plans to add more coal-based power capacity, and the U.S. has seen record oil production. The Dubai Consensus talks about "transition fuels," with natural gas being considered, even though it has its challenges.

The agreement also focuses on reducing methane emissions, which is a powerful greenhouse gas. Many countries, including India, have agreed to cut down on these emissions to help control global warming.

In a nutshell, the Dubai Consensus is a step towards acknowledging the problems with using fossil fuels, but it doesn't mean we're stopping them right away. There's still a lot of work to do to find cleaner and more sustainable energy sources.

18th December 2023

An uphill struggle to grow the Forest Rights Act-The Hindu Editorial

Environment

Key takeaways

1. **Historical Injustices:** The FRA was enacted to address historical injustices caused by colonial forest policies and post-independence actions that displaced and dispossessed forest-dwelling communities.



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2. **FRA's Purpose:** The FRA aimed to acknowledge and rectify these injustices by recognizing individual forest rights (IFRs) and community forest rights (CFRs), decentralizing forest governance, and granting access and use rights to forest resources.
3. **Implementation Challenges:** The FRA's implementation has faced challenges, including political opportunism, resistance from forest officials, bureaucratic apathy, and misconceptions about its intent.
4. **Individual Rights:** Many states primarily focused on individual rights under the FRA, sometimes treating it as an encroachment regularization scheme, leading to flawed implementation.
5. **Community Rights:** Recognition of community forest rights (CFRs) has been slow and incomplete, with strong opposition from the forest bureaucracy, hindering the decentralization of forest governance.
6. **Regional Variation:** Maharashtra, Odisha, and Chhattisgarh have made some progress in recognizing CFRs, with Maharashtra enabling their activation. However, these positive steps are limited, and many regions still lack proper recognition of community rights.
7. **Collective Understanding Needed:** To fully realize the FRA's potential, there needs to be a collective understanding of its intent among political leaders, bureaucrats, and environmentalists, as well as a commitment to address the issues affecting its implementation.

Mains easy language

The Forest Rights Act (FRA) was enacted in 2006 in India to rectify historical injustices related to forest land and democratize forest governance. However, its implementation has faced challenges, including political opportunism, resistance from forest officials, bureaucratic apathy, and misconceptions about its purpose.

Historical injustices resulted from colonial policies that disrupted customary forest rights and continued post-independence. The FRA aimed to recognize both individual and community forest rights, promote decentralized governance, and grant access to forest resources.

Unfortunately, many states focused primarily on individual rights, often misinterpreting the FRA's intent. Recognition of community forest rights has been slow due to resistance from the forest bureaucracy.

Some states, like Maharashtra and Odisha, have made progress, but overall, implementation remains incomplete. To fully realize the FRA's potential, there needs to be a collective understanding of its objectives among stakeholders, emphasizing addressing historical injustices, recognizing both individual and community rights, and overcoming implementation challenges.

[On selecting Election Commissioners-The Hindu Text and Context](#)

Polity

Key takeaways

1. **Bill Passage:** The Rajya Sabha has passed The Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Office, and Terms of Office) Bill, 2023.
2. **Constitutional Background:** Article 324 of the Indian Constitution defines the composition of the Election Commission of India (ECI), consisting of the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and two Election Commissioners (ECs), with their appointments subject to parliamentary law.
3. **Supreme Court's Ruling:** The Supreme Court, in a March 2023 ruling, highlighted a legislative void regarding CEC and EC appointments over the past 73 years. It emphasized the importance of ECI's independence for ensuring free and fair elections.
4. **Proposed Appointment Mechanism:** The bill introduces a structured mechanism for selecting the CEC and ECs. It suggests appointing individuals who have held positions equivalent to the rank of Secretary to the Government of India. A selection committee, led by the Minister of Law and Justice, will recommend candidates for the President's appointment. The committee includes the Prime Minister, Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha, and a Union Cabinet Minister nominated by the Prime Minister.
5. **Global Practices:** Appointment mechanisms for electoral bodies vary worldwide, with different countries involving various institutions and processes.
6. **Critique of the Bill:** The bill has faced criticism for potentially favoring the incumbent government and excluding the Chief Justice of India (CJI) from the selection committee, deviating from the Supreme Court's ruling.
7. **Future Prospects:** Despite concerns, the bill is likely to become law in its current form, with the possibility of unanimous decisions by the selection committee enhancing public confidence in the ECI's impartial functioning.

Mains easy language





The Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Office, and Terms of Office) Bill, 2023, recently passed by the Rajya Sabha, addresses the appointment procedures for the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and Election Commissioners (ECs) in India. While the Indian Constitution outlines the composition of the Election Commission of India (ECI), it lacks specific provisions for their appointments, leaving room for legislative action.

In response to a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) and a Supreme Court ruling highlighting the absence of a parliamentary law on this matter, the proposed bill introduces a structured mechanism. It suggests that the CEC and ECs should be chosen from individuals who have held positions equivalent to the rank of Secretary to the Government of India. A search committee will prepare a panel of candidates, and the President will appoint them based on the recommendation of a selection committee consisting of the Prime Minister, Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha, and a Union Cabinet Minister nominated by the Prime Minister.

Despite some concerns about the new bill favoring the incumbent government, it is expected to become law. A unanimous decision by the selection committee in making appointments could enhance public confidence in the ECI's impartial functioning.

[An overview of the European Union's Artificial Intelligence Act -the Hindu Text and Context](#)

Science and technology

Key takeaways

1. **EU AI Act Overview:** The EU's AI Act is a significant legislative effort to regulate AI technologies within the European Union.
2. **Balancing Innovation and Ethics:** It aims to balance AI innovation with ethical and responsible development.
3. **Objectives:** The Act seeks to create a regulatory framework, mitigate AI risks, and provide guidelines for developers, users, and regulators.
4. **Risk-Based Approach:** AI applications are categorized by risk levels, enabling tailored regulations for higher-risk applications.
5. **Transparency and Accountability:** Developers must provide clear information about AI capabilities and limitations, promoting user transparency.
6. **Conformity Assessment:** Higher-risk AI applications undergo independent assessments, enhancing objectivity and regulatory oversight.
7. **Global Impact:** The EU AI Act is expected to influence global AI development and collaboration, shaping international AI standards.

Mains easy language

The European Union's (EU) AI Act is a groundbreaking legislative initiative aimed at regulating artificial intelligence technologies within the EU. It seeks to strike a balance between fostering innovation and ensuring ethical and responsible AI development. The Act's primary objectives are to create a comprehensive regulatory framework for AI technologies, mitigate the risks associated with AI systems, and establish clear guidelines for developers, users, and regulators.

One notable strength of the EU AI Act is its risk-based approach, categorizing AI applications into different risk levels, allowing for tailored regulations. It explicitly prohibits certain AI practices deemed unacceptable, such as social credit scoring systems and predictive policing applications. The Act emphasizes transparency, requiring developers to provide clear information about AI system capabilities and limitations, empowering users to make informed decisions.

However, some criticisms include the challenge of accurately defining and categorizing AI applications due to their evolving nature. There are concerns that stringent regulations may hinder the competitiveness of European businesses, particularly smaller enterprises and startups.

The EU AI Act is poised to have a global impact, influencing AI development beyond the EU's borders. It prioritizes ethical considerations and fundamental rights, encouraging international collaboration in AI regulation. While it represents a significant step towards responsible AI regulation, striking the right balance between regulation and fostering innovation remains a critical consideration.

[The era of CRISPR therapeutics is here – what can we expect? -The Hindu science](#)

Science and technology

Key takeaways

1. **CRISPR Approvals Transform Genetic Medicine:** Recent approvals in the UK and the US mark a significant milestone in genetic medicine, with CRISPR-based therapies offering hope to those suffering from inherited blood disorders.





2. **Decades of Academic Pursuit Lead to CRISPR Discovery:** CRISPR, a precise genome-editing technology, has evolved over decades of academic research, allowing for targeted corrections of genetic anomalies.
3. **Casgevy: A Molecular-Level Cure for Blood Disorders:** Exagamglogene autotemcel, known as Casgevy, is a groundbreaking CRISPR-based therapy that modifies patients' blood stem cells to cure diseases like sickle-cell disease and β -thalassemia at the molecular level.
4. **The Beginning of a New Era in Medicine:** These approvals represent the beginning of a new era in medicine, as more advanced CRISPR techniques like base-editing, prime editing, and epigenetic modification continue to emerge.
5. **Safety and Accuracy Concerns in CRISPR:** Safety and accuracy concerns, including the possibility of off-target events, necessitate ongoing scrutiny and research as CRISPR technologies evolve.
6. **CRISPR's Broad Potential:** CRISPR's potential extends beyond blood disorders, holding promise for various genetic diseases and conditions.
7. **The Arrival of the CRISPR Era:** The CRISPR era has arrived, offering remarkable possibilities for the future of genetic medicine, and as research and technology progress, these possibilities continue to expand.

Mains easy language

Recent approvals of CRISPR-based therapies in the UK and the US represent a groundbreaking moment in genetic medicine, offering hope to millions affected by inherited blood disorders like sickle-cell disease and β -thalassemia. The journey to harnessing the power of CRISPR spans three decades of academic pursuit, culminating in the development of a precise genome-editing tool. The approved therapy, Casgevy, exemplifies the potential of CRISPR by modifying patients' blood stem cells to correct genetic defects at the molecular level.

However, these approvals are just the beginning of a new era in medicine. First-generation CRISPR technologies are being superseded by more advanced techniques like base-editing, prime editing, and epigenetic modification. While these hold great promise, concerns about safety and accuracy, including off-target events, require ongoing scrutiny.

Despite these challenges, the CRISPR era has arrived, offering remarkable possibilities for patients and families affected by genetic diseases. As research and technology continue to advance, the future of genetic medicine appears increasingly promising.

Political, not constitutional-Indian Express Editorial

Polity

Key Takeaways:

1. **Article 370 Repeal:** The Supreme Court upheld the repeal of Article 370, effectively integrating Jammu and Kashmir into the Union of India, a decision many view positively.
2. **Constitutional Concerns:** However, the author argues that the Centre's actions in revoking Article 370 were not in accordance with the Constitution and federalism principles.
3. **Diminishing State Area:** Article 370 included a safeguard preventing the diminishment of Jammu and Kashmir's area without the State Assembly's consent. Still, a substantial reduction occurred in August 2019 without the inhabitants' knowledge or consent.
4. **Change to Union Territory:** Jammu and Kashmir's status was unilaterally altered from a state to a Union Territory, a change not justified by the Constitution.
5. **Provisions of Article 370 (3):** Article 370 (3) allowed the President to declare the entire Article 370 inoperative, but the proviso required the recommendation of the Constituent Assembly of Jammu and Kashmir. The Court's interpretation that the recommendation was not binding on the President is disputed by the author.
6. **Constitutional Correctness:** The author concludes that while the Supreme Court's decision may be politically acceptable, it is not constitutionally correct, citing prior judgments and constitutional principles.

Mains easy language

The article discusses the Supreme Court's verdict upholding the repeal of Article 370, which integrated Jammu and Kashmir into India. While many view this positively, the author raises concerns about the constitutional correctness of the decision.

The author argues that the Centre's actions did not align with the Constitution and federalism principles. They point out that the significant reduction in Jammu and Kashmir's area and the change in its status from a state to a Union Territory were not constitutionally justified.





Additionally, the author challenges the Supreme Court's interpretation of Article 370 (3), which allowed the President to declare the article inoperative but required the Constituent Assembly's recommendation. The author disputes the Court's conclusion that this recommendation was not binding on the President, citing prior judgments and constitutional principles.

In summary, the article highlights constitutional concerns surrounding the Article 370 repeal despite its political significance.

INDIA IN AI AGE-Indian Express Editorial

Science and technology

Key takeaways

1. **India's AI Ambitions:** India aims to be a prominent player in the field of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and is actively participating in global AI governance initiatives, such as the Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI).
2. **Global AI Revolution:** The AI revolution is set to have profound and wide-ranging impacts across multiple sectors, including social, political, economic, and military domains.
3. **Challenges Ahead:** India faces challenges in terms of computing power for AI systems and must invest in computing infrastructure. Additionally, investments in basic sciences and engineer training in AI-related technologies are critical.
4. **Global AI Governance:** India's role in GPAI and its participation in shaping norms for responsible AI development and use is significant. However, global AI governance involves complex debates between democracies and autocracies and differing perspectives within Western and Northern and Southern countries.
5. **Adaptive Multilateral Approach:** India needs to adapt its multilateral strategies to align with national interests and the collective global good to lead effectively in the global governance of AI.

Mains easy language

India's aspirations in the field of Artificial Intelligence (AI) were emphasized during the recent AI summit in Delhi. India aims to become a significant player and contribute to the development of global governance rules for AI.

However, several challenges need to be addressed. India lacks significant computing power, essential for AI systems. The government plans to launch a national AI mission to strengthen computing capabilities and may need to encourage government agencies to release data for AI research.

Investments in basic sciences and training engineers in AI-related technologies are crucial to India's success in the field. On the global front, India will preside over GPAI, where it will be involved in shaping norms for responsible AI development and use. This area is marked by complexities, including debates between democracies and autocracies and differences within Western and Northern and Southern countries.

To lead in the global governance of AI, India must adapt its multilateral strategies to align with national interests and the broader global good.

FOOD VERSUS FUEL-Indian Express Editorial

Economy

Key takeaways

1. **Policy Shocks in Indian Agribusiness:** Indian agribusinesses have faced a series of policy shocks since mid-2022, including export restrictions on various agricultural products and stocking limits on pulses.
2. **Ethanol Production Directive:** The recent directive from the Indian government restricting sugar mills from producing ethanol directly from concentrated cane juice/syrup has raised concerns. This directive contradicts previous policy initiatives aimed at promoting ethanol production.
3. **Impact on Sugar Mills:** Sugar mills had invested in new distilleries to produce ethanol directly from cane juice, which was encouraged by favorable government policies. However, the recent directive threatens the viability of these investments.
4. **Reduced Sugar Diversion for Ethanol:** The government's directive limits the diversion of sugar for ethanol production from cane juice and intermediate-stage molasses to 1.7 million tonnes in the ongoing 2023-24 supply year. This reduction aims to increase the availability of sugar for food consumption.
5. **Policy Credibility and Investment:** The abrupt policy changes in the agricultural sector raise concerns about policy credibility. Such unpredictability can deter investments in agriculture, which is crucial for the sector's growth and development.

Mains easy language





Recent policy changes in India's agricultural sector, such as restrictions on rice, wheat, sugar, and onion exports and curbing ethanol production from cane juice, have raised questions about policy credibility and could deter vital investments. Sugar mills initially invested in ethanol production due to favorable government policies, which offered higher prices for cane juice-based ethanol. However, the government's recent directive has restricted sugar diversion for ethanol production. This change, along with the ban on sugar exports, aims to increase domestic sugar availability but has consequences for sugar mills, farmers, and investments in the sector.

The unpredictability of policy shifts, driven by the need to ensure commodity availability for upcoming national elections, could undermine the agriculture sector's stability and discourage much-needed investments. These actions contrast with the government's efforts to promote the national biofuels program, leading to higher ethanol blending in petrol in recent years.

Looking to the Black Sea-Indian Express Editorial

International relations

Key takeaways

1. **Geography, Technology, and Circumstances Matter:** The Black Sea conflict between Russia and Ukraine underscores the significant impact of geography, technology, and situational factors on naval warfare outcomes.
2. **Turkey's Control of Access Points:** Turkey's control of key access points to the Black Sea, such as the Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits, played a pivotal role in preventing Russia from closing Ukrainian ports, revealing the limitations of naval blockades in active conflicts.
3. **Rise of Combat Drones:** The conflict highlights the growing importance of combat drones, with a Bayraktar TB2 drone distracting radar systems on the Russian flagship Moskva, allowing Ukrainian anti-ship missiles to penetrate its defenses.
4. **Utilizing Unmanned Surface Vehicles (USVs):** Ukrainian forces effectively employed USVs in attacks on Russian warships, demonstrating the utility of these unmanned vessels in littoral warfare.
5. **Enhancing Littoral Warfare with Shore-Based Missiles:** The use of shore-based missiles in attacks on Russian-occupied ports, like Berdyansk, showcased their effectiveness in littoral warfare scenarios.
6. **Creative Approaches by Weaker Powers:** Weaker naval powers often employ innovative and creative approaches, including technology and tactics, to deter stronger adversaries.
7. **Importance of Ship Design and Crew Competence:** Ship design and crew competence play a vital role in naval warfare, as demonstrated by the unanticipated strike on the Moskva, revealing the need for well-trained personnel and advanced defense systems.
8. **Nonlinear Thinking and Adaptive Strategies:** Success in contemporary naval battles hinges on a side's ability to think nonlinearly, develop adaptive strategies, and effectively utilize available tools and resources.

Mains easy language

The conflict in the Black Sea, although geographically distant from India, holds essential naval lessons that the country should consider. The war in the Black Sea serves as a reminder of how geography, technology, and circumstances significantly impact naval warfare. Russia's inability to shut down all Ukrainian ports due to Turkish control of access points illustrates the limited utility of a naval blockade in active conflicts.

Furthermore, the use of combat drones, unmanned surface vehicles (USVs), and shore-based missiles has become a crucial aspect of modern naval warfare. Drones played a role in distracting radar systems and enabling missile attacks on Russian warships. Littoral warfare effectiveness can also be enhanced through creative approaches, such as targeting adversary logistics sites and using limited naval capabilities innovatively.

Lastly, ship design and crew competence are vital factors for survival in war. The ability to think nonlinearly and develop adaptive strategies is crucial in contemporary naval battles. These lessons highlight the need for India to stay updated and adapt to evolving naval strategies and technologies.

The agr terms of trade-Indian Express Explained

Economy

Key Takeaways:

1. **Terms of Trade (ToT) in Indian Agriculture:** Terms of Trade represent the movement in prices of agricultural commodities relative to non-farm goods and services. It has seen significant improvement over the last decade and a half.



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2. **Calculation of ToT:** ToT can be calculated using implicit price deflators. It compares Gross Value Added (GVA) at current and constant prices for agriculture and non-agriculture sectors, indicating how prices have moved relative to a base year.
3. **Historical Trends:** ToT for agriculture was relatively low until the mid-2000s. The real recovery happened from 2009-10 onwards, peaking in 2020-21.
4. **Factors Behind Improved ToT:** The improved ToT for agriculture is attributed to the global agricultural commodity price boom from 2004 to 2014 and policy interventions like Minimum Support Price (MSP) hikes.
5. **Impact on Farmers and Agricultural Laborers:** While ToT for the farm sector as a whole has improved, it has favored agricultural laborers more than farmers. The recent years have seen stagnation or deterioration in ToT for both groups.

Mains easy language

The article discusses the concept of Terms of Trade (ToT) in Indian agriculture, which measures the movement in prices of farm commodities relative to non-farm goods and services. Over the past decade and a half, ToT for agriculture has shown significant improvement. This improvement is largely attributed to the global agricultural commodity price boom and government policies like MSP hikes.

Interestingly, while ToT for the entire farm sector has improved, it has benefited agricultural laborers more than farmers. Real wages for agricultural laborers have risen, impacting farmers who face rising production costs without commensurate increases in crop prices. This situation has led to the squeezing of farmers between higher costs and stagnant produce prices.

Additionally, the article highlights that the recent years have witnessed stagnation or deterioration in ToT for both farmers and agricultural laborers. This trend has socio-economic and political implications, particularly as the demand for reservations in government jobs and educational institutions by dominant agrarian communities continues to grow.

In summary, the article sheds light on the changing dynamics of ToT in Indian agriculture and its implications for different stakeholders, emphasizing the need for policies that address the challenges faced by farmers and laborers in the sector.

19th December 2023

A climate for change-Indian Express Editorial

Environment

Key Takeaways:

1. **Recent Multilateral Events:** Multilateral events like COP28 in Dubai have emphasized the need for a transition to renewable energy to achieve net-zero emissions. The call to triple renewable energy capacity has been highlighted by various international declarations and commitments.
2. **Energy Access Gap:** Around 8% of the world's population, approximately 675 million people, lack access to affordable and reliable energy, hindering human and economic development and impacting various aspects of well-being.
3. **Tripling Renewables:** To achieve the well-below 2-degree Celsius target and ensure clean energy access for all, tripling investments in clean energy is crucial, with the potential need for up to five times the current level of investment.
4. **Strengthening Partnerships:** Strengthening partnerships between governments, the private sector, and multilateral institutions is essential to enable and sustain this energy transition. This involves technology transfer, risk mitigation, and regulatory framework enhancement.
5. **Three-Pronged Agenda:** A three-pronged agenda, led by multilateral institutions, is imperative. It focuses on tripling the impact, leveraging financial mechanisms, and fostering collaboration to ensure that no one is left behind in the transition to renewable energy.
6. **Role of Multilateral Institutions:** Multilateral institutions can play a crucial role in mobilizing long-term, low-cost finance for clean energy projects, mitigating risks, and driving regulatory support and institutional mechanisms.
7. **Technology Transition Groups:** Collaborative technology transition groups, comprising interested countries, the private sector, experts, and NGOs, can facilitate technology transfer, pool intellectual property rights, and accelerate technology adoption.
8. **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):** Addressing energy access is fundamental to achieving the SDGs and enhancing global well-being. COP meetings should prioritize energy access as a key aspect of sustainable development.

Mains easy language

The urgency of transitioning to renewable energy has been highlighted in recent multilateral events like COP28. A commitment to tripling renewable energy capacity is echoed in international declarations.



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Despite progress, around 8% of the global population lacks access to affordable and reliable energy, impacting development and well-being.

To meet climate goals and ensure clean energy for all, substantial clean energy investments are needed, potentially up to five times current levels.

Partnerships between governments, the private sector, and multilateral institutions are vital for this transition. Multilateral institutions can facilitate finance, risk mitigation, and regulatory support.

A three-pronged agenda led by multilateral institutions focuses on tripling impact, leveraging finance, and fostering collaboration. Technology transition groups can accelerate technology transfer and adoption. Addressing energy access is crucial for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and enhancing global well-being. Prioritizing energy access in COP meetings can drive progress across the SDGs.

PLUG THE BREACH-Indian Express Editorial

Internal security

Key takeaways

1. **ICMR Data Breach:** The ICMR website faced a major data breach, with four individuals arrested. Over 80 crore people's personal information, including Aadhaar numbers, passport details, and health records, was exposed.
2. **Privacy Concerns:** This breach involved a massive amount of sensitive data, raising serious privacy concerns. The leaked data could potentially unlock financial transactions, personal communications, and medical records.
3. **Healthcare Digitization:** India's push for healthcare digitization was evident during the COVID-19 vaccination drive, offering benefits like quicker diagnoses and better treatment decisions.
4. **Data Security:** Data security is crucial in healthcare digitization, especially with systems like the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission that involve data flow between participants. Cyberattacks can disrupt medical systems and compromise patient data.
5. **Global Health Data Security Issues:** India is not alone in facing health data security challenges. The UK's NHS has experienced multiple attacks, resulting in data breaches, highlighting the need for robust security measures.
6. **Data Protection Act:** India's Data Protection Act has faced criticism for not adequately addressing health-related information security. The ICMR data breach emphasizes the urgency for policymakers to strengthen data security in healthcare digitization efforts.

Mains easy language

The recent data breach at India's premier medical research agency, ICMR, underscores the critical importance of data security in healthcare digitization efforts. The breach exposed sensitive personal information, including Aadhaar numbers and health records, raising significant privacy concerns.

Healthcare digitization offers numerous benefits, such as quicker diagnoses and improved treatment decisions. However, it also opens the door to potential cyberattacks and data breaches. The Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission's federated architecture emphasizes data flow among participants, necessitating robust data security measures.

Globally, health data security remains a challenge, with countries like the UK and the US experiencing data breaches in their healthcare systems. Laws and regulations have been implemented to enhance data security, although no system is foolproof.

India's Data Protection Act has faced criticism for not adequately addressing health-related information security. The ICMR data breach serves as a stark reminder of the need for policymakers to prioritize and strengthen data security measures in healthcare digitization efforts. It is crucial to ensure that sensitive personal information remains protected and does not fall into the wrong hands.

India's first winter of Arctic research: why it matters-Indian Express Explained

Geography

Key takeaways

1. **Year-Round Research:** India's Himadri research station in the Arctic will now operate year-round, allowing for scientific observations and studies during the challenging winter months.
2. **Climate Change Focus:** The expedition underscores the increasing importance of Arctic research in the context of climate change. Rising temperatures and melting sea ice in the Arctic have global implications.





3. **International Collaboration:** Arctic research is governed by international agreements, and India's participation demonstrates its commitment to global cooperation in understanding and addressing environmental changes in the region.
4. **Unique Research Opportunities:** The Arctic provides a pristine environment for studying various natural phenomena, including atmospheric, oceanic, geological, and glaciological processes.
5. **Research Diversity:** The expedition's research areas encompass a wide range of scientific disciplines, including atmospheric sciences, astronomy, astrophysics, and climate studies, addressing crucial questions about the Arctic's role in climate change.
6. **Logistical Support:** Collaboration with Norwegian agencies for winter gear, transport, and logistics ensures the safety and success of the expedition, highlighting the importance of international partnerships in Arctic research.

Mains easy language

The first winter expedition to India's Arctic research station, Himadri, located in Ny-Ålesund, Svalbard, holds significant implications for climate science and international collaboration. Operating year-round, Himadri allows for crucial research in the Arctic region, which is experiencing rapid environmental changes due to climate change. This expedition underscores the importance of studying the Arctic's role in global climate dynamics.

The expedition focuses on diverse scientific disciplines, such as atmospheric sciences, astronomy, astrophysics, and climate studies. It highlights the pristine research opportunities that the Arctic offers, including its unique environment for understanding natural phenomena.

International collaboration is a key theme, with India actively participating in the global effort to address Arctic research and climate change. Collaborative agreements and logistical support from Norwegian agencies underscore the importance of international partnerships in Arctic science.

In summary, India's first winter expedition to Himadri marks a significant step in advancing our understanding of the Arctic's changing environment, its role in climate change, and the importance of global cooperation in addressing these critical issues.

How MPs are suspended-Indian Express Explained

Polity

Key takeaways

1. **Unprecedented Suspensions:** During the Winter Session, 78 opposition MPs were suspended, 33 from Lok Sabha and 45 from Rajya Sabha, totaling an all-time high of 92 suspensions.
2. **Opposition Protest:** The suspensions resulted from opposition MPs disrupting parliamentary proceedings in response to a recent security breach in Parliament.
3. **Reasons for Disruption:** Long-standing reasons for disruption include limited time for important issues, unresponsiveness from the government, deliberate disruptions for political gains, and slow action against disruptive MPs.
4. **Presiding Officer's Role:** Presiding officers like the Speaker and Chairman can suspend MPs by directing them to withdraw, naming them, and initiating suspension motions.
5. **Rule Changes:** Lok Sabha's Rule 374A allows automatic suspension of "named" MPs for up to five days or the session without a separate motion. Rajya Sabha hasn't adopted this provision.
6. **Duration of Suspension:** MPs can be suspended for the session's remainder, with reinstatement possible through a motion. Extreme cases may lead to expulsion.
7. **Increasing Suspensions:** The number of suspensions has risen, with at least 149 since 2019, compared to 81 in 2014-19 and 36 in 2009-14.

Mains easy language

In India's recent Winter Session of Parliament, an unprecedented suspension of 78 opposition MPs, with 33 from Lok Sabha and 45 from Rajya Sabha, took place in response to their disruption of parliamentary proceedings following a security breach. The disruptions stem from longstanding issues, including limited time for crucial matters, government unresponsiveness, deliberate disruptions for political purposes, and delayed action against disruptive MPs.

Presiding officers, such as the Speaker and Chairman, have the authority to suspend MPs by directing them to withdraw, naming them, and initiating suspension motions. Lok Sabha introduced Rule 374A in 2001, allowing automatic suspension of "named" MPs for up to five days or the session without a separate motion, while Rajya Sabha has not adopted this provision.

Suspensions typically last for the remainder of the session, but reinstatement is possible through a motion, and expulsion can occur in extreme cases. The increasing number of suspensions in recent years has sparked debates about how to address disruptions while





upholding democratic values. Presiding officers face the challenge of maintaining order while allowing MPs to express their concerns and grievances, emphasizing the need for a long-term solution in Indian Parliament.

A blow for the rights of the legislature, in law making-The Hindu Editorial

Polity

Key takeaways

1. **Landmark Judgment on Article 200:** Chief Justice of India (CJI) D.Y. Chandrachud reinterpreted Article 200 of the Indian Constitution on November 10, 2023, focusing on the Governor's options when presented with a Bill passed by the State Legislature.
2. **Interpreting Article 200 Proviso:** The reinterpretation mainly concerns the first proviso to Article 200, clarifying that the Governor's power to withhold assent depends on sending the Bill back to the Assembly for immediate reconsideration.
3. **Historical Confusion Dispelled:** Prior to this judgment, there was confusion over whether the Governor's power to withhold assent was absolute. The new interpretation makes it contingent on sending the Bill back for prompt reconsideration.
4. **Safeguarding Legislative Rights:** The CJI's interpretation aims to protect State legislatures' legislative rights and processes, preventing undue interference by unelected Governors.
5. **Addressing Delays in Decision-Making:** The ruling emphasizes that Governors cannot unduly delay Bill decisions, ensuring timely legislative action.
6. **Reserving Bills for Presidential Consideration:** Governors can still reserve Bills for the President's consideration, but debate continues over the types of Bills eligible for this action.

Mains easy language

In a landmark judgment on November 10, 2023, Chief Justice of India (CJI) D.Y. Chandrachud reinterpreted Article 200 of the Indian Constitution, specifically focusing on the first proviso. This proviso relates to the Governor's options when presented with a Bill passed by the State Legislature.

Prior to this judgment, there was confusion regarding the Governor's power to withhold assent and whether it was absolute. The CJI's interpretation clarified that the Governor's power to withhold assent depends on sending the Bill back to the Assembly for immediate reconsideration. This reinterpretation safeguards the rights of State legislatures and their legislative processes, preventing undue interference by unelected Governors.

Moreover, the judgment emphasizes that Governors cannot unduly delay their decisions on Bills, ensuring timely legislative action. However, there is still debate over the types of Bills that Governors can send for Presidential consideration. The Constitution indirectly references this in Article 254 and Article 213, suggesting that Bills exclusively on State subjects should not be sent to the President, and Governors cannot send Bills on concurrent subjects if they do not conflict with central laws. Instead, Governors should focus on sending Bills with unconstitutional provisions back to the Assembly for reconsideration. Ultimately, the constitutional validity of a law is determined by the courts, and neither the Governor nor the President has jurisdiction over it.

Grass-root democracy as a bulwark against Maoists-The Hindu Editorial

Sociology

Key takeaways

1. **Tribal Votes in Chhattisgarh:** Tribal votes hold significant political sway in Chhattisgarh, often determining which party forms the government.
2. **Maoist Insurgency:** Maoist insurgency is a persistent issue in tribal regions of Chhattisgarh, particularly in Bastar, where tribals constitute the core cadre of the movement.
3. **Low Voter Turnout:** Maoist-affected areas witnessed alarmingly low voter turnout, dropping as low as 3% to 4%, due to violence and Maoist boycott calls.
4. **Challenges to Democracy:** The Maoist strategy of election boycotts forces tribal populations to abstain from the democratic process, despite seeking empowerment.
5. **Disillusionment:** The decreasing trend in voter participation in these regions suggests a growing sense of disillusionment among the electorate.





6. **Election Issues:** The predominant election issue among tribals revolved around religion-based conversions, possibly manufactured by political entities to divert attention from fundamental concerns.
7. **Tribal Awareness:** Tribal communities are becoming increasingly aware of their constitutional rights and are demanding dignity and entitlements.

Mains easy language

The recent Chhattisgarh assembly elections highlighted the importance of tribal votes, constituting 34% of the state's electorate, in determining the state's government. However, these tribal areas, particularly Bastar, are plagued by Maoist insurgency, impacting voter turnout.

Maoists historically call for boycotts of elections, leading to dismal turnout, as low as 3% to 4%. This raises questions about voter disillusionment. While religion-based conversions dominated election issues, none effectively addressed the Maoist problem.

The article underscores the need to empower tribal communities and enhance grassroots democracy. The Provisions of the Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act (PESA) could be a valuable tool if consistently implemented. It aims to empower gram sabhas for tribal governance but has been poorly executed.

To counter the Maoists and bolster democracy, the article suggests nurturing tribal leadership, acknowledging their aspirations, and giving them a voice. This can address the Maoist challenge beyond security and development, strengthening democracy in tribal regions.

What does COP-28 mean for cities?-the Hindu Text and Context

Environment

Key takeaways

1. **COP-28 Addressed Both Mitigation and Adaptation Strategies:** COP-28 focused on addressing climate change through both mitigation and adaptation strategies, marking an important milestone in global climate discussions.
2. **Urban Areas Significantly Contribute to Climate Change:** Urban areas consume nearly 75% of primary energy and are responsible for approximately 70% of CO₂ emissions (76% of total GHG emissions). Addressing urban issues is essential to achieve Paris Agreement commitments.
3. **Special Day on Urbanization and Climate Change:** COP-28 included a dedicated day for a ministerial meeting on urbanization and climate change, bringing together housing, urban development, environment finance ministers, local leaders, financial institutions, NGOs, and other stakeholders.
4. **Advocacy for Multi-Level Green Deal Governance:** City representatives emphasized the need for multi-level green deal governance and revising governance and regulation of energy and climate action, recognizing cities and regions as key actors in driving climate ambition.
5. **Challenges in Global South Cities:** Cities in the Global South face greater vulnerability, with limited empowerment of city leaders, predominant informal employment, and susceptibility to climate-induced disasters. Addressing these challenges is crucial.
6. **Inclusion of Cities in Climate Action Plans:** There is a need to include city leaders and civil society groups in the preparation of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and National Adaptation Plans to ensure equitable participation in climate action planning.

Mains easy language

The 28th Conference of Parties (COP-28) in Dubai addressed both mitigation and adaptation strategies for tackling climate change. Urban areas play a significant role in climate change, consuming 75% of primary energy and contributing to 70% of CO₂ emissions. A special day at COP-28 focused on urbanization and climate change, involving various stakeholders. City representatives advocated for multi-level green deal governance and greater recognition of cities' roles in climate action.

Cities in the Global South face unique challenges, including vulnerability, lack of empowerment for city leaders, informal employment, and susceptibility to climate-induced disasters. To address these challenges, greater support is required, potentially through a climate atlas for these cities.

Inclusion of city leaders and civil society groups in climate action planning, especially during the preparation of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and National Adaptation Plans, is crucial for equitable participation in climate action efforts. COP-28 highlighted the interconnectedness of climate action, social justice, and the role of urban areas in driving change.

Customised mRNA is the next frontier in personalised medicine -The Hindu Science

Science





Key Takeaways:

- 1. Understanding mRNA:** mRNA (messenger RNA) serves as natural instructions for making specific proteins in the body. It plays a fundamental role in cellular processes.
- 2. The Language of mRNA:** mRNA's language consists of four nucleotide building blocks: A, U, C, and G, with three-letter words encoding protein building blocks. This simple code facilitates precise protein synthesis.
- 3. Scalability of mRNA Medicines:** mRNA-based medicines are scalable, with a consistent manufacturing process, making production efficient and adaptable to different treatments.
- 4. Flexibility Demonstrated by mRNA Vaccines:** COVID-19 mRNA vaccines showcase the adaptability of mRNA therapies. Scientists can quickly update these vaccines to target new viral variants, ensuring ongoing protection.
- 5. Exploring mRNA-Based Treatments:** Beyond vaccines, mRNA-based treatments are being investigated for various diseases, including cancer and genetic disorders. This research offers the potential for personalized and effective therapies.
- 6. Potential for Personalized Medicine:** Customized mRNA holds promise for personalized medicine. Doctors can sample a patient's tumor, sequence key genes, and adjust mRNA treatments to match the specific characteristics of the patient's disease.
- 7. Treating Genetic Disorders:** mRNA therapies have the potential to correct genetic instructions, offering hope for treating a wide range of genetic disorders and diseases. This includes conditions like propionic acidemia and heart disease, providing potential solutions to long-standing medical challenges.

Mains easy language

Customized mRNA-based medicine is a revolutionary frontier in personalized healthcare. mRNA, a natural cellular messenger, is now being tailored to create powerful therapies.

mRNA therapies offer scalability and flexibility, unlike traditional drugs, making them efficient and adaptable. COVID-19 vaccines exemplify this flexibility, as they can be updated to target new variants.

Beyond vaccines, mRNA treatments hold potential for personalized cancer therapies. By sequencing tumors and adjusting mRNA treatments, tailored solutions can be developed.

These therapies also show promise for genetic disorders and diseases. Correcting genetic instructions and promoting new blood vessel formation offer hope for improved healthcare.

In summary, customized mRNA medicines have the potential to transform personalized healthcare by offering adaptable and powerful treatments for various diseases and genetic disorders.

[Afghanistan, left out of COP-28, hopes for inclusion in COP-29-The Hindu Science](#)

International relations

Key Takeaways:

- 1. Afghanistan's Ongoing Exclusion:** Afghanistan, a highly climate-vulnerable nation, was conspicuously absent from COP-28 for the third consecutive year.
- 2. Taliban's Rise and Isolation:** The country's exclusion from climate negotiations follows the Taliban's takeover of Kabul in 2021, which has resulted in Afghanistan's international isolation.
- 3. Gender-Based Restrictions as a Factor:** Some foreign governments cite the Taliban's stringent restrictions on women, including barring girls and women from high schools and universities, as a primary reason for their reluctance to engage with Afghanistan.
- 4. Efforts for Afghan Representation:** Humanitarian and international officials made concerted efforts to enable Afghan representatives to attend COP-28, although these efforts ultimately did not succeed.
- 5. Hope for Future Engagement:** Despite the setbacks, there is optimism that Afghanistan may engage in climate discussions in some capacity in the coming years.
- 6. UNFCCC's Decision Deferral:** The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) COP Bureau decided to defer a decision on Afghanistan's representation at future climate summits during a November 2022 meeting.
- 7. Impact on Climate Funds:** Afghanistan's exclusion has hindered its access to essential U.N. climate funds, such as the Green Climate Fund, leading to the postponement of critical climate projects in the country. These projects included sustainable energy initiatives, improved irrigation systems, and rooftop solar panel deployments in Kabul.

Mains easy language



| Clear your doubts now.



Afghanistan's persistent exclusion from international climate negotiations, notably from COP-28, underscores the challenges faced by a nation grappling with climate vulnerability amid political turmoil. The Taliban's assumption of power in Kabul and their gender-based restrictions on women have contributed to Afghanistan's isolation on the global stage. While there were concerted efforts to facilitate Afghan representation at COP-28, these endeavors faced obstacles.

There remains hope for future engagement and inclusion of Afghanistan in climate discussions. The UNFCCC's COP Bureau deferred a decision regarding Afghanistan's participation in future climate summits, leaving the door open for potential reintegration.

However, Afghanistan's absence from crucial U.N. climate funds, including the Green Climate Fund, has hampered essential climate projects. These projects, ranging from sustainable energy initiatives to agricultural enhancements, have been postponed, impacting the country's ability to address climate change and food security challenges.

20th December 2023

[A climate paradox-Indian Express editorial](#)

Environment

Key Takeaways:

1. **India's Dual Role at COP28:** India positions itself as a Global South leader at COP28 but lacks crucial decarbonization pledges.
2. **Modi's Emphasis on Climate Justice:** Prime Minister Modi highlights the inequity of climate impact in his address at the conference.
3. **Renewable Energy Achievements:** India ranks fourth globally in renewable energy capacity installations and attracts substantial investment in solar energy.
4. **Fossil Fuel Reliance Persists:** India continues to heavily rely on fossil fuels, primarily coal, for a significant portion of its electricity generation.
5. **Misalignment with International Climate Goals:** India's emissions trajectory falls short of international climate targets, with a net-zero goal set for 2070, while more ambitious goals are suggested.
6. **Complex Energy Development Path:** India's National Electricity Plan reflects a strategic shift toward renewables but also a substantial increase in coal capacity.
7. **Criticism of Climate Targets:** Climate experts deem India's climate targets as "highly insufficient" and call for more ambitious emissions projections.
8. **Urgent Need for Renewable Infrastructure:** Increasing heatwaves in India emphasize the necessity to expand renewable energy infrastructure, especially for cooling purposes.

Mains easy language

At COP28, India plays a dual role, positioning itself as a leader of the Global South while facing criticism for its absence in crucial decarbonization pledges. Prime Minister Modi emphasizes climate justice and the disproportionate impact of climate change on vulnerable nations.

India has made significant strides in renewable energy, ranking fourth globally in capacity installations and attracting substantial solar energy investment. However, the country still heavily relies on fossil fuels, particularly coal, for electricity generation.

India's emissions trajectory does not align with international climate goals, with a net-zero target set for 2070 while more ambitious targets are recommended. The National Electricity Plan outlines a complex path with a shift towards renewables but also a substantial increase in coal capacity.

Climate experts criticize India's climate targets as "highly insufficient," urging the country to align projections with more ambitious goals. The increasing frequency of heatwaves underscores the urgent need for expanded renewable energy infrastructure, particularly for cooling.

India's energy policy decisions in the coming years will test its commitment to the Paris Agreement and leadership in the Global South. Embracing renewables, which are cost-effective, would contribute to global climate mitigation and align with economic interests. India's approach to renewable energy expansion will be a critical indicator of its contribution to combating climate change in the next decade.

[Telecom Bill: what it says, what concerns it raises-Indian Express Explained](#)

Governance

Key takeaways



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1. **Simplified Licensing:** The bill simplifies telecom licensing, replacing multiple permits with a single authorization system.
2. **Spectrum Changes:** While auctions are preferred, administrative spectrum allocation is allowed for specific sectors. Unused spectrum can be reclaimed without compensation.
3. **Voluntary Disclosure:** Entities can voluntarily disclose lapses, with a structured dispute resolution process.
4. **Biometric Authentication:** Mandates biometric user authentication, raising privacy concerns.
5. **Interception Powers:** Grants authorities the power to intercept communications during emergencies or for public safety, with exemptions for accredited correspondents.
6. **Takeover Authority:** Allows government control of telecom services during national security or wartime situations.
7. **Satellite Spectrum:** Introduces administrative allocation for satellite broadband spectrum, departing from terrestrial spectrum auctions. TRAI will determine pricing and allocation methodology.

Mains easy language

The Telecommunications Bill of 2023 in India brings forth substantial reforms. It simplifies licensing procedures, streamlining the regulatory landscape. Administrative allocation of spectrum is introduced for specific sectors, with provisions to reclaim unused spectrum. Entities are encouraged to voluntarily report any breaches, and the bill mandates biometric authentication for users, although concerns about user privacy have been raised.

The bill grants interception powers to government authorities during public emergencies or for public safety reasons, with some exemptions for accredited correspondents. Additionally, it enables the government to take control and management of telecommunications services during national security crises or wartime, ensuring the continued operation of critical services.

A noteworthy departure from the traditional approach is the administrative allocation of spectrum for satellite broadband services, reflecting the evolving technological landscape in the telecom sector.

However, concerns persist regarding the broad interception powers granted, the potential infringement on user privacy due to biometric authentication, and the extent of regulation imposed on online platforms. The impact of these changes on the telecommunications industry and digital services in India will be closely monitored as the bill progresses through the legislative process.

[Illegal Delhi colonies protected from another 3 years: what the law says-Indian Express Explained](#)

Polity

Key takeaways

1. **Extension of Protection:** Both Houses of Parliament have passed an amendment extending protection for certain categories of Delhi's residents in unauthorized colonies, slums, and among hawkers. This extension will be in effect until December 31, 2026.
2. **Purpose of Extension:** The extension aims to safeguard approximately 40 lakh residents from punitive actions that could disrupt their lives.
3. **Background:** These protections originated in response to sealing drives in 2006 that targeted unauthorized constructions.
4. **Amendment Details:** The recent amendment extends the protections for three more years, covering unauthorized constructions up to June 1, 2014.
5. **Relocation and Rehabilitation:** The amendment emphasizes the need for organized plans for relocating and rehabilitating residents affected by these actions.
6. **Ownership Rights:** The NCT of Delhi (Recognition of Property Rights of Residents in Unauthorized Colonies) Act, 2019, granted ownership rights to residents of unauthorized colonies.
7. **Future Outlook:** Delays in conferring ownership rights, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, highlight the need for comprehensive solutions. The draft Master Plan Delhi-2041, in its final stages, is expected to shape the future of these areas upon approval.

Mains easy language

The extension of protection against punitive actions for slum dwellers, hawkers, and residents of unauthorized colonies in Delhi until December 31, 2026, highlights the ongoing challenges in addressing urban development and housing issues in the national capital. The law and its amendments have been instrumental in providing temporary relief to vulnerable populations, but the question of long-term solutions and the need for continued extensions raise important policy considerations.





The extension of protections underscores the importance of balanced urban planning, relocation, and rehabilitation efforts to ensure the well-being of marginalized communities. It also reflects the complexities of addressing unauthorized constructions and providing ownership rights in a densely populated urban area.

The future of these protections will likely depend on the progress made in conferring ownership rights and implementing development control norms for unauthorized colonies. Delays in this process have been attributed to various factors, including the COVID-19 pandemic. As the government works to address these challenges, it will be essential to strike a balance between regularization and orderly urban development while safeguarding the rights and livelihoods of vulnerable populations. The extension of protections serves as a reminder of the ongoing need for comprehensive urban planning and inclusive policies in India's capital city.

Turbulence in south-The Hindu Editorial

Geography

Key takeaways

1. **Turbulent Weather in Tamil Nadu:** Tamil Nadu experienced a turbulent December with severe weather events, including Cyclone Michaung in the northern parts and heavy rainfall in the southern districts.
2. **Impact on Millions:** Nearly four million people were severely affected by the heavy rainfall, causing significant damage to infrastructure, including roads, railways, canals, and homes.
3. **Weather Forecasting Challenges:** The article highlights challenges in weather forecasting, emphasizing the need for more precise and location-specific predictions to prepare for such extreme events.
4. **Interagency Coordination:** Improved coordination among government departments and agencies is essential for effective disaster response. Closer collaboration could help proactively manage such situations.
5. **Advancements in Forecasting:** There is a call for advancements in weather forecasting technology to enhance prediction accuracy, aiding in better preparation for future extreme weather events.

Mains easy language

Tamil Nadu experienced a tumultuous December, facing consecutive weather challenges. While northern parts of the state were recovering from Cyclone Michaung, southern regions, including Thoothukudi, Tirunelveli, Tenkasi, and Kanniyakumari districts, were hit by exceptionally heavy rainfall. Nearly four million people were severely affected, and infrastructure, including roads, rail lines, canals, tanks, and houses, suffered damage.

The surprise scale and coverage of this rainfall event raised questions about weather forecasting and preparedness. The Meteorological Department had issued warnings of "very heavy to extremely heavy" rain for three days, but the exact magnitude and location of the downpour remained unpredictable due to limitations in forecasting technology.

This incident underscores the need for better coordination among government departments and agencies to enhance disaster preparedness and response. Improved collaboration between agencies, such as the Meteorology Department and Railways, could prevent events like the disruption of the Tiruchendur train. A more cohesive working arrangement among different agencies is essential for more effective disaster mitigation and response efforts.

Tax 'HFSS' foods, view it as a public health imperative-The Hindu Editorial

Sociology(health)

Key takeaways

1. **HFSS Foods and Health Impact:** High Fat Sugar Salt (HFSS) foods contribute significantly to health problems such as obesity, diabetes, and high blood pressure, leading to non-communicable diseases (NCDs).
2. **Global Prevalence:** HFSS food consumption is not limited to high-income countries; it is also on the rise in low- and middle-income countries, including India, where NCDs are increasing rapidly.
3. **Ultra-Processed Food Growth:** India has seen a substantial increase in ultra-processed food consumption, driven by the popularity of HFSS products like snacks and soft drinks, posing health risks.
4. **International Trend:** Many countries, including Denmark, France, Mexico, and the UK, have introduced taxes on HFSS foods to reduce consumption, offering a model for others.
5. **Benefits of HFSS Taxation:** Such taxes can help decrease healthcare costs, encourage industry reformulation for healthier alternatives, promote better food choices, and improve public health.





6. **Need for Differentiated Taxation:** Tax rates should consider the nutritional quality of foods, differentiating between HFSS products and healthier options to make healthy choices more affordable.
7. **Public Health Priority:** HFSS taxation should be seen as a crucial public health measure, offering a means to combat obesity, improve health outcomes, and reduce the burden on healthcare systems when combined with other strategies like nutrition education and effective food labeling.

Mains easy language

The article highlights the urgent need for India to implement taxes on High Fat Sugar Salt (HFSS) foods as a crucial public health imperative. HFSS foods are major contributors to health issues like obesity, diabetes, and high blood pressure, with a significant impact on India's healthcare system and economy.

Despite India's alarming shift toward consuming HFSS products, current taxation policies do not adequately address their nutritional content. The article argues that HFSS taxation should be designed to deter consumption, promote healthier food choices, and encourage manufacturers to reformulate their products. This approach can lead to multiple benefits, including improved public health outcomes, reduced healthcare costs, and a more equitable food system.

The international trend of taxing HFSS foods, seen in countries like Denmark, France, and Mexico, provides a model for India to follow. By implementing such taxes and combining them with nutrition education and effective food labeling, India can effectively combat the rising epidemic of obesity and related diseases, ultimately fostering the nation's well-being.

India's ethanol conundrum-The Hindu Editorial

Economy

Key Takeaways:

1. **Ethanol Blending Target:** India faces challenges in achieving its ambitious ethanol blending target of 20% by 2025 due to various factors.
2. **Transition to Grains-based Ethanol:** To meet the target, the government is exploring a transition towards grains-based ethanol production, particularly maize (corn).
3. **Food-Fuel Conflict:** Ethanol production from corn diverts grain away from food and livestock feed, resulting in a food-fuel conflict and linking food prices directly with crude oil prices.
4. **Global Impact of Ethanol:** The article highlights the global impact of ethanol production, citing the experience of the United States with corn-based ethanol and its price effects.
5. **Sugarcane vs. Corn:** It discusses the suitability of sugarcane as an ethanol feedstock compared to corn, particularly in tropical countries like India and Brazil.
6. **Differential Pricing Policy:** India's differential pricing policies incentivized the use of cane juice for ethanol production, intensifying the food versus fuel debate.
7. **Balancing Renewable Energy Strategy:** India must carefully balance its renewable energy strategy with the potential risks of food inflation and explore alternative approaches to meet its ethanol blending target.

Mains easy language

India's pursuit of an ambitious ethanol blending target of 20% by 2025 faces significant challenges, prompting a transition towards grains-based ethanol production, particularly maize (corn). While ethanol blending has increased significantly, the food-fuel conflict associated with corn-based ethanol raises concerns about food prices and security.

The article explores the global impact of ethanol production, drawing lessons from the United States' experience with corn-based ethanol, which resulted in price increases and a food crisis. In contrast, sugarcane remains a more suitable feedstock in tropical countries like India, offering higher yields without intensifying the food versus fuel debate.

India's differential pricing policies incentivized cane juice for ethanol production, leading to reduced sugar stocks. To meet the 2025 target, the government plans to rely on grains-based ethanol, which could trigger food inflation due to high grain demand.

The future of India's renewables strategy hinges on navigating the delicate food-fuel trade-off. Policymakers must consider alternative approaches, infrastructure investment, and urban design to meet energy goals while avoiding food price instability and hunger concerns. Balancing renewable energy and food security remains a critical challenge.

Revolutionising interfaces: the journey of touchscreens from concept to ubiquity-The Hindu Text and Context

Science and technology



| Clear your doubts now.



Key takeaways

- 1. Touchscreen Invention:** The touchscreen concept was invented in 1965 by engineer E.A. Johnson. He developed a capacitive device capable of registering touches by a finger, laying the foundation for modern touchscreens.
- 2. Types of Touchscreens:** Touchscreens come in various types, including capacitive and resistive. Capacitive touchscreens, particularly prevalent in smartphones, offer superior image clarity, sensitivity, and durability compared to resistive ones.
- 3. Rise of Capacitive Touchscreens:** The adoption of capacitive touchscreens in consumer electronics began in the 1990s. Devices like IBM Simon, Apple Newton, and Palm Pilot PDAs introduced touchscreens to the mass market.
- 4. Ongoing Advancements:** Touchscreen technology continues to evolve. Recent advancements focus on improving interfaces for smaller devices like smartwatches, leveraging machine learning for more accurate data extraction, and integrating additional sensors into smartphones for more intuitive interactions.
- 5. Human-Machine Interaction:** Touchscreens have transformed how we interact with technology, making devices feel like natural extensions of ourselves through their intuitive and responsive interfaces.
- 6. Future Prospects:** Touchscreen technology is expected to keep advancing, promising even more seamless human-machine interactions in the future. This could include enhanced haptic feedback, improved gesture recognition, and integration with augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) technologies.
- 7. Impact on Society:** Touchscreens have had a profound impact on society, from revolutionizing personal communication to transforming various industries such as healthcare, education, and entertainment. Their widespread adoption has reshaped the way we work, play, and connect with the digital world.

Mains easy language

Touchscreens, a fundamental aspect of modern technology, have evolved from their initial invention in the mid-20th century to become an integral part of our daily lives. The concept of touchscreens originated with engineer E.A. Johnson in 1965 when he developed a capacitive device capable of registering finger touches. This invention laid the foundation for the touchscreens we use today.

Further innovations followed, with G. Samuel Hurst introducing the resistive touchscreen in 1970. This development, along with subsequent breakthroughs, paved the way for touchscreens to be adapted for various applications, including computer terminals and consumer electronics.

Capacitive touchscreens, commonly found in smartphones, rely on a grid of capacitors to detect touch by measuring changes in electric fields. They offer advantages like better image clarity and sensitivity, leading to their widespread adoption in the consumer electronics market.

Touchscreen technology continues to advance, with a focus on improving interfaces for smaller devices such as smartwatches, utilizing machine learning to enhance data extraction, and integrating more sensors into smartphones. As technology evolves, touchscreens remain a vital interface between humans and machines, driving innovation and enhancing user experiences.

Measuring scientists' productivity with numbers undermines science-The Hindu Science

Science

Key Takeaways:

- 1. Use of Numerical Measures:** Numerical measures, such as citation counts and indices, are increasingly being used to evaluate scientists' productivity, impacting decisions related to hiring, funding, promotions, and awards.
- 2. Stanford University's Top 2% Ranking:** Stanford University ranked the top 2% of scientists based on citation metrics, resulting in substantial attention, particularly for Indian scientists featured on the list.
- 3. Standardized Citation Metrics:** The ranking system relies on standardized citation metrics, including total citations, h-index, and more, to assess scientists' citation impact both annually and throughout their careers.
- 4. Inadequacy of Quantitative Metrics:** These metrics primarily rely on quantitative data derived from citation profiles and fail to evaluate the quality or impact of scientific work.
- 5. Lack of Field-Specific Considerations:** Metrics do not account for differences in research fields or specific aspects of subfields, potentially leading to inequities in assessment.
- 6. Incentives for Unethical Practices:** Overemphasis on publication and citation counts can incentivize unethical practices, such as self-citation and competition for author positions.





7. **Neglect of Other Responsibilities:** Metrics-focused evaluation may overlook scientists' contributions to teaching, mentoring, community service, and administration, which are crucial for the broader scientific community.
8. **Impact on Academic Publishing:** The pressure to publish in high-impact journals driven by citation metrics can affect the scientific publishing landscape.
9. **Simple Evaluation:** Despite the complexity of quantitative indicators, the best way to evaluate scientists' work remains reading and assessing the quality of their scientific contributions.

Mains easy language

The increasing use of numerical metrics, like ranking scientists based on citations, has become common in academia, impacting decisions on hiring, funding, and promotions. However, this approach raises concerns.

Firstly, these metrics don't reflect research quality. For instance, a scientist's high citation count may come from less impactful sources.

Secondly, they disregard field-specific differences. Some areas require longer research timelines, while others publish more rapidly.

Thirdly, the focus on numbers encourages unethical practices like self-citation and competition for author positions.

Lastly, these metrics often overlook scientists' broader contributions, such as teaching and mentoring.

A balanced approach combining quantitative and qualitative assessments, including peer reviews and considering non-research contributions, is needed to ensure a fair evaluation of scientists and reduce the negative consequences of relying solely on numerical indicators.

21st December 2023

In this together-Indian Express Editorial

International relations

Key Takeaways:

1. **Unwavering US Support for Israel:** The ongoing conflict in Palestine has highlighted the consistent and unwavering support that the United States provides to Israel. President Joe Biden unequivocally expressed support for Israel during the conflict.
2. **Special Relationship:** The US-Israel relationship is often characterized as a "special relationship," with the US being the first country to recognize Israel's sovereignty in 1948. This relationship involves substantial military aid from the US to Israel.
3. **Settler Colonialism:** Both the US and Israel are considered settler colonial states. Settler colonialism involves the displacement and replacement of indigenous populations. In the case of Israel, the mass expulsion of Palestinians during its founding is a significant aspect of settler colonialism.
4. **Genocide and Displacement:** Settler colonialism often results in genocide and the dispossession of indigenous lands. The term "nakba" is used by Palestinians to describe their displacement and dispossession during the creation of Israel.
5. **Whitenationalism and Immigrant Societies:** Despite evolving into immigrant societies, both the US and Australia continue to grapple with periodic resurgences of virulent white nationalism, reflecting the lingering influence of settler colonialism.
6. **Differing Perspectives on Land Productivity:** Historically, some settlers believed they were making unproductive land fruitful. Martin Buber, for example, noted that Jewish settlers taught Arab farmers to cultivate the land. However, these efforts often omitted the perspectives and rights of indigenous populations.
7. **Palestine's Erasure:** Many American and Israeli politicians refuse even to acknowledge Palestine's existence, contributing to the erasure of Palestinian identity and rights.
8. **Global Consequences:** The unwavering US-Israel alliance and their approach to the Palestinian issue have had catastrophic consequences for their own countries and pose potential disasters for global stability and peace.

Mains easy language

The ongoing conflict in Palestine has highlighted the strong support the United States offers to Israel. President Joe Biden's unwavering backing during the conflict underscores their close relationship, often called a "special relationship," with significant military aid from the US.

Both the US and Israel are considered settler colonial states, characterized by displacing and replacing indigenous populations. Israel's founding involved the mass expulsion of Palestinians, referred to as "nakba." Settler colonialism typically leads to genocide and land dispossession. Despite evolving into immigrant societies, both the US and Australia still grapple with white nationalism linked to settler colonial legacies.





Historically, settlers believed they made unproductive land fruitful, often overlooking indigenous perspectives and rights. Some American and Israeli politicians deny Palestine's existence, further erasing Palestinian identity. This unwavering US-Israel alliance has had catastrophic consequences for their countries and global stability. The conflict remains a complex issue with significant global implications.

The nature of growth-Indian Express Explained

Economy

Key takeaways

1. **GDP Growth Surpasses Expectations:** India's GDP growth for the current financial year has exceeded expectations, with a Q2 growth rate of 7.6%, driven primarily by strong performance in the manufacturing sector.
2. **Stock Market Surge:** The stock market has seen a significant surge, attributed in part to rising company profits and renewed investor interest following recent political victories.
3. **Consumption Disparities:** Disparities in consumption levels persist, with a widening urban-rural divide and a noticeable shift toward premium products in urban areas.
4. **Corporate Profit Soars:** Corporate profits have seen a sharp increase, even though net sales growth has been modest, thanks to lower input prices. This surge in profits has contributed to the stock market's strong performance.
5. **Investment and Sectoral Variations:** Some sectors are responding to higher profits by investing in productive capacity, while growth is not uniform across all industries. Sectors such as gems and jewellery benefit from premium consumption demand, while others like infrastructure and construction materials benefit from government capital expenditure.
6. **Uneven Recovery:** Overall, India's economy is displaying positive signs of recovery. However, this recovery is not evenly distributed, with disparities in consumption patterns and corporate performance across different segments of the economy.

Mains easy language

In a nutshell, India's economic landscape is characterized by surprising GDP growth, led by a robust manufacturing sector and a buoyant stock market fueled by surging corporate profits. However, underlying this positive picture are significant disparities in consumption, with urban and rural divides, and a preference for premium products in urban areas.

Corporate earnings have surged, primarily due to lower input costs, even though sales growth has been moderate. This surge in profits has been a major driver of stock market gains, attracting renewed investor interest.

Some sectors are seizing the opportunity to invest in productive capacity in response to higher profits. However, these investments are not evenly distributed across industries, with certain sectors benefiting more from the current economic conditions, such as gems and jewellery, and those tied to government capital expenditure, like infrastructure and construction materials.

While India's overall economic outlook is optimistic, the uneven recovery across different sectors and consumption patterns underscores the complex and multifaceted nature of the country's economic landscape as it navigates its way through the challenges and opportunities of post-pandemic growth.

TRUMP DISQUALIFIED: WHAT IS THE US CONSTITUTION'S 14TH AMENDMENT-Indian Express Explained

Polity

Key takeaways

1. **Trump Disqualification:** Donald Trump has been disqualified from Colorado's 2024 presidential ballot under the Fourteenth Amendment.
2. **Capitol Attack Link:** This decision is tied to Trump's alleged involvement in the January 6, 2021 Capitol attacks.
3. **Section 3 of the Amendment:** Section 3 of the Fourteenth Amendment prohibits individuals involved in insurrection from holding office again unless Congress removes the disability with a two-thirds vote.
4. **Limited Electoral Impact:** Trump's disqualification in Colorado is not expected to significantly impact his 2024 candidacy, as the state usually favors Democratic candidates.
5. **Unprecedented Application:** This case marks a rare use of Section 3 of the Fourteenth Amendment, highlighting the legal complexities surrounding disqualifications for insurrection against the United States.

Mains easy language





In summary, the Supreme Court of Colorado has ruled to disqualify former President Donald Trump from appearing on the state's 2024 presidential ballot. This disqualification is based on Section 3 of the Fourteenth Amendment, a rare application that links Trump's alleged involvement in the January 6, 2021 Capitol attacks to his ineligibility for future office. Section 3 of the Fourteenth Amendment prohibits individuals who have engaged in insurrection against the United States from holding office again, unless Congress removes this disability through a two-thirds vote. While this ruling is significant, it is unlikely to have a substantial impact on Trump's overall electoral prospects, as Colorado traditionally favors Democratic candidates. This case underscores the legal complexities surrounding disqualifications for individuals involved in acts of insurrection against the United States.

GREENWASHING-Indian Express Explained

Environment

Key Takeaways:

1. **Greenwashing in Airlines:** Several airlines, including Air France, Lufthansa, Etihad, and KLM, have faced accusations of greenwashing in their advertising. They have been criticized for misleading consumers about the environmental impact of air travel.
2. **What is Greenwashing?:** Greenwashing refers to the practice of companies or governments creating a false impression that their products or activities are environmentally friendly or contribute to reducing emissions. It often involves highlighting sustainable aspects to overshadow environmentally damaging practices.
3. **KLM's "Fly Responsibly" Campaign:** KLM faced a trial in Amsterdam over its "Fly Responsibly" advertising campaign, which environmentalists argued was misleading because there is no truly environmentally friendly way to fly.
4. **Misleading Ads:** The Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) in the UK identified misleading Google ads from Air France, Lufthansa, and Etihad. These ads suggested sustainability in their flights but lacked evidence to support their environmental claims.
5. **Environmental Impact of Airlines:** The aviation industry currently contributes approximately 2.5% of all human-produced CO2 emissions, according to the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. While this may appear modest, it is expected to grow significantly in the future.

Mains easy language

The issue of greenwashing in the airline industry has come to the forefront, with airlines such as Air France, Lufthansa, Etihad, and KLM facing accusations of misleading consumers about the environmental impact of air travel. Greenwashing involves companies creating a false impression of environmental friendliness or sustainability, often using misleading imagery, labels, or selective disclosure of facts.

KLM's "Fly Responsibly" campaign is a notable example, as it was taken to trial in Amsterdam, with environmentalists arguing that there is no genuinely eco-friendly way to fly. In the UK, the Advertising Standards Authority identified misleading Google ads from these airlines, which claimed sustainability without providing sufficient evidence.

Despite accounting for about 2.5% of human-produced CO2 emissions, the aviation industry's impact on climate change is expected to increase significantly. This situation underscores the importance of addressing greenwashing and promoting genuine sustainability efforts within the airline sector to mitigate its environmental effects.

India's defence budgeting and the point of deterrence-The Hindu Editorial

Science(defence)

Key Takeaways:

1. **IAF's Squadron Strength:** The Indian Air Force (IAF) has faced a significant decline in squadron strength, with only 32 squadrons currently operational, falling short of the required strength of 42 squadrons.
2. **Budgetary Concerns:** India's defense budget allocation for the upcoming Budget 2024-25 is a matter of concern, as it may be influenced by electoral sops and other competing priorities.
3. **Affordable Defense vs. Effective Defense:** There is a critical debate between prioritizing "affordable defense" driven by budget constraints and "affordable effectiveness" driven by the actual defense requirements.
4. **Threat on Northern Borders:** India faces a live threat on its northern borders, necessitating preparedness for potential conflicts with both its northern and western neighbors.
5. **Balancing Imports and Indigenous Development:** Striking a balance between defense imports and indigenous defense production is essential to ensure military readiness.





6. **Low Research and Development Expenditure:** India's research and development expenditure in the defense sector is relatively low compared to global standards, posing challenges for technological modernization.
7. **Geopolitical Shifts and Defense Preparedness:** Geopolitical shifts, including China's increasing defense budget and aggressive stance, require India to invest in its defense capabilities to maintain deterrence and national security.

Mains easy language

India's defense budgeting faces challenges that could impact deterrence capabilities. As the armed forces grapple with shortages and modernization needs, the allocation of funds in the upcoming Budget 2024-25 is a concern. The key question is whether budget constraints will determine military readiness or if actual defense requirements will prevail.

The Indian Air Force (IAF) has seen a decline in squadron strength, and the budget's influence on defense preparedness is a concern. The threat on India's northern and western borders remains, necessitating balanced investment in defense imports and indigenous development.

India's defense research and development expenditure is relatively low, posing technological modernization challenges. Geopolitical shifts, such as China's increasing defense budget, require India to invest in defense capabilities for deterrence.

A judicious assessment of defense planning and budgeting is crucial, ensuring national security imperatives are prioritized. Balancing budget constraints and defense needs is essential for affordable and effective defense preparedness.

Outcomes of the COP-28 climate summit-The Hindu Text and Context

Environment

Key Takeaways

1. **Loss and Damage Fund:** COP-28 operationalized the Loss and Damage (L&D) fund, but it faces funding challenges, with only \$790 million pledged so far, falling short of annual requirements.
2. **Global Stocktake (GST):** COP-28 introduced the first-ever GST for assessing progress toward Paris Agreement goals. Concerns remain regarding fossil fuel transition and unproven technologies.
3. **Green Finance:** Developed nations are recognized for climate finance responsibility, but details on grant-based finance entities are lacking. New green finance mechanisms were introduced but fall short of UN estimates.
4. **India's Stance:** India did not sign the climate and health declaration due to healthcare sector concerns. It also refrained from signing the Global Methane Pledge, focusing on carbon dioxide.
5. **Mixed Outcomes:** COP-28 brought positive results in renewable energy and nature-based solutions but faced challenges in areas like fossil fuel subsidies, fund management, and private sector involvement.
6. **Contentious Issues:** Controversies arose over fossil fuel subsidies, market mechanisms, fund allocation, World Bank's role, and private sector engagement.
7. **Overall Assessment:** COP-28 achieved significant progress but faces challenges and differences between developed and developing countries in fossil fuel use, fund management, and market mechanisms.

Mains easy language

COP-28, the annual climate conference, achieved several milestones but faced challenges. The Loss and Damage (L&D) fund was operationalized but received inadequate pledges. The Global Stocktake (GST) was introduced, focusing on transitioning from fossil fuels in energy systems, but other sectors remained unaddressed.

Green finance commitments were emphasized, but specifics on responsible entities were lacking. New mechanisms were established, yet funds fell short of estimates. India refrained from signing the climate and health declaration due to concerns about emissions reduction in the healthcare sector and the Global Methane Pledge's focus on methane.

While progress was made in renewable energy and nature-based solutions, contentious issues like fossil fuel subsidies, fund management, and private sector engagement persisted. COP-28 showcased achievements but highlighted differences between developed and developing countries in addressing climate challenges.

Volcano in Iceland erupts after being preceded by thousands of earthquakes-The Hindu Science

Geography

Key takeaways





1. **Volcanic Eruption in Iceland:** A volcano in southwestern Iceland erupted on December 18 after weeks of seismic activity, captivating observers with fountains of orange lava shooting into the dark sky.
2. **Evacuation of Grindavik:** The town of Grindavik, located about 4 km from the eruption site, was evacuated in November due to earthquake damage and heightened volcanic activity, leaving many residents displaced.
3. **Iceland's Volcanic History:** Iceland, situated above a volcanic hotspot in the North Atlantic, experiences eruptions on average every four to five years. The most notable in recent memory was the Eyjafjallajokull eruption in 2010, which disrupted European airspace.
4. **No Expected Ash Emission:** Unlike the 2010 eruption, this recent one is not anticipated to release ash into the atmosphere since it doesn't lie beneath water or ice, minimizing the impact on air travel.
5. **Reykjanes Peninsula Activity:** The Reykjanes Peninsula volcanic range, located approximately 50 km southwest of Reykjavik, has experienced multiple eruptions since 2021 after an 800-year dormancy.
6. **Uncertainty for Grindavik:** Residents of Grindavik, a fishing community of 3,400, have mixed emotions as they watch the eruption. Some may not be able to return to their homes, as the town could be affected by lava flow.
7. **Impact on Tourism:** The eruption and preceding earthquakes disrupted tourism in Iceland, with the temporary closure of the popular Blue Lagoon geothermal spa. The spectacle of the eruption attracts global attention but has bittersweet undertones for the affected community.

Mains easy language

A volcano in southwestern Iceland erupted following weeks of rumbling and thousands of earthquakes. The eruption, which began on December 18, was located about 4 km from the town of Grindavik, leading to its evacuation in November due to earthquake damage and eruption fears.

The eruption featured fountains of orange lava shooting into the dark sky, captivating viewers in Iceland, which experiences about 20 hours of darkness daily in December. Iceland has a history of eruptions, with the last significant one being the Eyjafjallajokull volcano in 2010 that disrupted European airspace.

Unlike the 2010 eruption, this one is not expected to release ash into the atmosphere as it's not beneath water or ice. Flights to and from Iceland remain unaffected. The Reykjanes Peninsula volcanic range, dormant for 800 years, has now erupted thrice since 2021.

The November evacuation of Grindavik left residents uncertain about their homes' future, as the current eruption could encroach upon the town. The nearby Blue Lagoon geothermal spa also temporarily closed due to earthquake activity, impacting tourism.

The eruption is a reminder of Iceland's volcanic nature, attracting global attention as nature's fiery spectacle unfolds.

22nd December 2023

IMF'S MESSAGE-Indian Express Editorial

Economy

Key takeaways

1. **Exchange Rate Regime:** India's exchange rate regime was temporarily reclassified due to stability in the rupee-dollar rate. The RBI disagrees, stating that the rupee's value is market-driven and interventions aim to curb volatility.
2. **Fiscal Consolidation:** The IMF emphasizes the need for ambitious fiscal consolidation to reduce government debt and build fiscal reserves. There's a risk of debt exceeding 100% of GDP if economic shocks occur.
3. **RBI's View:** India's IMF executive director argues that sovereign debt risks are low because most debt is in domestic currency. General government debt levels have remained relatively stable despite economic shocks.
4. **Flexible Exchange Rate:** A flexible exchange rate is seen as crucial to absorb external economic shocks and maintain stability.
5. **Continued Fiscal Efforts:** Sustained fiscal consolidation efforts by both central and state governments are crucial, especially considering the challenges posed by the pandemic.

Mains easy language

The IMF's Annual Article IV Report on India has sparked discussions on two crucial aspects.

Firstly, it addresses the reclassification of India's exchange rate regime due to relative stability in the rupee-dollar rate. However, the RBI opposes this, asserting that the rupee's exchange rate is market-driven.



| Clear your doubts now.



Secondly, the report emphasizes the need for significant fiscal consolidation in India to reduce government debt levels and create fiscal buffers. The IMF warns of debt exceeding 100% of GDP if economic shocks occur.

India's IMF executive director counters that sovereign debt risks are low because most debt is in domestic currency, and general government debt levels have seen minimal increases despite economic shocks.

The report highlights the importance of maintaining a flexible exchange rate regime for economic stability.

Lastly, it underscores the need for continuous fiscal consolidation efforts by both central and state governments, especially considering the challenges posed by the pandemic.

What should your credit score be, why is it important?-Indian express Explained

Economy

Key takeaways

1. **Credit Score Importance:** Your credit score is crucial when applying for loans or credit cards. It helps lenders assess your creditworthiness and financial responsibility.
2. **Credit Information Companies (CICs):** CICs collect and maintain credit information. In India, there are four major ones: TransUnion CIBIL, Experian, Equifax, and CRIF High Mark. They gather data from various credit providers.
3. **Credit Score Range:** Credit scores in India range from 300 to 900, with higher scores indicating better creditworthiness. An ideal score is above 800.
4. **Credit Score Impact:** Timely payments improve your score, while defaults lower it. A score above 800 makes it easier to get loans and credit cards with lower interest rates.
5. **CIC Database:** CICs have details of creditors, borrowers, and transactions totaling over Rs 150 lakh crore in the Indian banking system.
6. **Data Accuracy:** Regularly check your credit report for accuracy and contact the CIC if there are inaccuracies.
7. **Complaints and RBI's Actions:** Complaints about CICs not updating statuses prompted the RBI to mandate annual Free Full Credit Reports (FFCR). Lenders must explain data correction rejections. CICs must review algorithms and address complaints.

Mains easy language

Credit scores are essential for loan and credit card applications in India, serving as a measure of creditworthiness. Credit Information Companies (CICs), such as TransUnion CIBIL, Experian, Equifax, and CRIF High Mark, compile data from various sources to calculate these scores, typically ranging from 300 to 900. An ideal score lies above 800, indicating a higher likelihood of loan approval with lower interest rates.

CICs maintain extensive databases, encompassing creditor and borrower information, which total more than Rs 150 lakh crore in outstanding loans within the Indian banking system. Regularly reviewing one's credit report for accuracy is crucial to ensure that the data is up to date and free of errors.

Complaints about CICs, including delayed updates and inaccuracies, prompted the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to take action. The RBI mandated the provision of annual Free Full Credit Reports (FFCR) to individuals and required lenders to explain the reasons for rejecting data correction requests. Additionally, CICs are obligated to periodically review their algorithms and address complaints to maintain data accuracy and fairness within the credit reporting system.

In summary, maintaining a good credit score is crucial for favorable credit terms, and borrowers should regularly check their credit reports for accuracy. The RBI has introduced measures to enhance transparency and accountability within the credit reporting process.

IPC to BNS, what has changed-Indian Express Explained

Polity

Key takeaways

1. **Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita Bill, 2023:** This bill brings significant changes to India's criminal law through a comprehensive reform of the Indian Penal Code (IPC).
2. **New Offenses:** The bill introduces offenses like criminalizing deceitful promises to marry, addressing mob lynching and hate crimes with penalties ranging from imprisonment to the death penalty for mob murders.





3. **Organized Crime:** Organized crime is now part of regular criminal law, removing the need for specialized state legislations and their extensive powers.
4. **Terrorism:** Terrorism is now incorporated into regular criminal law, drawing from the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA), with questions surrounding its interplay with the UAPA.
5. **Gender Neutrality:** Certain laws, especially those concerning children, are made gender-neutral to ensure impartial application.
6. **Deletions:** Notable deletions include Section 377, which criminalized homosexuality, and provisions related to adultery and the label "thug."
7. **Mandatory Minimum Sentences:** The bill introduces mandatory minimum sentences, reducing judicial discretion in sentencing.
8. **Graded Fines:** Offenses related to public property damage now carry fines that vary based on the extent of damage caused.

Mains easy language

The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita Bill, 2023, brings about substantial changes to the Indian Penal Code (IPC). Notable provisions criminalize deceitful promises to marry, mob lynching, and hate crimes. Organized crime is now addressed under ordinary criminal law, eliminating the need for special state legislations. Terrorism is also incorporated into the IPC, raising questions about its concurrent operation with the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA).

The bill introduces new offenses, including attempts to commit suicide with the intent to restrain public servants, potentially affecting protests. It repeals Section 377, criminalizing homosexuality, and deletes provisions related to adultery and the label "thug."

Gender neutrality is introduced in some laws, making them applicable to both genders. The bill also criminalizes the publication of false and misleading information and revises sedition laws, expanding their scope.

Mandatory minimum sentences are introduced for various offenses, limiting judicial discretion. Fines for damaging public property are graded based on the extent of damage. These changes mark a significant overhaul of the IPC, aiming to address evolving societal concerns and legal standards.

WHAT ARE VOLCANOES—AND WHY DO THEY KEEP ERUPTING IN ICELAND?—Indian Express Explained

Geography

Key takeaways

1. **Iceland Volcanic Activity:** The Fagradalsfjall volcano in Iceland recently erupted, prompting evacuations from Grindavik, a threatened town. This marks the third eruption in two years, despite a 6,000-year dormancy period.
2. **Eruption Frequency:** Iceland is renowned for its high volcanic activity, typically witnessing eruptions every four to five years. However, since 2021, the frequency has risen, with nearly one eruption annually.
3. **Volcano Basics:** Volcanoes are surface openings where materials like magma and lava, much hotter than their surroundings, erupt onto the Earth's surface. They are shaped by various factors, including magma viscosity, gas content, and eruption processes.
4. **Formation of Volcanoes:** Magma rises to the surface through tectonic plate movements, either moving apart, moving together, or via hotspots within the Earth's interior.
5. **Types of Volcanoes:** There are two main types of volcanoes: stratovolcanoes, characterized by steep, cone-shaped sides, and shield volcanoes, which have lower profiles resembling shields on the ground.
6. **Iceland's Unique Geology:** Iceland's extraordinary volcanic activity is due to its location between the Eurasian and North American tectonic plates, gradually moving apart, and its position over a hotspot, contributing to frequent eruptions.
7. **Impact on Region:** While eruptions are natural geological events, they can have significant impacts on local communities, necessitating precautionary measures and evacuations to safeguard lives and property.

Mains easy language

The recent eruption of Iceland's Fagradalsfjall volcano, the third in two years after a 6,000-year dormancy, highlights Iceland's frequent volcanic activity. Typically, Iceland witnesses eruptions every four to five years, but the rate has increased, with nearly one eruption yearly since 2021.

Volcanoes, like Fagradalsfjall, are openings where hotter materials like magma and lava erupt onto the Earth's surface. Their types, whether stratovolcanoes with steep sides or shield volcanoes with low profiles, depend on various factors, including magma properties and plate movements.

Iceland's remarkable volcanic activity stems from its location between tectonic plates, gradually moving apart, and its position over a hotspot. These geological events can impact local communities, leading to evacuations and safety measures. This eruption underscores the





dynamic geological processes shaping Iceland's landscape and the importance of ongoing monitoring and preparedness in this volcanically active region.

Questionable searches under the Money Laundering Act-The Hindu Editorial

Internal Security

Key takeaways

1. **Supreme Court's PMLA Interpretation:**The Supreme Court's interpretation of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 (PMLA), has sparked controversy and criticism.
2. **Limited PMLA Application:**The PMLA's limited application, as ruled by the Supreme Court, is focused on property gained from criminal activities related to scheduled offenses and its qualification as "proceeds of crime."
3. **Scrutiny of Enforcement Directorate (ED) Actions:**ED actions, including searches and arrests, have faced scrutiny for exceeding the boundaries defined by the PMLA, resulting in criticism from the Supreme Court.
4. **Emphasis on ED Conduct:**The Supreme Court emphasizes the importance of the ED conducting its operations with the highest standards of probity, fairness, and consistency under the stringent PMLA.
5. **Selective Targeting of States:**Central investigating agencies, like the ED, have been accused of selectively targeting states, particularly those governed by the Opposition, raising concerns about potential misuse of authority.
6. **Illegal Mining Investigations:**Investigations related to illegal mining of minerals, typically a state matter, have been conducted in states where the ruling party is in opposition, despite these offenses not falling under "scheduled offenses" in the PMLA.
7. **Implications for Federalism and Democracy:**These developments have significant implications for the principles of federalism and democracy in India, highlighting the need for impartial and fair enforcement of laws to protect the integrity of democratic institutions.

Mains easy language

The interpretation of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 (PMLA), by the Supreme Court of India has raised concerns and sparked criticism. The Court's ruling restricts the application of the PMLA to property gained from criminal activities related to scheduled offenses and its qualification as "proceeds of crime." This limited scope has led to scrutiny of the Enforcement Directorate's (ED) actions, including searches and arrests, which have been criticized for exceeding the boundaries defined by the PMLA.

The Supreme Court emphasizes the need for the ED to conduct its operations with the utmost probity, fairness, and consistency under the stringent PMLA. There is a growing concern about the selective targeting of states, particularly those governed by the Opposition, by central investigating agencies like the ED. These agencies have been accused of conducting investigations related to illegal mining of minerals, even in cases where these offenses do not fall under "scheduled offenses" in the PMLA.

These developments have significant implications for the principles of federalism and democracy in India. They highlight the need for impartial and fair enforcement of laws to protect the integrity of democratic institutions. The abuse of authority by central investigating agencies and the misuse of the court process raise disturbing questions about the state of democracy and federalism in the country.

Should an All-India Judicial Service be created?-The Hindu Editorial

Polity

Key takeaways

1. **Underrepresentation in the Judiciary:**The proposal for an All-India Judicial Service (AIJS) seeks to address the issue of underrepresentation in the judiciary, particularly concerning women and marginalized communities among subordinate court judges.
2. **Low Representation and Gender Disparity:**The India Justice Report 2022 reveals that only 35% of subordinate court judges are women, and no state has met quotas for Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), and Other Backward Classes (OBC) categories in the subordinate judiciary.
3. **Barriers to Entry:**Barriers to entry into the judiciary, including the requirement of seven years of legal practice and the importance of local knowledge, disproportionately affect individuals from underprivileged backgrounds and marginalized communities.
4. **Language and Regional Challenges:**Language and regional factors pose challenges as district court cases are conducted in regional languages. Understanding local languages, customs, and dialects is essential for effective judicial decision-making.





5. **Judicial Vacancies:**The issue of judicial vacancies is significant, with 5,388 posts lying vacant in the district judiciary. Some suggest that a centralised service could address this problem, while others argue that timely recruitment exams are crucial.
6. **Attracting Young Lawyers:**To attract young lawyers to the judiciary, factors such as improved pay structures, career prospects, and opportunities to serve in one's home state need consideration.
7. **Preserving Judicial Independence:**Concerns about potential loss of judicial independence arise if the AIJS were to be implemented. The existing system, where High Courts play a pivotal role in appointments, transfers, and removals, is seen as effective in safeguarding judicial independence. Constitutional implications of the AIJS proposal require careful examination.

Mains easy language

The proposal for an All-India Judicial Service (AIJS) seeks to address underrepresentation in the judiciary, particularly among women and marginalized communities. However, several challenges hinder its implementation.

One challenge is the seven-year legal practice requirement, which acts as a barrier for individuals, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, to enter the judiciary.

The regional and linguistic diversity of India poses another obstacle. District court cases are conducted in regional languages, necessitating a deep understanding of local languages and customs. A centralized recruitment exam may disadvantage candidates not proficient in the regional language.

Vacant judicial positions in the district judiciary are a pressing concern, with over 5,000 positions unfilled. Whether centralization can improve this situation remains uncertain.

Attracting young lawyers to the judiciary is crucial. This requires better pay structures, improved career prospects, and opportunities to serve in one's home state.

Preserving judicial independence is vital. The current system, where High Courts play a significant role in appointments and transfers, safeguards this independence. Introducing AIJS could raise constitutional concerns.

In summary, while AIJS aims to address representation issues, challenges related to entry requirements, linguistic diversity, vacancies, talent attraction, and judicial independence must be carefully considered for its successful implementation.

[Analysing the Post Office Bill, 2023-The Hindu Text and Context](#)

Polity

Key takeaways

1. **Post Office Bill, 2023:** The Indian Parliament passed the Post Office Bill, 2023, as a replacement for the colonial-era Indian Post Office Act, 1898, with the aim of improving the functioning of the Postal Department.
2. **Interception Powers:** The new Bill grants interception powers to government-appointed officers, allowing them to intercept, open, or detain postal articles on various grounds, including national security, public order, and contravention of the law.
3. **Liability Exemption:** The Bill stipulates that neither the Post Office nor its officers will incur liability unless they engage in fraudulent or willful actions resulting in loss, delay, or misdelivery of services.
4. **Opposition Concerns:** Opposition MPs have raised concerns that the Bill infringes upon the fundamental right to privacy and enables state surveillance. They question the absence of clear guidelines, lack of grounds definition, and the absence of mechanisms for citizen grievance redressal.
5. **Government's Defense:** The government argues that interception powers are essential for safeguarding national security, particularly in India's diverse and complex society, where security threats can be significant.
6. **Historical Context:** Similar interception provisions existed in the past but were not enacted into law, highlighting the historical background of this legal concept.
7. **Supreme Court Rulings:** The Supreme Court has previously ruled that any state actions, such as interception, must have safeguards to prevent arbitrary use of surveillance powers and protect citizens' privacy rights.
8. **Expert Critique:** Legal experts have criticized the Bill for not including necessary safeguards. They point out that it lacks written orders, justifiable reasons for interceptions, and could potentially lead to unchecked state surveillance, which may infringe upon citizens' privacy.

Mains easy language

The Post Office Bill, 2023, recently passed in India, aims to modernize postal services but has raised concerns due to its extensive interception powers. Under the new law, government-appointed officers can intercept, open, or detain postal articles for reasons such as





national security and public order. While the government claims these powers are necessary, opposition MPs argue that the bill lacks clarity and safeguards, potentially infringing on citizens' right to privacy, which is considered fundamental in India.

Historically, similar interception provisions existed but were not enacted into law. Supreme Court rulings emphasize the need for safeguards against arbitrary state surveillance and protection of privacy rights.

Experts criticize the bill for its lack of safeguards, including written orders, justifiable reasons for interceptions, and mechanisms for addressing citizen complaints. They argue that it could lead to unchecked state surveillance.

In summary, the Post Office Bill, 2023, raises concerns about the balance between national security and individual privacy. The government's efforts to modernize postal services should address these concerns to protect citizens' rights adequately.

[As JN.1 emerges as variant of interest, time to evaluate preparedness-The Hindu Science](#)

Science

Key takeaways

1. **JN.1 Classified as a Variant of Interest (VOI):** The WHO has designated JN.1 as a Variant of Interest (VOI) due to its distinct genetic characteristics and rapid spread within the COVID-19 landscape.
2. **Low Immediate Global Health Risk:** Currently, JN.1 is assessed as posing a low additional global health risk. However, concerns arise with the onset of winter in the Northern Hemisphere, potentially increasing respiratory infections.
3. **Diverse Disease Severity:** JN.1 displays a wide range of disease severity, similar to Omicron variants, encompassing asymptomatic cases, mild illness, severe disease, and fatalities.
4. **Preventive Measures Recommended:** Several countries, including the United States and India, have advised precautionary measures like mask-wearing in crowded areas to mitigate potential transmission risks associated with JN.1.
5. **CDC Assessment:** The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in the United States have been monitoring JN.1 and currently state that it does not pose an elevated risk to public health. No evidence suggests increased disease severity linked to JN.1 infections.
6. **Vaccination and Immunity:** Discussions are ongoing regarding the need for additional vaccine doses to combat JN.1 in India. Epidemiologists suggest that robust vaccination and prior infection immunity should offer effective protection against this variant.
7. **Global Surveillance and Data Sharing:** The WHO emphasizes the importance of global surveillance, extensive virus sequencing, and transparent data sharing mechanisms to monitor variants like JN.1. Timely data sharing is crucial for tracking virus evolution and adapting public health responses.
8. **Continued Monitoring:** The WHO commits to continuous monitoring of the JN.1 variant and pledges to adjust guidance and recommendations as needed, especially as the Northern Hemisphere experiences winter, potentially impacting respiratory infections.

Mains easy language

The emergence of the JN.1 subvariant of COVID-19, classified as a Variant of Interest (VOI) by the World Health Organization (WHO), has reignited concerns about the ongoing pandemic. JN.1, part of the BA.2.86 lineage, has shown rapid spread potential.

While the risk posed by JN.1 is currently considered low, the onset of winter in the Northern Hemisphere raises concerns about increased respiratory infections in affected regions. JN.1 shares a disease spectrum with Omicron variants, from asymptomatic to severe cases.

Some countries recommend mask-wearing in crowded areas due to JN.1. However, the U.S. CDC sees no elevated public health risk, and updated vaccines are expected to provide better protection against JN.1. India is monitoring JN.1 closely and focuses on home-based treatment for mild cases.

Preparedness involves surveillance, genome sequencing, and data sharing. The WHO adapts guidance as JN.1 evolves, emphasizing global cooperation to address COVID-19 variant challenges.

[Researchers patenting new treatment for nicotine addiction-The Hindu Science](#)

Science

Key takeaways

1. **Novel Approach to Nicotine Addiction:** Researchers have developed an innovative strategy to address nicotine addiction by focusing on cotinine, a nicotine metabolite, and leveraging ascorbic acid (Vitamin C) as a reducing agent.





2. **Traditional Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT):**Current methods for nicotine addiction treatment, such as NRT, involve providing additional nicotine to the body, which may not effectively address the addiction's root causes.
3. **Recirculating Cotinine with Vitamin C:**The researchers have created a dissolvable film containing Vitamin C, which individuals can place on their tongue whenever they experience the urge to smoke. This film serves as a delivery mechanism for ascorbic acid.
4. **Converting Cotinine Back to Nicotine:**The primary objective of this approach is to convert cotinine, a nicotine byproduct that can linger in the body for up to six weeks, back into nicotine by reducing its carbonyl group.
5. **Potential Health Risks of Cotinine:**Cotinine, while a byproduct of nicotine metabolism, can pose health risks, including a potential association with cancer.
6. **Promising Results in Preliminary Studies:**Preliminary studies involving volunteers, particularly those who struggled with quitting smoking due to withdrawal symptoms, have shown promising results with this innovative treatment approach.
7. **Patent Application and Future Prospects:**The researchers have applied for an Indian patent for this novel approach, which offers a potentially safer and more effective means of addressing nicotine addiction by recycling cotinine without introducing additional nicotine.
8. **Innovative Path to Smoking Cessation:**This innovative strategy could provide individuals with a new and effective path to overcome nicotine addiction, potentially revolutionizing smoking cessation treatments.

Mains easy language

Researchers have developed a groundbreaking approach to address nicotine addiction by targeting cotinine, a byproduct of nicotine metabolism, and employing ascorbic acid (Vitamin C) as a reducing agent. In contrast to conventional Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT), which supplements the body with additional nicotine, this innovative method aims to convert cotinine back into nicotine. They have devised dissolvable films containing Vitamin C that individuals can use when they experience cravings. Cotinine, which can persist in the body for up to six weeks, carries potential health risks, including potential links to cancer. Preliminary studies conducted on volunteers, including those grappling with quitting due to withdrawal symptoms, have yielded promising results.

The researchers have initiated the process of applying for an Indian patent for this groundbreaking approach, which offers a potentially safer and more effective method for addressing nicotine addiction. This pioneering strategy opens up new possibilities for individuals looking to quit smoking by recycling cotinine without introducing additional nicotine into their systems. It represents a significant advancement in the field of addiction treatment and could offer hope to many struggling with nicotine dependence.

23rd December 2023

Grand gesture,small details-Indian Express Editorial

International relations

Key takeaways

1. **Evaluation of Foreign Policy:** A country's foreign policy should be assessed not only by its grand gestures but also by its attention to smaller, often overlooked, details and its effectiveness in promoting the interests of developing nations.
2. **India's Emphasis on Global South:** India has emphasized its affiliation with the Global South, aiming to represent the aspirations of developing countries on international platforms, including during its G20 Presidency.
3. **Surprising UNESCO Election Result:** Despite its efforts to garner support from the Global South, India faced a surprising defeat in a UNESCO election, with Pakistan winning by a significant margin, raising questions about the effectiveness of India's diplomacy with developing countries.
4. **Regional Group Dynamics:** The UNESCO Executive Board's elections are influenced by regional dynamics, and Pakistan managed to secure more support from developing nations within the Asia-Pacific group.
5. **Extradition Issue with Denmark:** India's pursuit of the extradition of Kim Davy from Denmark, a key matter stemming from the Purulia arms drop case, appears to have made little progress, raising concerns about India's approach to such issues.
6. **Forgotten Cases:** The case of Kim Davy and the Italian Marines case highlight the importance of maintaining attention to cases involving Indian citizens and ensuring that they receive due consideration in foreign legal systems.
7. **Conduct in Small Matters:** A nation's conduct in smaller matters, such as protecting its citizens and upholding its laws, also contributes to its reputation on the global stage and should not be overlooked.

Mains easy language



| Clear your doubts now.



In assessing a country's foreign policy, attention to both grand gestures and smaller details is essential. India has positioned itself as a leader of the Global South, emphasizing its commitment to representing developing nations' interests on the international stage. Recent events, however, have raised questions about the effectiveness of India's diplomacy with developing countries.

In a surprising UNESCO election, India suffered a significant defeat to Pakistan, despite Pakistan's troubled state and economic challenges. This outcome suggests that Pakistan received more support from developing nations in the Asia-Pacific group.

Another issue concerns India's pursuit of Kim Davy's extradition from Denmark in the Purulia arms drop case. Despite Davy's public acknowledgment of his involvement in breaking Indian laws, India's efforts to bring him to justice appear to have stalled.

The article underscores that nations are judged not only by grand actions but also by how they handle smaller matters, such as protecting their citizens and upholding their laws. It emphasizes the importance of addressing and following through on smaller, less visible issues that impact citizens and international relations for a nation's global reputation.

India's Credit Rating Challenge: Indian Express Editorial

Economy

Key takeaways

1. **India's Credit Rating Challenge:** India's soaring GDP and foreign exchange reserves have not translated into higher sovereign credit ratings. Despite economic growth and fiscal stability, credit rating agencies (CRAs) have been hesitant to upgrade India's rating.
2. **CRAs' Critique:** The Chief Economic Adviser's office criticized CRAs for their opaque methodologies, emphasizing the reliance on subjective qualitative factors over objective economic measures.
3. **Qualitative vs. Macro Factors:** While qualitative factors like governance matter, macroeconomic stability indicators such as GDP growth, inflation, fiscal balance, and foreign exchange reserves are crucial for assessing creditworthiness.
4. **Impact of Governance Indicators:** The paper highlights that "governance indicators" significantly influence India's credit ratings. These indicators, based on subjective perceptions, can overshadow macroeconomic improvements.
5. **India's Way Forward:** India should focus on fiscal consolidation and data quality enhancement to address the credit rating challenge. Reducing the high general government debt-GDP ratio and improving data collection are essential steps.
6. **Transparency and Credibility:** India's critique calls for greater transparency in the rating process. Addressing fiscal discipline and data quality will enhance India's financial stability and international credibility.

Mains easy language

Despite India's impressive economic growth and fiscal stability, its sovereign credit ratings have not seen significant improvements. Credit rating agencies (CRAs) have been criticized for their opaque methodologies and reliance on subjective factors like governance, democracy, and rule of law rather than objective economic indicators.

The paper by the Chief Economic Adviser's office emphasizes that "governance indicators" explain a significant portion of India's credit ratings. This highlights the importance of qualitative factors in determining creditworthiness, often overshadowing macroeconomic improvements.

To address this challenge, India must prioritize fiscal consolidation to reduce its current government debt-GDP ratio of 82%. Additionally, concerns about data quality, particularly the absence of updated Census and household consumer expenditure survey results since 2011-12, need attention.

Enhancing data collection and accuracy is essential for informed decision-making and improving India's international credibility. While CRAs should be more transparent, India must also strengthen its macroeconomic fundamentals and data quality to achieve higher sovereign credit ratings.

How India chooses the Chief Guest for Republic Day-Indian Express Explained

International relations

Key takeaways

1. **Diplomatic Honor:** Being invited as the Chief Guest is a prestigious diplomatic honor that not only showcases respect but also highlights the significance of the diplomatic relationship between India and the guest's country.
2. **Relationship Quality:** The selection reflects the depth and quality of diplomatic, political, and economic ties between India and the guest's country, emphasizing the mutual commitment to strengthening these ties.





3. **Multifaceted Considerations:** The decision involves evaluating various factors, including political, economic, strategic interests, and shared values, ensuring a comprehensive approach to diplomatic relations.
4. **High-Level Approval:** Approval from the highest authorities in India, including the Prime Minister and the President, underscores the strategic importance and commitment to the visit's success.
5. **Availability Check:** Confirming the guest's availability is crucial to prevent scheduling conflicts and logistical issues, ensuring a seamless visit.
6. **Diplomatic Collaboration:** The process necessitates close collaboration between the governments of both countries, showcasing the depth of diplomatic coordination and cooperation.
7. **Media Significance:** The event's media coverage is not just a formality but a crucial aspect for shaping international perceptions and highlighting India's diplomatic hospitality on a global stage.

Mains easy language

The selection of the Chief Guest for India's Republic Day is a diplomatically significant process that symbolizes the strength of bilateral relations. It reflects political, economic, and strategic ties between India and the guest's nation. Obtaining high-level approval, including that of the Prime Minister and President, underscores its strategic importance and alignment with broader foreign policy goals.

Ensuring the availability of the potential Chief Guest is essential, as heads of state often have demanding schedules. This step showcases meticulous planning, preventing scheduling conflicts and logistical issues. Diplomatic collaboration between both governments plays a pivotal role in the process, fostering not only bilateral relations but also contributing to international diplomacy.

Media coverage is vital in shaping global perceptions, emphasizing India's traditions and culture while projecting a positive image. This tradition highlights India's commitment to fostering international relations and diplomacy, showcasing its role on the global stage.

A PRODUCT OF WARTIME:EVOLUTION OF THE MODERN PASSPORT-Indian Express Explained

History(world)

Key Takeaways:

1. **Origin of Passport:** Passports, as we know them today, have a relatively modern origin, dating back around 70 years.
2. **Historical Precursors:** Documents similar to passports, allowing residents of one country to travel to another, have existed for centuries in various forms.
3. **French Passport System:** France had a well-established passport system even before the French Revolution, using it to control the movement of people, including skilled workers and potential troublemakers.
4. **British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act:** The first modern passport, featuring distinguishing characteristics like a photograph and signature, emerged as a product of this 1914 British Act.
5. **World War I and Indian Passport Legislation:** The outbreak of World War I led to the British government enacting passport legislation in India, making passport possession compulsory.
6. **League of Nations Conference:** In 1920, the League of Nations held a conference on passport regulation, leading to the adoption of a standardized global passport system, with the British model as the basis.
7. **US Immigration Legislation:** The US adopted passport-based immigration laws in response to a surge in immigration from China and Japan, leading to the Emergency Quota Act of 1921 and the Immigration Act of 1924.
8. **Evolution into Modern Citizenship:** Originally designed for wartime identification, passports have become an integral aspect of modern citizenship, used for international travel and border control.

Mains easy language

The article explores the evolution of the modern passport, shedding light on its historical and geopolitical origins. Passports, as we recognize them today, are a relatively recent development, with their emergence dating back only about seven decades. However, precursors to passports, which allowed residents of one country to travel to another, have existed for centuries.

The historical examples include France, where a passport system was in place even before the French Revolution, primarily used to control the movement of individuals, including skilled workers and potential troublemakers. In India, the British government enforced passport requirements during World War I through the Defence of India Act.

The article highlights that the concept of passports gained popularity in the aftermath of World War I, as nations sought to secure their borders. The League of Nations played a role in standardizing the global passport system, ultimately adopting the British model.





Additionally, the United States adopted passport-based immigration laws as a response to increased immigration from certain countries. Passports, initially intended as a wartime means of distinguishing allies from enemies, have evolved into an essential component of modern citizenship, used for international travel and border control.

This historical evolution of passports underscores their significance in contemporary society, reflecting changes in international relations, security concerns, and citizenship practices over the years.

Credit ratings: the Govt view-Indian Express Explained

Economics

Key takeaways

1. **Government Criticism:** The Indian government has raised concerns about the "opaque methodologies" employed by major global credit rating agencies in determining sovereign ratings.
2. **Sovereign Ratings Significance:** Sovereign ratings are vital as they indicate a government's creditworthiness and impact its ability to borrow money internationally, affecting both the government and businesses within the country.
3. **Historical Development:** Major credit rating agencies like Moody's, Standard & Poor's (S&P), and Fitch have been influential in this field, with Moody's established in 1900. Their prominence increased after World War I.
4. **Government's Concerns:** The government's critique focuses on issues such as potential bias against developing economies, lack of transparency in expert selection, and unclear weighting of parameters in the rating process.
5. **Subjectivity and Transparency:** The government argues that subjective assessments, particularly in areas like governance indicators, can disproportionately affect developing economies.
6. **Need for Objectivity:** The criticism emphasizes the importance of greater transparency and objectivity in sovereign credit rating processes, particularly for emerging economies like India.
7. **Impact on Borrowing Costs:** Sovereign ratings play a significant role in determining borrowing costs for governments and businesses, making them a critical aspect of economic policy.

Mains easy language

The Indian government has expressed criticism of the methodologies employed by major global credit rating agencies to determine sovereign ratings in a recent document titled "Re-examining Narratives." Sovereign ratings are crucial indicators of a government's creditworthiness and have a significant impact on its ability to secure international loans. Lower ratings result in higher borrowing costs, not only for the government but also for businesses within the country.

Historically, credit rating agencies such as Moody's, Standard & Poor's (S&P), and Fitch have played a pivotal role in this field. Moody's, for instance, was established in 1900, but these agencies gained prominence after World War I, when nations started prioritizing border security.

The government's criticism centers on several key points. Firstly, it argues that the methodologies used can disadvantage developing economies due to subjective assessments, especially in areas like governance indicators. Secondly, there is a lack of transparency in the selection of experts for rating assessments, adding to the opacity of the process. Lastly, there is a lack of clarity in conveying the assigned weights for each parameter considered in the rating process.

This critique highlights the need for greater transparency and objectivity in sovereign credit rating processes, particularly in the context of emerging economies like India. Sovereign ratings are a critical aspect of economic policy, impacting borrowing costs for both the government and businesses, making them a crucial area for reform and improvement.

Israel is fighting in the dark in Gaza-The Hindu Editorial

International relations

Key takeaways

1. **Escalating Conflict in Gaza:** Israel's military campaign in Gaza has led to a significant humanitarian crisis, with a focus on casualties among women and children.
2. **Israel's Stated Objectives:** Israel's military operation was launched in response to a cross-border raid by Hamas, with the declared goals of freeing hostages and dismantling Hamas.
3. **Challenges in Achieving Objectives:** Despite its military superiority, Israel has not been successful in achieving its objectives, particularly in dismantling Hamas.





4. **Complexities of Dismantling Hamas:**Dismantling Hamas through military means is challenging due to the group's deep roots in Palestinian society and its resistance against Israeli occupation.
5. **Hamas's Strategy:**Hamas aims to deny Israel a quick military victory and expose its weaknesses, putting stress on Israel's economy and global reputation.
6. **International Isolation of Israel:**Israel's actions in Gaza have isolated it on the international stage, with growing concerns even from its traditional allies.
7. **Regional Instability:**The conflict in West Asia is causing regional instability, drawing in other actors and threatening the overall stability of the region.

Mains easy language

The ongoing conflict in Gaza, characterized by extensive Israeli airstrikes and ground operations, has sparked a severe humanitarian crisis, particularly impacting women and children. Israel launched its offensive with the aim of securing the release of hostages held by Hamas and dismantling the organization. However, these objectives have proven elusive, with Hamas showing resilience and the conflict entering its tenth week.

Dismantling Hamas through military force is challenging due to the group's deep societal roots, historical significance, and its fight against Israeli occupation. Hamas's strategy focuses on prolonging the conflict to highlight Israel's vulnerabilities, straining its economy, and tarnishing its global reputation.

Israel's actions have drawn criticism and concerns of international isolation, even from traditional allies. The conflict contributes to regional instability, raising the risk of broader regional involvement. The situation underscores the urgent need for diplomatic efforts to bring about a lasting ceasefire and address the deep-seated issues at the heart of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

[Telecom law upgrades for a digital authoritarian state-The Hindu Editorial](#)

Science and technology

Key takeaways

1. **Cultural Nativism Over Democracy:**The Telecom Bill 2023 emphasizes cultural nativism and individual leadership over democratic principles, as seen in the intentional use of "Bharat" instead of "India" and the attribution of the Prime Minister's "vision."
2. **Digital Bharat Nidhi's Limited Impact:**Renaming the Universal Services Obligation Fund (USOF) as "Digital Bharat Nidhi" does not effectively address the digital divide or improve internet access for millions of Indians.
3. **Favors Select Private Firms:**Provisions like satellite spectrum allocation without auctions may benefit specific private companies, raising concerns about potential crony capitalism.
4. **Limited Benefits for Small Innovators:**Regulatory sandboxes and online dispute resolution systems are more likely to benefit large corporations due to the prevailing oligopoly in the telecom sector.
5. **Colonial Architecture of Regulation:**The bill maintains the colonial framework of telecom regulation, with subtle rewording and vague definitions, enabling potential surveillance and intrusion into user privacy.
6. **Concerns Over User Privacy:**Provisions for user identification through biometric data and penalties for non-compliance raise concerns about citizens' digital rights and privacy.
7. **Hasty Passage and Opposition Suppression:**The Telecom Bill's rushed passage without adequate parliamentary debate and the suspension of opposition members raise questions about India's democratic processes and its transformation towards authoritarian rule.

Mains easy language

The recently passed Telecom Bill 2023 in India raises significant concerns about the country's trajectory towards digital authoritarianism. Despite its branding as a nod to cultural nativism and the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the bill retains the colonial-era regulatory framework, potentially undermining democratic principles.

Notably, the renaming of the Universal Services Obligation Fund (USOF) as the "Digital Bharat Nidhi" is largely cosmetic, failing to address the persistent digital divide or the decline in smartphone sales. The bill introduces provisions that may favor select private companies and grant the government greater control over telecommunications services, including user identification through biometrics and imposing substantial penalties for non-compliance.





Furthermore, the suspension of opposition members during the bill's passage signals a worrying trend of curtailing democratic dissent. Overall, while the bill outwardly emphasizes cultural assertiveness, it simultaneously reinforces the government's regulatory grip on digital communications, potentially compromising individual liberties and privacy in the digital age.

Awards for words-The Hindu Editorial

Art and Culture

Key takeaways

1. **Celebrating Linguistic Diversity:** The Sahitya Akademi Awards honor outstanding literary works in 24 diverse Indian languages, showcasing the country's rich linguistic tapestry.
2. **Encouragement for Writers:** These awards serve as a source of motivation and recognition for authors, potentially leading to increased book sales and inclusion in educational syllabi.
3. **Translation Opportunities:** Winning authors often have the chance to see their works translated into various regional languages and English, expanding the reach of Indian literature.
4. **Limited International Recognition:** Despite their significance, the Sahitya Akademi Awards lack the global acclaim of prestigious prizes like the Booker Prize or the Pulitzer.
5. **Need for Enhanced Promotion:** The Sahitya Akademi should improve its promotional efforts, with an outdated website and inadequate social media presence hindering its outreach.
6. **Preserving Literary Heritage:** To safeguard India's diverse literary traditions and promote reading, particularly among children, the Sahitya Akademi should leverage its extensive network to enhance awareness of its programs and engage with readers more effectively.

Mains easy language

The Sahitya Akademi Awards, which celebrate literary excellence across 24 Indian languages, play a crucial role in recognizing linguistic diversity in India. These awards provide encouragement to writers and help promote their works, contributing to increased sales and inclusion in educational curricula. Moreover, they offer opportunities for translation into various regional languages and English, expanding the reach of Indian literature.

However, the Sahitya Akademi Awards lack the international recognition of prizes like the Booker Prize or the Pulitzer, partly due to inadequate promotion. While the Sahitya Akademi conducts various literary activities and holds awards such as the Bal Sahitya award and Bhasha Samman, it fails to effectively publicize its programs. The organization's website is outdated, and its social media presence is limited.

In an age when digital screens are replacing books for many, the Sahitya Akademi should utilize its extensive network to better promote India's rich literary heritage and engage with readers, especially children, to encourage reading habits and preserve the country's diverse linguistic traditions.

24th December . , 2023

How is the U.K. cracking down on immigration?- The Hindu FAQ

-International Relations

Key Takeaways

1. **Policy Change:** The U.K. government is changing its immigration rules to reduce the number of immigrants, addressing the recent significant increase in immigration.
2. **Reasons for Change:** Record high migration in 2022, especially in technology and non-EU student arrivals, prompted these changes.
3. **New Rules:** The new rules include:
 - a. Higher salary requirements for skilled worker visas.
 - b. Stricter conditions for family visas for U.K. citizens.
 - c. Revised student visa policies.
 - d. Increased health surcharge fees for visa holders.



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4. **Impact and Response:** These changes have been met with criticism and concern about family separations and hardships for immigrants. Some advocacy groups are considering legal action against these new rules.
5. **Simple Explanation:** The U.K. is making it harder for people to move there, especially for work or family reasons. They're doing this because too many people have been coming in recently. These new rules are controversial and might cause problems for families and immigrants.

Easy Explanation

The U.K. government is making its rules for people coming into the country stricter. They noticed that a lot more people have been moving to the U.K., especially for jobs in technology and students from outside Europe. So, they decided to change the rules to slow down how many people come in.

Here's what's changing:

- People who want to work in the U.K. now need to earn more money to qualify for a visa.
- It's going to be harder for U.K. citizens to bring family members from other countries.
- Students from other countries will face tougher rules if they want to stay and work in the U.K. after finishing their studies.
- People coming to the U.K. on visas will have to pay more for healthcare services.

Some people are upset about these new rules. They think it's not fair and could split up families. There are groups trying to fight against these changes, saying they're too harsh on people who want to live in the U.K.

What's the latest blip in India Maldives ties?- The Hindu FAQ

International Relations

Key Takeaways

1. **Maldives Cabinet's Decision:** The Maldives Cabinet has chosen not to renew a hydrography cooperation agreement with India. This decision aligns with President Mohamed Muizzu's campaign promise to reduce India's military presence in the Maldives.
2. **What is Hydrography?:** Hydrography involves studying and mapping oceans and water bodies. It's essential for navigation safety, economic development, security, defense, scientific research, and environmental protection.
3. **India's Role in Hydrography:** India, a member of the International Hydrographic Organization since 1955, is well-regarded in hydrographic surveys. The Indian Naval Hydrographic Department, established in 1874, collaborates with various countries in the Indian Ocean Region and beyond.
4. **Importance of the 2019 MoU:** Signed during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's state visit to the Maldives in 2019, this MoU marked a significant cooperation between the two countries in hydrography. It followed a landslide election victory by President Solih and the MDP, who supported close ties with India.
5. **Reason for Non-Renewal of Agreement:** President Muizzu's government aims to terminate foreign agreements seen as threats to national security. The decision to not renew the hydrography MoU is part of this broader policy to enhance Maldivian sovereignty.
6. **India's Response:** India's Ministry of External Affairs highlighted its proven expertise in hydrography and its beneficial collaborations with other Indian Ocean countries.
7. **Impact on India-Maldives Relations:** This development indicates a potentially challenging phase for India-Maldives relations. It comes amidst the Maldives' growing engagement with China and its absence from a recent maritime security meeting involving India, Sri Lanka, and Mauritius. The situation's future impact on India's relationship with the Maldives is being closely observed.

Easy Explanation

The Maldives has decided not to continue an agreement with India about studying and mapping the sea. This decision is part of the new Maldivian President's plan to have less military involvement from India. India has been good at this sea mapping work and has helped many countries. But now, the Maldives wants to handle things more on its own. This change could make things a bit tricky between India and the Maldives, especially since the Maldives is also talking more with China. People are watching to see how this will affect the friendship between India and the Maldives.

A Strategic Choke Point- The Hindu Profiles

International Relations



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Key Takeaways

Context of the Conflict

- The conflict between Israel and Hamas in October led to concerns about Hezbollah in Lebanon opening a second front. However, Hezbollah and Israel have avoided an all-out war.
- The Yemen-based Houthi group expanded the conflict to the Red Sea, initially targeting Israel and then moving to attack commercial shipping.

Houthi Tactics and Impact

- The Houthis, backed by Iran, shifted from targeting Israel to attacking ships in the Red Sea, threatening global shipping.
- They targeted the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, a key maritime route, leading to a significant drop in Red Sea traffic and increased shipping and insurance costs.

Historical and Strategic Importance of Bab el-Mandeb

- The Bab el-Mandeb Strait is crucial for global shipping, connecting the Red Sea with the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean.
- Control of the strait has shifted over time, with the Houthis gaining proximity after capturing Hodeidah port.

Global Trade and Economic Impact

- Houthi attacks disrupt global trade, affecting roughly 12% of global seaborne trade.
- Shipping reroutes around Africa increase travel time and costs, potentially heightening global inflation.

International Responses

- The U.S. formed a naval task force to counter the Houthi threat but faces limited regional support.
- There's potential for U.S. offensive action against Houthis, who vow to continue attacks in response to Israel's actions in Gaza.

Easy Explanation

Since Israel and Hamas started fighting in October, there's been tension in the region. The Houthi group in Yemen began attacking ships in the Red Sea, moving the conflict to a crucial sea route. This area is important for global trade, and their attacks have caused big problems for shipping. The U.S. is trying to stop them, but it's complicated because other countries in the area aren't fully supporting the U.S. efforts. The conflict is causing delays and extra costs in shipping, which could affect prices and the economy worldwide. The situation is tense, with the Houthis threatening to keep attacking ships.

25th December 2023

Poised for Viksit Bharat-Indian Express Editorial

Economy

Key takeaways

1. **Development Goal by 2047:** India aims to become a developed nation by 2047, with the definition of a developed country being one with a per capita Gross National Income (GNI) exceeding \$13,846.
2. **Economic Growth Trajectory:** India has witnessed remarkable economic growth, particularly during the tenure of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, with the potential to reach a \$6 trillion economy by 2029.
3. **Policy Shift Since 1991:** The economic reforms initiated since 1991 have played a pivotal role in India's economic growth, leading to increased infrastructure development and access to basic facilities.
4. **Per Capita Income and Purchasing Power Parity (PPP):** While India's per capita income has been increasing, it still has a considerable way to go to reach the high-income threshold. However, in PPP terms, India's per capita income is relatively higher.
5. **Income Inequality and Welfare:** Income inequality remains a challenge in India, with income shares among population groups showing limited improvement. Nonetheless, measures like the Gini Index indicate stability in income inequality.
6. **Inflation and Financial Stability:** India has maintained stable inflation rates during recent years, and its substantial foreign exchange reserves have helped prevent currency depreciation, ensuring financial stability alongside high growth rates.
7. **The Path to Development:** India's journey towards becoming a developed nation by 2047 hinges on continued investment in infrastructure, education, and innovation, as well as maintaining stability and avoiding major disruptions.



| Clear your doubts now.



Mains easy language

India aims to become a developed nation by 2047, defined by having a per capita Gross National Income (GNI) exceeding \$13,846. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership has fueled significant economic growth, potentially reaching a \$6 trillion economy by 2029 due to policies initiated since the 1991 economic reforms.

While India's per capita income is on the rise, it remains below the high-income threshold. However, when considering purchasing power parity (PPP), India's per capita income is relatively higher, indicating substantial economic progress.

Challenges persist in reducing income inequality, with income shares among population groups remaining stable. The Gini Index reflects limited progress in reducing inequality. Nonetheless, India maintains economic stability with controlled inflation and robust foreign exchange reserves.

To achieve its 2047 development goal, India must continue investing in infrastructure, education, and innovation. Stable growth with controlled inflation, focusing on investments and innovation, is crucial, provided major disruptions are avoided.

In summary, India's aspiration for development by 2047 is rooted in economic growth, income trends, and financial stability. While challenges exist, the nation's progress suggests that with appropriate policies and ongoing efforts, achieving this goal is plausible.

Last mile delivery is key-Indian Express Editorial

Governance

Key takeaways

1. **Good Governance Day:** The article commemorates Good Governance Day on December 25, honoring leaders like Atal Bihari Vajpayee and emphasizing the importance of good governance.
2. **People-Centered Governance:** It highlights the shift towards people-centered governance, inspired by Sardar Patel's vision and driven by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call to "reform, perform, and transform."
3. **Ambitious Development Goals:** India's development goals have become more ambitious, aiming to transform into a \$5 trillion economy with improved infrastructure, education, healthcare, and livelihood opportunities.
4. **Public Participation:** The government has encouraged public participation, turning initiatives like Swachh Bharat into people's movements and making it a key principle in program implementation.
5. **Sushasan (Good Governance):** Good governance, referred to as Sushasan, is seen as a promising pathway for societal transformation, emphasizing inclusivity and winning the trust of all citizens.
6. **Achievements and Challenges:** While India has achieved significant milestones in areas like poverty alleviation, healthcare, and technology advancement, there's a need to address challenges, refine strategies, and streamline governance systems for greater effectiveness.
7. **Inspiration from Lord Ram:** Drawing inspiration from Lord Ram's values and historical examples of good governance, the article advocates for governance systems dedicated to societal growth, transparency, and adaptability on the journey to becoming a developed nation by 2047.

Mains easy language

The article marks Good Governance Day, celebrating leaders like Atal Bihari Vajpayee and highlighting the significance of good governance in India's development. It emphasizes the shift towards people-centered governance, inspired by Sardar Patel's vision and Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call to "reform, perform, and transform."

Under PM Modi's leadership, India has set ambitious development goals, aiming to become a \$5 trillion economy with improved infrastructure, education, healthcare, and inclusive growth. Public participation, turning initiatives like Swachh Bharat into people's movements, is pivotal.

While celebrating achievements in areas like poverty alleviation and technology, the article calls for continuous self-reflection. It stresses the importance of agile and transparent governance systems, particularly for efficient last-mile service delivery.

Inspiration is drawn from historical examples and Lord Ram's values, advocating for governance dedicated to creating a caring, growing society. The article concludes with a call to usher in "Viksit Bharat @2047" through well-governed India, emphasizing societal growth, transparency, and adaptability.

In summary, the article underscores the role of good governance, applauds India's ambitious development goals, and calls for continuous improvement, efficient service delivery, and values-driven governance on the path to becoming a developed nation by 2047.





The changing Indian village-Indian Express Explained

Sociology

Key takeaways

1. **Longitudinal Village Studies:** The article examines the importance of multi-decade studies in two Indian villages, Palakurichi and Palanpur, revealing evolving rural dynamics.
2. **Agriculture Decline:** Both villages have experienced a decline in the dominance of agriculture in their economies, with changing occupational structures.
3. **Workforce Diversification:** Non-farm employment opportunities have grown, indicating a shift in rural employment patterns away from agriculture.
4. **Changing Land Ownership:** Traditional upper-caste landholders have lost influence, as middle-caste communities and Dalits have gained landownership.
5. **Policy Insights:** The article emphasizes the need for policies safeguarding landowners' interests and encouraging tenant-cultivators to invest in leased lands for sustainability.
6. **Land Preservation:** Preserving and effectively managing cultivated lands is vital for rural development as agriculture's role diminishes.
7. **Lessons for Transformation:** The studies offer valuable lessons for policymakers and researchers studying rural transformation and the evolving needs of rural areas.

Mains easy language

This article discusses insights gained from long-term studies in two Indian villages: Palakurichi in Tamil Nadu and Palanpur in Uttar Pradesh, spanning over a century. These studies reveal significant changes in rural India's socio economic landscape.

Palakurichi, once the "rice bowl of South India," experienced an agricultural decline due to water scarcity post-1990s. The workforce diversified into non-agricultural sectors, reflecting changing rural employment patterns.

Similarly, Palanpur saw a diminishing role of agriculture, leading to workforce diversification away from farming. These changes highlight evolving rural employment dynamics.

Notably, traditional upper-caste landholders lost influence, as middle-caste communities and Dalits gained land ownership, reshaping power dynamics in the villages.

These studies offer policy insights, emphasizing the need for landowner-friendly policies and encouraging tenant-cultivators to invest in leased lands, ensuring agricultural land's long-term sustainability. Preserving and effectively managing cultivated lands becomes crucial as rural India shifts away from agriculture.

In conclusion, these longitudinal village studies provide vital insights into evolving rural India, including changes in agriculture, employment, and landownership. They offer valuable lessons for policymakers and researchers studying rural transformation and rural community needs.

India's jobs crisis, the macroeconomic reasons-The Hindu Editorial

Economy

Key takeaways

1. **India's Ongoing Jobs Crisis-Persistent Labor Market Challenges:** India continues to grapple with a persistent jobs crisis, marked by an insufficiency in labor demand, as indicated by official data and real-world observations.
2. **Distinguishing Types of Employment-Wage Employment vs. Self-Employment:** In India, two primary types of employment exist: wage employment, where labor is demanded by employers, and self-employment, where labor supply and demand are identical. The focus here is on the former, particularly regular wage or salaried jobs.
3. **Historical Patterns of Employment-Informal Employment and Disguised Unemployment:** The Indian economy has traditionally featured both open unemployment (job-seekers without work) and high levels of informal employment, which includes the self-employed and casual wage workers. The latter is often referred to as "disguised unemployment," as it signifies a lack of formal sector job opportunities.
4. **Determinants of Labor Demand-Factors Influencing Formal Sector Labor Demand:** Labor demand in the formal non-agricultural sector hinges on two primary factors: the volume of output firms can sell and the level of technology employed, which dictates the number of workers needed.



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5. **The Enigma of Jobless Growth-Disconnect Between Economic Growth and Employment:** Despite India's economic growth, formal employment growth has not responded as expected, indicating a phenomenon known as "jobless growth." This disconnect between overall economic expansion and job creation is a key challenge.
6. **Macro Policy Framework-Relevance of Macroeconomic Policies:** Historically, macroeconomic policies have revolved around driving economic growth as a means to increase employment. However, the Indian context calls for a more nuanced approach.
7. **Rethinking Employment Policies-Multi-Faceted Approach Required:** Addressing India's employment crisis necessitates a comprehensive strategy that includes enhancing workforce quality through education and healthcare, closing skill gaps, and creating public sector job opportunities. Additionally, revising the macroeconomic framework to support these initiatives is essential.

Mains easy language

India faces a persistent jobs crisis, evident in official data and on-the-ground reports. This crisis primarily affects regular salaried jobs in the formal sector. Historically, India has struggled with both open unemployment and high informal employment, indicating a shortage of formal sector opportunities.

Over the past four decades, the growth of salaried non-agricultural workers has remained stagnant, revealing a disconnect between labor demand in the formal sector and overall economic growth.

Formal sector labor demand hinges on output volume and technology use. India's "jobless growth" phenomenon suggests that employment growth does not keep up with GDP expansion.

Traditionally, India's macroeconomic policies have focused on stimulating economic growth to create jobs. However, this approach seems inadequate. India now needs a multifaceted strategy involving education, healthcare, skills development, and public sector job creation. A reimagined macroeconomic framework is necessary to support these efforts.

In summary, India's persistent jobs crisis requires a comprehensive approach that extends beyond economic growth. Addressing this challenge demands a holistic strategy that encompasses education, healthcare, skills development, and public sector employment within a revamped macroeconomic framework.

The evolving role of the Colombo Security Conclave-The Hindu Editorial

International relations

Key takeaways

1. **Evolving Indian Ocean Dynamics:** The Colombo Security Conclave (CSC) reflects the changing dynamics in the Indian Ocean region, with India actively promoting security and stability.
2. **India's Expanding Role:** India plays a growing role in the Indian Ocean, offering defense assistance, capacity building, and humanitarian aid to island nations.
3. **China's Influence:** China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has increased its presence and influence in the Indian Ocean, challenging India's regional leadership.
4. **CSC's Focus Areas:** The CSC's cooperation spans maritime security, counterterrorism, trafficking, cybersecurity, and humanitarian assistance, addressing diverse threats.
5. **Strategic Accommodation:** India adopts a flexible approach within the CSC, recognizing regional countries' diverse views on China and economic dependencies.
6. **Vulnerability to Domestic Politics:** The CSC faces vulnerability to domestic political changes in member-states, impacting regional collaboration.
7. **India's Leadership:** Despite challenges, the CSC remains crucial for India to consolidate regional leadership and address Indian Ocean security concerns.

Mains easy language

The Colombo Security Conclave (CSC) is gaining importance in addressing Indian Ocean region security dynamics. India's recent participation, led by National Security Adviser Ajit Doval, reflects the evolving regional landscape. Initially formed in 2011 but later stalled due to India-Maldives tensions, India has worked to revive and expand the CSC to include Mauritius, Seychelles, and Bangladesh, aligning with its evolving strategic vision for the Indian Ocean.





India has a historical role in enhancing Indian Ocean security, assisting island nations with defense capacity building and crisis response. The CSC provides a platform for India to formalize its leadership, shape regional security dynamics, and tackle emerging threats.

China's extensive Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) investments in the Indian Ocean have underscored the CSC's importance. China's maritime ambitions and defense ties challenge India's influence. India recognizes that regional countries maintain economic ties with China, prompting it to adapt CSC cooperation accordingly.

However, the CSC remains vulnerable to domestic political shifts among member-states. The recent absence of the Maldives from a CSC meeting highlights this vulnerability, likely due to pro-China sentiments or domestic political considerations. As CSC member-states are democracies, they may use nationalist or pro-China narratives for domestic and external advantages. India must navigate this complex landscape as it seeks to solidify regional leadership and address Indian Ocean security challenges.

Another opportunity-The Hindu Editorial

Governance

Key takeaways

1. **WFI Suspension:** The Union Sports Ministry's suspension of the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) underscores the ongoing turmoil in Indian wrestling.
2. **Harassment Allegations:** The crisis began with allegations of sexual harassment by top wrestlers against the former WFI President and coaches, resulting in legal actions and the President's removal.
3. **Controversial Leadership Transition:** Despite the controversy, a close associate of the former President became the new WFI President, triggering athlete protests, resignations, and concerns about gender representation.
4. **Sports Ministry's Intervention:** The Sports Ministry's decision to suspend WFI was prompted by hasty decision-making, non-compliance with the WFI constitution, and concerns about the operation of Federation affairs linked to harassment allegations.
5. **Reform Opportunity:** This crisis highlights systemic problems in Indian sports administration, including patronage politics and political influence. It presents an opportunity for sweeping reforms to establish a transparent and accountable sports administration system in India.

Mains easy language

The suspension of the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) by the Union Sports Ministry reflects the prolonged crisis that has plagued Indian wrestling. This crisis initially erupted when prominent wrestlers accused the then WFI President of sexual harassment, leading to legal actions and his removal. However, the recent appointment of a close associate of the former President as the new WFI President, without any women representation, sparked athlete protests and even led to the return of a Padma Shri award in protest. The government's intervention cited hasty decisions and non-compliance with the WFI constitution. This situation exposes deep-rooted issues in Indian sports administration, including patronage politics and political influence. It is a critical moment to initiate comprehensive reforms and establish a transparent and accountable sports administration system in India. Such reforms are essential for nurturing and protecting the interests of athletes, ensuring fair and unbiased leadership, and upholding the integrity of Indian sports on the international stage.

India's revised criminal law proposals-The Hindu Text and Context

Polity

Key takeaways

1. **Replacement of Outdated Laws:** Union Home Minister Amit Shah introduced three revised Bills in the Lok Sabha to replace archaic British-era criminal laws in India, including the Indian Penal Code (IPC), the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), and the Indian Evidence Act.
2. **UAPA's Definition of 'Terrorist Act':** The Bharatiya Nyaya (Second) Sanhita Bill, 2023 incorporates the definition of a 'terrorist act' from the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 (UAPA). It focuses on safeguarding India's unity, integrity, economic security, and sovereignty.
3. **Redefining 'Cruelty' Against Women:** In the Bharatiya Nyaya (Second) Sanhita Bill, 2023, a revised definition of 'cruelty' against women has been introduced, with punishments of up to three years in jail. However, this definition closely mirrors existing provisions in the IPC.
4. **Addressing Mob Lynching:** The revised Bills address the issue of mob lynching, previously criticized for prescribing a lesser minimum punishment. The revised version removes the minimum sentence and now penalizes it on par with murder.





5. Omissions in Gender-Neutral Provisions: Notable recommendations, such as introducing gender-neutral provisions for adultery and criminalizing non-consensual sex, were not included in the revised Bills, raising concerns regarding gender equality.

6. Introduction of 'Community Service': The Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha (Second) Sanhita, 2023 introduces 'community service' as a form of punishment for minor offenses. It also expands police powers, including handcuff usage, and extends police custody beyond the initial 15 days, which has raised civil liberties concerns.

7. Admissibility of Electronic Evidence: The Bharatiya Sakshya (Second) Bill, 2023 revises the admissibility of electronic evidence, aligning it with established legal standards. However, some experts have flagged missed opportunities to address overcriminalization and increased police powers.

Mains easy language

The Indian government, led by Amit Shah, has proposed three Bills to modernize British-era criminal laws: the Bharatiya Nyaya (Second) Sanhita Bill, 2023; the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha (Second) Sanhita, 2023; and the Bharatiya Sakshya (Second) Bill, 2023.

The Bharatiya Nyaya (Second) Sanhita Bill, 2023, incorporates the UAPA's definition of a 'terrorist act,' emphasizing the protection of India's unity and sovereignty.

This Bill introduces a definition of 'cruelty' against women, punishable by up to three years in prison, but it largely mirrors existing provisions in the IPC.

Regarding mob lynching, the revised Bill treats it on par with murder by removing the minimum sentence requirement.

However, the Bills do not address gender-neutral provisions for adultery and non-consensual sex, raising concerns about gender equality.

The Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha (Second) Sanhita, 2023 introduces 'community service' as a punishment for minor offenses, emphasizing rehabilitation. But, expanded police powers, including extended custody, raise civil liberty concerns.

The Bharatiya Sakshya (Second) Bill, 2023 aligns the admissibility of electronic evidence with legal standards.

Critics argue that these Bills miss the opportunity to address overcriminalization and expanding police powers, potentially impacting individual rights and freedoms.

[Why ransomware attacks on Indian IT firms are a cause for concern?-The Hindu Text and Context](#)

Science and technology

Key Takeaways:

- 1. HCL Technologies' Ransomware Incident:** The recent ransomware attack on HCL Technologies, a major Indian IT services provider, negatively impacted its stock market perception, highlighting the increasing threat of ransomware attacks on Indian organizations.
- 2. Incident Details and Disclosure:** HCL Technologies disclosed the ransomware incident within a restricted cloud environment during its quarterly earnings report but did not provide specific details about the attack.
- 3. Rising Ransomware Threat in India:** Ransomware attacks, characterized by extortion software that encrypts data and demands a ransom for its release, have become a growing concern in India. A 2023 study revealed that a significant percentage of organizations in the country have fallen victim to these attacks.
- 4. Payment Trends and Consequences:** The study showed that a considerable number of organizations, 44%, paid the ransom to retrieve their data, despite the associated costs. However, paying the ransom often resulted in increased recovery expenses.
- 5. Targeting IT Organizations:** Threat actors tend to focus on IT organizations due to the valuable data they hold, including intellectual property, personally identifiable information, and access credentials.
- 6. Notable Incidents:** Other Indian organizations, such as Infosys subsidiary, Sun Pharma, and the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), have also faced ransomware attacks, emphasizing the widespread nature of this threat.

Mains easy language

The recent ransomware incident involving HCL Technologies underscores the growing threat of ransomware attacks on Indian organizations. This incident had a significant impact on the company's stock market perception, despite being contained within a restricted cloud environment.

Ransomware attacks, characterized by extortion software that encrypts data and demands a ransom for its release, have become a pressing concern for Indian organizations. A recent study highlighted that a significant majority of organizations in India have experienced ransomware attacks, and a notable percentage chose to pay the ransom to recover their data, despite the associated costs.





IT organizations are particularly appealing targets for threat actors due to the valuable data they house, including intellectual property, personally identifiable information, access credentials, and financial data. Successful ransomware attacks on these organizations can result in substantial consequences, including the devaluation of the company, software replication, and threats to revenue streams.

The ransomware threat extends beyond HCL Technologies, with other Indian organizations like Infosys subsidiary, Sun Pharma, and AIIMS falling victim to similar attacks. These incidents emphasize the urgent need for heightened cybersecurity measures and preparedness within the Indian IT sector to combat evolving cyber threats effectively.

The cosmological constant problem is one of physics' biggest crises-The Hindu Science

Science

Key takeaways

1. **Cosmological Constant Problem:** The cosmological constant problem is a significant challenge in physics, primarily concerning the mysterious dark energy's role and density in the universe.
2. **Dark Energy Dominance:** Dark energy, an enigmatic cosmic force, constitutes approximately 70% of the universe's total energy content, making it the most prevalent component.
3. **Dynamic Space:** According to Albert Einstein's theory of general relativity, space is not empty but behaves as a dynamic, flexible medium that can expand or contract based on the energy within it.
4. **Control of Cosmic Expansion:** Dark energy plays a crucial role in dictating the rate at which the universe expands, influencing the cosmic structure on a grand scale.
5. **Fine-Tuning Challenge:** The cosmological constant problem revolves around the remarkable fine-tuning required for the theoretical prediction of dark energy's density to align with actual observations.
6. **Ongoing Scientific Inquiry:** Scientists continue to explore various theories and mathematical principles in their quest to understand the perplexing nature of dark energy and its impact on the universe's expansion.

Mains easy language

The cosmological constant problem presents a profound challenge in physics, centering on the enigma of dark energy's density in the universe. Theoretical predictions clash dramatically with observations, leading to a critical discrepancy. Dark energy, an enigmatic cosmic entity, comprises a staggering 70% of the universe's total energy, and its influence on cosmic expansion remains elusive.

Einstein's revelation that space is not void but a flexible medium, like water for fish, is essential. Introducing energy into space triggers expansion or contraction, akin to inflating a balloon. Dark energy, as the dominant force, guides the universe's expansion rate. By assessing the universe's vastness and age, scientists estimate dark energy's presence within space.

However, the crisis arises from the stark difference between theory and reality. Calculations suggest an immense amount of dark energy, but actual measurements reveal much less. This problem, labeled the "worst theoretical prediction in physics," demands extraordinary fine-tuning.

Despite notable efforts, including theories proposed by luminaries like Hawking and Weinberg, the cosmological constant problem remains unsolved. Scientists persist in their quest for mathematical principles that can illuminate the profound mysteries of dark energy and its cosmic impact.

26th December 2023

The Pir Panjal challenge-Indian Express Editorial

Internal security

Key takeaways

1. **Shift in Terrorist Activity:** The text highlights a recent shift in terrorist presence and activity from Kashmir to the Poonch-Rajouri sector. This shift is attributed to the region's relative ease of infiltration compared to the well-secured Kashmir valley.
2. **Factors for the Shift:** The presence of terrorists in the Poonch-Rajouri sector can be traced back to historical local support and a more conducive environment for infiltration. The abrogation of Article 370 has also contributed to this shift.
3. **Army's Adaptability:** The Indian Army has demonstrated adaptability in dealing with such shifts in the past, such as during the Kargil conflict. It is open to reviewing weaknesses and enhancing security measures.
4. **Investigation and Transparency:** Allegations surrounding civilian casualties and suspicious circumstances must be thoroughly investigated. The Army's commitment to ethics and transparency is crucial in maintaining public trust.





5. **Operational Measures:** To address the current situation, brigade-sized operations with drone support are recommended in the lower reaches of the Pir Panjal. Public outreach and engagement in affected communities are also deemed essential.
6. **Government and Army's Resilience:** The text highlights the government and Army's ability to navigate such challenges over the years, reassuring the nation about their capabilities.
7. **Vigilance and Precaution:** The situation remains dynamic and can have ripple effects beyond the region. Vigilance and precautionary measures are essential to maintain stability.
8. **Media and Public Discourse:** Senior leaders and the media should exercise caution in their statements to prevent further unrest and misinformation.

Mains easy language

The text discusses a shift in terrorist activity from Kashmir to the Poonch-Rajouri sector in India, attributed to easier infiltration and changing geopolitical factors. The Indian Army's adaptability and resilience in dealing with evolving threats are highlighted, with past experiences like the Kargil conflict serving as examples. Ethics and transparency in military operations are emphasized, especially concerning allegations of civilian casualties.

Operational recommendations include conducting brigade-sized operations in the Pir Panjal region with drone support and engaging with affected communities through public outreach. While confidence in the government and the Army's ability to handle security challenges is expressed, vigilance and precaution are stressed due to the dynamic nature of the situation.

Lastly, responsible communication by senior leaders and the media is underscored to prevent inflammatory statements and misinformation.

A DISSENTING NOTE-Indian Express Editorial

Economy

Key takeaways

1. **Contrasting Monetary Policies:** The text highlights the contrast between the US Federal Reserve's dovish stance, suggesting potential rate cuts, and the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) commitment to actively disinflationary policies and price stability.
2. **Dissent in the Monetary Policy Committee:** There is a difference of opinion within the Indian Monetary Policy Committee (MPC), with MPC member Jayanth Varma advocating for a lower real interest rate, while the RBI maintains its current stance.
3. **Inflation Trajectory's Importance:** Any potential changes in monetary policy or rate cuts in India will depend on the trajectory of retail inflation. Approaching the 4 percent inflation target could lead to a less restrictive policy.
4. **Uncertainty in Inflation:** The text highlights uncertainty, particularly regarding food inflation, which the RBI must closely monitor to prevent one-off food price shocks from affecting disinflation efforts.
5. **Price Stability as a Priority:** The primary objective guiding the actions of the MPC is to ensure price stability, emphasizing its significance in India's monetary policy decisions.

Mains easy language

The article discusses differing perspectives on monetary policy, particularly interest rates, between the US Federal Reserve and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). While the US Federal Reserve hints at possible rate cuts, the RBI maintains a commitment to actively disinflationary policies and price stability, with a focus on reaching the 4 percent CPI target.

Within the Indian Monetary Policy Committee (MPC), there are dissenting views. One MPC member, Jayanth Varma, believes the current real interest rate of 2 percent is excessive and suggests it should be around 1.5 percent. Another member, Ashima Goyal, has previously indicated a suitable real interest rate of about 1 percent for the Indian economy.

The possibility of any monetary policy change or rate cuts depends on the trajectory of retail inflation. If inflation approaches the central bank's 4 percent target, it may open up room for a less restrictive policy. However, there is uncertainty, especially regarding food inflation, which the RBI must monitor closely.

In summary, the article underscores the importance of managing inflation and ensuring price stability in India's monetary policy. It highlights differing opinions within the MPC and the significance of the inflation trajectory in determining future policy actions.

Safety and cybersecurity-Indian express Editorial

Science and technology

Key takeaways



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1. **Massive Data Breach:** The article discusses a significant data breach involving Indians' personal data, including sensitive information like Aadhaar numbers, passport details, and addresses, being available on the dark web.
2. **Data Breach Trends:** Data breaches are on the rise globally, and India is not immune to such incidents, with previous breaches involving CoWin registration data and ransomware attacks on critical institutions.
3. **Government Response:** The article criticizes the Indian government's response to data breaches, highlighting a lack of transparency, accountability, and a long-term cybersecurity strategy.
4. **Aadhaar Concerns:** Aadhaar's role in data security is questioned, especially its mandatory registration for various services, posing risks to citizens' data privacy.
5. **Data Protection Act:** The recently introduced Data Protection Act in India is criticized for its shortcomings, including exemptions for the government regarding data retention and erasure and inadequate provisions for sensitive health information.
6. **Cybersecurity Recommendations:** The article provides recommendations for improving India's cybersecurity, including the establishment of a cyber security board, adoption of a zero-trust architecture, and a standardized playbook for responding to cybersecurity vulnerabilities.
7. **People-Centric Policies:** The article stresses the importance of putting people at the center of all policies, ensuring that they are informed immediately about cyber incidents and are provided with assistance to protect themselves and mitigate the fallout.

Mains easy language

This article highlights the alarming rise in data breaches in India, with a recent breach exposing sensitive data of millions of citizens, including Aadhaar numbers and passports. Such breaches pose risks of identity theft and financial fraud.

Criticism is directed towards the government's response, which lacks transparency and a long-term cybersecurity strategy. Concerns also surround the Aadhaar system's role in data security, as it has been mandated despite Supreme Court restrictions.

The Data Protection Act introduced in India is criticized for its shortcomings, including exemptions for the government.

To address these issues, the article suggests prioritizing cybersecurity, establishing a cyber security board, adopting a zero-trust architecture, and educating citizens about cyber threats.

In conclusion, the article underscores the need for India to enhance data security, adopt better cybersecurity measures, and prioritize citizen protection in the digital age.

[Stabilising frayed ties, yet hurdles ahead-The Hindu Editorial](#)

International relations

Key takeaways

1. **Stabilized Relations:** Following the meeting between U.S. President Joe Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping, the U.S. and China have managed to stabilize their previously deteriorating relationship.
2. **Military Contacts Resumed:** Military contacts between the two nations were restored through a virtual meeting between their top military officials, General Charles Q. Brown and General Liu Zhenli, after a hiatus due to tensions over Taiwan.
3. **Taiwan's Elections:** Taiwan's upcoming elections, with the leading candidate Lai Ching-te favoring Taiwanese sovereignty, may challenge U.S.-China relations, especially if the Taiwanese people opt to maintain a close partnership with the U.S.
4. **Technology Export Restrictions:** The U.S. continues to tighten restrictions on technology exports to China, particularly semiconductors, citing national security concerns.
5. **Uncertainty with U.S. Elections:** The outcome of the 2024 U.S. presidential elections, including the possibility of Donald Trump's re-election, introduces unpredictability into U.S.-China relations.
6. **South China Sea Tensions:** Growing tensions in the South China Sea, particularly near the Scarborough Reef and Second Thomas Shoal, could become a focal point in U.S.-China relations.
7. **Effective Communication:** Both countries aim to prevent misunderstandings and conflicts by emphasizing resilient communication as a means to ensure stability in their relationship.

Mains easy language

Following a turbulent year in U.S.-China relations, the situation has stabilized to some extent. Recent meetings between Presidents Biden and Xi suggest a willingness to manage the relationship without further escalation, and military dialogues have resumed.





However, challenges loom on the horizon. Taiwan's upcoming elections, likely to maintain a pro-sovereignty stance, could strain relations. The U.S. is also tightening technology export restrictions, particularly in semiconductors.

The outcome of the 2024 U.S. presidential elections remains uncertain, introducing potential dynamics. Tensions in the South China Sea add to the complexity, with the U.S. reaffirming support for the Philippines.

In summary, though there's stability, uncertainties persist. Taiwan, technology restrictions, U.S. leadership changes, and regional tensions are key factors influencing this vital bilateral relationship. Effective communication and conflict prevention mechanisms will be crucial to maintain stability.

[A dive into sanitation solutions: processing, managing and treating used water-The Hindu Text and Context](#)

Sociology(urbanization)

Key takeaways

- **1. Diverse Sanitation Solutions:** Sanitation systems encompass a wide spectrum, ranging from on-site solutions like twin pits and septic tanks to centralized sewer networks leading to treatment facilities.
- **2. Historical Origins:** The foundation of modern sanitation systems was laid in London during the 1800s, marking a significant leap in public health and environmental protection.
- **3. Faecal Sludge Management (FSM):** Faecal sludge treatment plants (FSTPs) play a vital role in processing waste from on-site systems, ensuring proper containment, treatment, and disposal of faecal sludge.
- **4. Urban Sewer Networks:** Dense urban areas often rely on underground sewer networks to collect and convey sewage efficiently to treatment facilities, employing gravity or pumps.
- **5. Effective Purification:** Sewage treatment plants (STPs) employ a range of techniques, both mechanical and gravity-based, to separate solids from liquids, purify the liquid part, and disinfect it, ensuring that it's safe for disposal or reuse.
- **6. Sustainable Reuse:** Treated solids and water can be repurposed for agriculture and landscaping, contributing to environmental sustainability and resource conservation.
- **7. Ongoing Challenges:** Achieving universal access to safe sanitation services remains a challenge due to issues such as poorly designed systems and inadequate maintenance practices, highlighting the need for continuous improvement.

Mains easy language

Sanitation systems are essential for managing used water, ensuring public health and environmental safety. They include on-site solutions like twin pits and septic tanks, ideal for rural areas, and centralized sewer networks in urban settings. These systems capture, treat, and dispose of used water effectively.

In rural regions, twin pits and septic tanks are common. Twin pits use two alternating pits; one collects liquid waste while the other rests and allows solids to degrade. In urban areas, underground sewer networks transport sewage to treatment plants, which employ various processes to purify it.

Faecal sludge treatment plants (FSTPs) serve smaller towns, treating faecal sludge using mechanical or gravity-based systems. Sewage treatment plants (STPs) cater to larger communities and use a series of processes to eliminate contaminants.

In essence, sanitation systems play a vital role in managing used water, from decentralized solutions to centralized networks, ensuring its safe treatment and disposal. However, achieving universal access to safe sanitation remains a challenge, necessitating improvements in system design and maintenance.

[Looking for intelligent alien life is hard not just for space's size -The Hindu Science](#)

Science

Key takeaways

1. **The Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence (SETI):** SETI aims to identify intelligent life beyond Earth by listening for electromagnetic-wave signals, particularly radio waves, as potential means of communication.
2. **Neutrinos: A Unique Communication Medium:** Neutrinos, subatomic particles with weak interactions, offer an alternative method for potential extraterrestrial communication due to their ability to traverse space with minimal disruption.
3. **Neutrino Signatures in Radioactive Decay:** Some instances of radioactive decay could involve neutrinos from outer space, which scientists are exploring as potential signals from extraterrestrial intelligence.





4. **Messaging Extraterrestrial Intelligence (METI):** METI involves sending intentional signals into space to initiate contact with extraterrestrial civilizations. It gained momentum with the discovery of exoplanets capable of supporting life.
5. **The Ongoing "Great Silence":** Despite years of searching, the universe's "Great Silence" continues, leaving questions about the existence of intelligent life beyond Earth or potential difficulties in detecting their signals.
6. **Expanding Detection Methods:** SETI and METI programs are diversifying their detection methods, moving beyond radio signals to explore optical telescopes, laser light, and even neutrinos.
7. **Collaboration and Interdisciplinary Efforts:** Collaboration among experts from natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities is crucial to advancing our understanding of life's potential existence, forms, and detection methods. This is particularly relevant as humanity explores interstellar endeavors like colonizing Mars and establishing lunar bases.

Mains easy language

The search for extraterrestrial intelligence (SETI) has been ongoing for over six decades, with scientists scanning for electromagnetic-wave signals as potential signs of intelligent life beyond Earth. Radio waves and neutrinos have emerged as potential mediums for this communication.

Neutrinos, subatomic particles that interact weakly with matter, have been proposed as a means of communication between extraterrestrial civilizations and Earth.

Despite years of searching, the universe remains eerily silent, leading to questions about the existence of intelligent life beyond Earth or the possibility that we have not yet deciphered their means of communication. SETI and METI programs are expanding their methods, exploring optical telescopes, laser light, and even neutrinos in their quest for extraterrestrial intelligence.

Collaboration among experts from various fields is crucial to advancing our understanding of extraterrestrial life, as humanity ventures into interstellar exploration and colonization efforts.

[Can Amazon strategy help Blue Origin top SpaceX?-The Hindu Science](#)

Science and technology

Key takeaways

1. **Leadership Transition:** Dave Limp, a former Amazon executive, has taken the helm as CEO of Blue Origin, signifying a significant leadership change for the space company.
2. **Priority on New Glenn Rocket:** Accelerating the development of the New Glenn rocket is a top agenda item, aiming to overcome delays and make it a cornerstone of Blue Origin's operations.
3. **Technological Integration:** Limp emphasizes the incorporation of software and artificial intelligence into manufacturing processes, aligning with Amazon's customer-centric philosophy.
4. **Fierce Competition:** Blue Origin faces stiff competition in Earth orbit from SpaceX, which has made multiple successful launches and is poised to disrupt the global launch market with Starship.
5. **Financial Sustainability:** As Blue Origin moves forward, there's a growing need for the company to become financially self-sustainable, transitioning away from reliance on Jeff Bezos' funding. Efficient execution and competitiveness are paramount in this evolving space industry landscape.

Mains easy language

Dave Limp, former Amazon executive, is now leading Blue Origin, bringing his experience from the e-commerce giant to bolster the space company's competitiveness against SpaceX. Limp's main priorities include speeding up the development of Blue Origin's New Glenn rocket, emphasizing meeting deadlines, and integrating software and artificial intelligence into manufacturing.

Blue Origin faces tough competition from SpaceX in Earth's orbit, with SpaceX achieving multiple successful launches and aiming for cost-effective space travel using its reusable Starship. Blue Origin is also involved in NASA's Artemis moon program, adding pressure to deliver efficiently. Beyond Earth's orbit, Blue Origin plans a moon lander for NASA, an orbital space station, satellite servicing, and a relaunch of its space tourism business.

Despite not yet reaching orbit with New Glenn, Blue Origin has various projects in progress. Generating revenue from New Glenn is crucial, with customers like Amazon's Kuiper satellite internet unit eagerly awaiting its deployment. To ensure long-term sustainability, Blue Origin must compete effectively in the evolving space industry landscape and transition away from reliance on Jeff Bezos' funding.





27th December 2023

Seeing the new South Asia-Indian Express Editorial

International relations

Key takeaways

- 1. Evolving South Asian Dynamics:** India's role in South Asia is undergoing transformation, necessitating a nuanced perspective beyond the notion of "losing" the region.
- 2. Nostalgia for British Raj:** The perception of India's diminishing influence is rooted in sentimental attachment to the British Raj, which is no longer applicable in today's world.
- 3. Legacy of Partition:** Lingering issues stemming from the Partition era, such as territorial disputes and religious divisions, continue to impede regional cooperation.
- 4. Economic Partition:** Economic policies favoring self-sufficiency and heightened border security have created trade barriers, although regional economic collaboration has seen some growth.
- 5. Pakistan's Kashmir Stance:** Pakistan's unwavering focus on Kashmir as an unfinished agenda of Partition hinders constructive engagement with India and broader regional integration.
- 6. India's Regional Vision:** India's regional ambitions are met with suspicion by neighboring elites who prioritize their national sovereignty.
- 7. Complex Neighborly Relations:** India's influence in its neighboring countries varies, and neighboring nations often adopt a balancing act in their relationship with India, based on their domestic political interests.

Mains easy language

This article explores India's changing role in South Asia, emphasizing the need to move past simplistic narratives of "losing" the region. It sheds light on the historical and structural factors shaping South Asian dynamics, dispelling notions of nostalgia for the British Raj and the challenges arising from the legacy of Partition.

The economic partition and border securitization have posed obstacles to regional cooperation, although some progress has been made. Pakistan's stance on Kashmir remains a significant impediment to positive engagement and regional integration. India's regional vision is met with suspicion among neighboring elites, who value their national sovereignty.

The article highlights the complexity of India's relationships with its neighbors, emphasizing the importance of recognizing each nation's agency and interests. Instead of fixating on past glories, India should adapt to the evolving South Asian landscape, where its capabilities can be harnessed to expand its influence in the region.

A missing industrial policy-Indian Express Editorial

Economy

Key takeaways

1. Departure from Past Policies:

- "Make in India" (MII) represents a significant departure from India's historical self-sufficiency approach.
- Unlike past policies, MII emphasizes competitiveness in manufacturing over protectionism.

2. Export and Job Creation Focus:

- MII's primary goal is to transform India into a global manufacturing and export hub.
- It places a strong emphasis on creating jobs, especially in labor-abundant sectors.

3. Protectionism Concerns:

- While MII is distinct from past protectionist policies, concerns exist regarding protectionist measures in certain sectors.
- These concerns should not overshadow MII's broader goals.

4. Status of Industrial Policy:

- The new industrial policy (NIP '23) is currently on hold.
- The production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme is already operational and attracting investments.

5. Need for Labor-Intensive Manufacturing:



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- India's challenge lies in creating productive jobs in a labor-abundant environment.
- Labor-intensive manufacturing remains crucial for mass job creation.

6. Data Deficiency Challenge:

- The absence of frequent and comprehensive data makes it challenging to assess MII's success, particularly in job creation.

7. Role of Labor-Intensive Manufacturing:

- While PLI benefits high-end manufacturing, labor-intensive manufacturing remains vital for mass job creation and economic growth.

Mains easy language

The article emphasizes that "Make in India" (MII) represents a departure from India's historical protectionist policies, instead focusing on transforming the country into a global manufacturing and export hub. It highlights the importance of job creation, especially in a labor-abundant country like India. While some concerns about protectionism exist, particularly in certain sectors, the article underscores the need to prioritize labor-intensive manufacturing to address India's job market challenges effectively.

It also briefly mentions the status of the new industrial policy (NIP '23) and the operational production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme. However, the article acknowledges the lack of frequent and detailed data on the impact of these policies, making it challenging to assess their success comprehensively.

In conclusion, the article reaffirms that labor-intensive manufacturing remains crucial for generating jobs and driving economic growth in India, and policies should be geared towards achieving this goal.

RED SEA TURBULENCE-Indian Express Editorial

International relations

Key takeaways

1. **Escalating Conflict in the Red Sea:**Houthi rebels in Yemen have been targeting ships in the Red Sea with drones and missiles since mid-November, raising concerns about maritime safety.
2. **Strategic Importance of the Red Sea:**The Red Sea is a crucial global trade route, accounting for nearly 30% of global ship container traffic, 12% of trade, and 10% of seaborne petroleum commerce.
3. **Economic Implications and Shipping Disruptions:**Attacks on ships in the Red Sea could lead to shipping companies diverting their routes, increasing fuel costs, delivery times, and potentially impacting the prices of imported goods, especially oil.
4. **International Response and Missing Allies:**The US launched Operation Prosperity Guardian, a multinational naval force, to protect against rebel attacks. However, some key players like Egypt and Saudi Arabia have not fully supported this initiative.
5. **Complex Linkage to Israel-Hamas Conflict:**The peace and stability of the Red Sea region are closely linked to the resolution of the Israel-Hamas conflict, adding complexity to the situation in the straits.

Mains easy language

The Red Sea is witnessing growing unrest as Houthi rebels target ships in the region, escalating tensions and posing risks to international trade. Iran is suspected of supporting the rebels in these attacks. The Red Sea plays a critical role in global shipping, trade, and oil transport, accounting for a significant portion of these activities. The recent attacks have forced some shipping companies to divert their routes, increasing fuel costs, delivery times, and prices of imported goods, particularly oil. The US initiated Operation Prosperity Guardian to safeguard against such attacks, but the absence of support from key players like Egypt and Saudi Arabia underscores the complexity of the situation. Resolving the Israel-Hamas conflict is essential for lasting peace and trade security in the region.

Sunny forecast, some clouds of concern-Indian Express Explained

Economy

Key takeaways

1. **Resilience Amidst Challenges:** Despite global economic volatility and various challenges, the Indian economy continues to demonstrate resilience, with strong fundamentals.
2. **Pre-Election Stimulus:** The anticipation of a pre-election spending stimulus in 2024 may temporarily boost consumption and reshape the economic debate on welfare versus trickle-down growth.





3. **Persistent Concerns:** Ongoing worries include food inflation, sluggish rural output, and slow services sector growth, which could impact India's economic recovery.
4. **Election Impact:** The 2024 elections in India could have significant implications for the economy, including the effects of election-related spending and potential shifts in economic policies.
5. **Narrow Economic Base:** India faces a fundamental issue of having a limited economic base, marked by a small consuming class, low bank credit, and a lack of productive small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) that create jobs.
6. **Policy Reforms Needed:** To address these challenges, there is a clear need for policy reforms, including labor reforms, private capital formation, and measures to encourage investment and job creation.
7. **Global and Domestic Factors:** India's economic outlook is influenced by both global factors, such as fiscal deficits in the US, and domestic factors, including inflation concerns. However, India is relatively well-positioned to withstand global uncertainties.

Mains easy language

The Indian economy is displaying resilience despite global economic uncertainties and domestic challenges, thanks to its strong underlying fundamentals.

There's anticipation of a pre-election spending boost in 2024, which could provide a short-term economic stimulus and alter the discourse around economic policies, particularly the balance between welfare and trickle-down growth.

Persistent concerns include issues like food inflation, sluggish rural growth, and slow progress in the services sector, which may hinder the broader economic recovery.

The upcoming 2024 elections in India are significant, as election-related spending and potential policy changes could have far-reaching effects on the economy.

India's economy is grappling with the issue of a narrow economic base, characterized by limited disposable incomes, low access to bank credit, and a lack of productive small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) that generate jobs.

To address these challenges, there's a clear need for policy reforms, encompassing labor reforms and measures to encourage private capital formation and investment, with the aim of boosting job creation.

Global economic factors, such as the high fiscal deficits in the United States and potential shifts in interest rates, also play a role in shaping India's economic outlook. Nonetheless, India is seen as relatively well-prepared to withstand global uncertainties.

In summary, India's economic landscape is a mix of challenges and opportunities, with resilience, policy reforms, and global dynamics all influencing its trajectory as it approaches 2024.

[INS Imphal inducted into the Navy: Its Features, combat capabilities - Indian Express Explained](#)

Science and technology(defence)

Key takeaways

1. **INS Imphal Commissioning:** INS Imphal, the third destroyer of the INS Visakhapatnam class, has been officially commissioned into the Indian Navy, marking a significant addition to India's naval capabilities.
2. **Project 15B:** Project 15B aimed to construct advanced variants of the Kolkata class of guided missile destroyers, enhancing their capabilities and weaponry.
3. **Efficient Construction:** INS Imphal had one of the shortest construction and trial periods for an indigenous destroyer, demonstrating remarkable efficiency in shipbuilding.
4. **Advanced Capabilities:** These destroyers are equipped with state-of-the-art systems, including propulsion for high speeds, a comprehensive atmospheric control system, and a combat management system for efficient resource allocation.
5. **Formidable Arsenal:** The destroyers are armed with a range of weaponry, including cruise missiles, surface-to-air missiles, guns, torpedo launchers, and anti-submarine warfare systems, making them versatile assets in various naval operations.
6. **Historical Tribute:** The commissioning of INS Imphal pays tribute to the contributions of the North-eastern region, particularly Manipur, to India's national security, sovereignty, and historical events during the Second World War.
7. **Naval Significance:** INS Imphal's commissioning strengthens India's naval capabilities and underscores the nation's commitment to advancing its defense preparedness.

Mains easy language





The provided text discusses the commissioning of INS Imphal, the third destroyer in the INS Visakhapatnam class, into the Indian Navy. Here's a synopsis of the main points:

INS Imphal, a part of Project 15B, has been officially commissioned into the Indian Navy, further enhancing India's naval capabilities.

Project 15B aimed to develop advanced variants of the Kolkata class of guided missile destroyers, focusing on enhancing their capabilities and weaponry.

The construction and trial period of INS Imphal was notably efficient, demonstrating India's growing expertise in shipbuilding.

These destroyers feature advanced systems, including high-speed propulsion, a comprehensive atmospheric control system, and a combat management system for efficient resource allocation.

In terms of weaponry, INS Imphal is armed with cruise missiles, surface-to-air missiles, guns, torpedo launchers, and anti-submarine warfare systems, making it a versatile asset in various naval operations.

The commissioning of INS Imphal also holds historical and strategic significance, paying tribute to the contributions of the North-eastern region, especially Manipur, to India's national security and historical events during World War II.

Overall, the commissioning of INS Imphal strengthens India's naval capabilities and highlights the nation's commitment to enhancing its defense preparedness, while also honoring the historical ties with the North-eastern region.

Are graduates facing unemployment? - The Hindu Text and Context

Economy

Key takeaways

Unemployment Trends

1. **National Rate Decrease:** Official data shows a drop in India's national unemployment rate from 6.1% in 2017-18 to 3.2% in 2022-23. However, a deeper look reveals ongoing challenges.
2. **Highly Educated Struggle:** Highly educated individuals have consistently faced higher unemployment rates, a structural issue persisting since the 1990s.
3. **Graduate Unemployment:** Graduates' unemployment rates have fluctuated over the years, from around 9% in the 1990s to 13% in 2022-23.
4. **Youth Graduate Unemployment:** Young graduates (aged 18-29) face particularly high unemployment rates, reaching 36% in 2017-18 and dropping to 27% by 2022-23.

Increasing Share of Graduates

1. **Growing Share of Graduates:** The proportion of graduates in the labor force has risen significantly, from 5% in 1993-94 to approximately 15% in 2022-23.

Complex Causes and Potential Solutions

1. **Complex Factors:** Graduate unemployment results from multiple factors, including skill gaps and the economy's ability to create suitable jobs.
2. **Harnessing the Demographic Dividend:** Addressing these challenges is crucial to fully utilize India's demographic dividend. It requires efforts to bridge skill gaps and foster an environment for job creation.

Mains easy language

India's national unemployment rate has declined from 6.1% in 2017-18 to 3.2% in 2022-23, as per official data. However, this headline figure masks an ongoing challenge – persistently high unemployment rates among highly educated individuals, particularly graduates.

For decades, individuals with higher education have faced consistently higher unemployment rates. In 2022-23, the graduate unemployment rate stands at 13%, highlighting a structural issue within the Indian economy.

The problem is even more pronounced among young graduates (aged 18-29), with unemployment rates reaching 36% in 2017-18 before declining to 27% in 2022-23. This trend indicates that young job-seekers with higher education continue to face significant hurdles in securing employment.

One underlying factor contributing to this challenge is the increasing share of graduates in the labor force, which has risen from 5% in 1993-94 to approximately 15% in 2022-23. As more graduates enter the job market, addressing graduate unemployment becomes paramount.





The complexity of this issue requires a multifaceted approach, including addressing skill gaps and creating an environment conducive to job creation. Effectively tackling graduate unemployment is crucial for harnessing India's demographic dividend and ensuring that the aspirations of its youth are realized.

Do shortened TB treatment plans offer the solution for India's TB burden?-The Hindu Text and Context

Science

Key takeaways

1. **High TB Burden:** India faces a substantial TB challenge, with about 27% of global TB cases, due to its large population.
2. **Treatment Challenges:** TB treatment involves long, complicated regimens, leading to treatment abandonment, side effects, and drug resistance, especially among children.
3. **Promising Solutions:** Recent studies show shorter treatment regimens, reducing the duration from six to four months for adults and children with non-severe TB.
4. **Delayed Adoption:** India has yet to adopt these shorter treatment guidelines, despite their endorsement by the World Health Organization.
5. **Embracing Innovation:** India needs to embrace innovative TB treatments, given its high TB burden, to enhance disease control.
6. **Collaboration and Cost Reduction:** Collaborative research and negotiations with drug manufacturers can lower costs, making shorter TB treatment accessible. Timely action is essential to align with global TB elimination targets.

Mains easy language

Tuberculosis (TB) remains a significant public health concern in India, accounting for a substantial portion of global TB cases. While India has made progress in TB care over the past decade, the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted these gains. One of the challenges in TB management is the long and complex treatment regimens, leading to treatment abandonment and drug resistance, particularly in children.

Recent studies have shown promising results in shortening TB treatment durations, reducing them from six to four months for adults and children with non-severe TB. These findings, endorsed by the World Health Organization, offer transformational possibilities for TB control in India.

However, India has been slow to adopt these revised treatment guidelines, and there is even evidence suggesting the potential for further shortening treatment to two months. Embracing these innovations is crucial for India's ambitious goal of eliminating TB by 2025.

To succeed, India must prioritize active screening, case detection, and early treatment initiation. Collaborative research efforts, cost negotiations, and political support can facilitate the adoption of shorter, more accessible TB treatment plans, saving millions of lives from this curable disease.

What incentives do scientists have to study rare diseases? -The Hindu Science

Science

Key takeaways

1. **Breakthrough Prizes Reward Medical Innovators:** The 2024 Breakthrough Prizes in Life Sciences celebrate scientists' groundbreaking work in healthcare, offering substantial rewards for their contributions.
2. **Focus on Rare Diseases:** Despite affecting 8% of the population, rare diseases receive limited research attention due to their scarcity. This results in inadequate understanding and treatments for these conditions.
3. **Ellen Sidransky's Dedication:** Clinical geneticist Ellen Sidransky's 25-year commitment to studying Gaucher disease unexpectedly led to crucial insights into Parkinson's disease risk genes.
4. **Broader Impact of Rare Disease Research:** Research into rare diseases can yield insights benefiting a wider population, emphasizing the importance of supporting such studies.
5. **Persistent Challenges:** High drug prices and limited access to essential medications remain challenges despite scientific progress, necessitating systemic solutions.
6. **Inspiration for Future Research:** The Breakthrough Prizes inspire ongoing research, encourage exploration of neglected diseases, and promote equitable healthcare access and outcomes.

Mains easy language



| Clear your doubts now.



The 2024 Breakthrough Prizes in Life Sciences celebrated medical innovators who are making significant contributions to healthcare. These prizes highlight the importance of addressing rare diseases, which affect approximately 8% of the global population. Despite their rarity, rare diseases are often overlooked in research due to their limited patient populations, resulting in insufficient understanding and treatment options.

One notable laureate, Ellen Sidransky, dedicated over two decades to studying Gaucher disease, an inherited metabolic disorder. Her research unexpectedly revealed crucial insights into Parkinson's disease risk genes, illustrating how studying rare diseases can lead to broader medical advancements.

While scientific breakthroughs offer hope, challenges persist, such as exorbitant drug prices and limited access to life-saving medications. The Breakthrough Prizes inspire future research, urging scientists to explore neglected diseases and advocate for equitable healthcare access.

In essence, these awards recognize the importance of medical research in improving human lives and emphasize the need to address both rare and prevalent health conditions.

28th December 2023

Taking on the drone-Indian Express Editorial

International Relations

Key Takeaways

1. **Armed Drone Strike:** A suspected armed drone strike on the MV Chem Pluto, a Liberian chemical tanker, off the Porbandar coast, raises concerns and prompts an Indian Navy response.
2. **Houthi Militants' Threat:** Houthi militants, backed by Iran, have increasingly used aerial drone attacks against civilian shipping, targeting both commercial and non-Israeli vessels in the Arabian Sea and the Southern Red Sea.
3. **U.S.-Led Operation:** The U.S. initiated Operation Prosperity Guardian, garnering support from allies such as the UK, Bahrain, Canada, Netherlands, Norway, and Seychelles, to safeguard regional maritime traffic.
4. **India's Dilemma:** India seeks to contribute to the U.S.-led coalition but faces a dilemma due to potential confrontations with capable Houthi combatants, especially following the MV Chem Pluto drone attack.
5. **Complex Defense:** Countering armed drones at sea is complex, with limited anti-drone technologies available to merchant ships, including jamming and spoofing.
6. **Coalition Participation:** Joining the U.S.-led coalition may be India's most practical option to protect regional maritime traffic, although challenges may arise due to geopolitical complexities and differences among coalition members.
7. **Naval Challenges:** Naval commanders acknowledge the difficulties of combating Houthi drone attacks, emphasizing the need for improvisation, operational coordination, and interoperability among coalition partners.

Mains easy language

The article highlights a significant challenge faced by the Indian Navy in responding to armed drone attacks on civilian shipping in the Arabian Sea. The recent attack on the MV Chem Pluto, attributed to Houthi militants, underscores the evolving threat landscape in the maritime domain. While India is eager to contribute to the U.S.-led Operation Prosperity Guardian, the potential confrontation with the capable Houthi combatants raises concerns.

Countering armed drones at sea is a complex endeavor, with limited effective technologies available to merchant ships. Joining the coalition appears to be India's most viable option, but it must navigate the complex geopolitics of the Israel-Palestine conflict and differences among coalition members.

The Indian Navy acknowledges the challenges ahead, with anti-drone warfare tactics still evolving. Achieving success will require improvisation, operational coordination, and a high level of interoperability among coalition partners, as well as a change in mindset and enhanced situational awareness. Protecting maritime traffic in the region remains a critical objective for all stakeholders involved.

Doing it like Vietnam-Indian Express Editorial

International relations

Key takeaways

1. **Vietnam's Resilience:** Vietnam's history showcases its remarkable resilience in overcoming adversity, including French colonialism and the Vietnam War.



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2. **Lessons in Healing:** The nation's journey illustrates the healing power of time, truth, and reconciliation, with a focus on development and peace.
3. **Challenges from Imperialism:** Vietnam faced challenges from both French colonialism and the devastating consequences of the Vietnam War.
4. **Economic Transformation:** Vietnam's economic reforms, initiated in 1986, have resulted in impressive growth, reduced poverty rates, and increased per capita income.
5. **Peaceful Relations:** Vietnam has successfully cultivated peaceful relations with former adversaries like the United States and China.
6. **India-Vietnam Relations:** Vietnamese officials express a desire for stronger trade and business ties with India, seeking expanded engagement and potential trade agreements.

Mains easy language

The article emphasizes Vietnam's resilience throughout its history, from French colonialism to the Vietnam War. It highlights the lessons in healing that Vietnam's journey offers, focusing on the transformative power of time, truth, and reconciliation, leading to development and peace.

Vietnam faced significant challenges from imperialism, enduring both French colonialism and the devastating Vietnam War. Despite the destruction caused by foreign powers, the nation has managed to achieve impressive economic transformation through its 'Doi Moi' reforms since 1986, resulting in reduced poverty and increased per capita income.

Vietnam's commitment to peaceful relations with former adversaries, such as the United States and China, demonstrates diplomatic maturity. The article also mentions Vietnam's desire for stronger trade relations with India, urging India to seize the opportunities for enhanced cooperation.

In summary, Vietnam's history serves as a testament to resilience, healing, and economic progress, with potential for increased collaboration between Vietnam and India.

Dealing with strategic realities, looking at new opportunities-Indian Express Explained

International relations

Key takeaways

1. **Middle East Crisis:** The Hamas attack disrupted efforts to normalize ties between Israel and the Arab world, resulting in a significant escalation in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
2. **Strain in India-US Relations:** Allegations of an Indian official's involvement in an assassination plot in the US have strained bilateral ties between India and the United States.
3. **Ongoing Russia-Ukraine War:** The protracted war between Russia and Ukraine poses challenges for the West, with funding obstacles and concerns about Moscow's resilience and its proximity to Beijing.
4. **Maldives Challenge:** The Maldivian government, considered close to China, has requested India to withdraw its military personnel and signaled its intention to terminate a water survey agreement.
5. **China's Strategic Challenge:** China remains India's foremost strategic concern, with a prolonged border standoff and growing apprehensions about China's influence in the region.
6. **Global South Positioning:** India's success in mobilizing developing and less developed countries under the banner of the Global South at the G20 summit is seen as a modern adaptation of its Non-Alignment leadership.
7. **Engagement in Kabul:** India has engaged with the Taliban, with a change in leadership at the Afghan embassy in New Delhi, reflecting evolving dynamics in Afghanistan.

Mains easy language

The provided text offers a comprehensive overview of India's foreign policy challenges in 2023 and potential opportunities and obstacles in 2024.

In 2023, India faced major strategic challenges: The Middle East crisis disrupted regional diplomacy. Strained India-US ties emerged over an alleged assassination plot. Funding issues affected Western support in the Russia-Ukraine war. India grappled with a shift in the Maldives' foreign policy, and the China-India border standoff continued to be a significant concern.

In 2024, India anticipates opportunities and challenges: The outcome of India's Lok Sabha elections will shape its foreign policy. Resolving US and Canada issues independently is a priority. Pakistan's elections could provide a chance for renewed engagement. India hopes for





positive relations with Bangladesh and faces uncertainties regarding the Russia-Ukraine conflict. Economic diplomacy, trade pacts, and tech partnerships are key focus areas.

In summary, India's foreign policy in the coming years will be influenced by a range of challenges and opportunities, with its domestic elections playing a pivotal role in shaping its global approach.

How PMJANMAN can help Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups-Indian Express Explained

Sociology

Key takeaways

1. **PMJANMAN Initiative:** The text introduces the Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan (PMJANMAN), a government initiative focused on addressing the challenges faced by Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) in India.
2. **PVTGs: Who Are They?:** It defines PVTGs as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups, formerly known as Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs). These groups are characterized by pre-agricultural lifestyles, low literacy, small populations, and subsistence economies.
3. **Development Challenges:** PVTGs are severely marginalized due to their isolation and distinct socio-economic and cultural traits. They lack access to basic services, face social discrimination, and are vulnerable to displacement from development and natural disasters.
4. **Existing Schemes:** The text mentions existing government initiatives like the PVTG Development Plan and the Pradhan Mantri Janjatiya Vikas Mission, which aim to support PVTGs. However, challenges in implementation have affected their effectiveness.
5. **PM-JANMAN's Approach:** PMJANMAN introduces a different approach, emphasizing proper identification, participatory bottom-up strategies, livelihood promotion, and improved access to health, education, and infrastructure for PVTGs.
6. **Infrastructure Development:** PMJANMAN relaxes guidelines for infrastructure development to better cater to the specific habitation needs of PVTGs, moving from a Gram Panchayat-based approach to a tola-based approach for development planning.

Mains easy language

The text highlights the Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan (PMJANMAN), a crucial government initiative addressing the plight of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) in India. These communities, characterized by pre-agricultural lifestyles, low literacy, small populations, and subsistence economies, face severe marginalization, limited access to basic services, and vulnerability to displacement.

Despite existing programs like the PVTG Development Plan and the Pradhan Mantri Janjatiya Vikas Mission, which aim to support PVTGs, implementation challenges persist. PMJANMAN offers a fresh approach, emphasizing proper identification and recognition of PVTGs, as the existing criteria need updating. It adopts a participatory bottom-up strategy, customizing interventions to meet the unique needs of PVTGs and actively involving them in decision-making.

The initiative also focuses on livelihood promotion, health, nutrition, and education, all while relaxing infrastructure development guidelines to better meet the habitation needs of PVTGs. PMJANMAN represents a comprehensive government effort to uplift and support PVTGs, addressing their multifaceted challenges through improved identification, participatory approaches, livelihood enhancement, and enhanced access to essential services and infrastructure.

Growth charts — WHO standards versus India crafted-The Hindu Editorial

Sociology

Key takeaways

1. **Child Undernutrition Challenge:** India faces persistent issues of child undernutrition, influenced by factors like food intake, dietary diversity, sanitation, women's status, and poverty.
2. **Monitoring Undernutrition:** Anthropometric standards, such as height-for-age (stunting) and weight-for-height (wasting), are commonly used to monitor child undernutrition and assess progress.
3. **WHO Growth Standards:** India currently uses the World Health Organization (WHO) Growth Standards, based on the Multicentre Growth Reference Study (MGRS), which set prescriptive growth "standards" rather than "references."
4. **Debate Over Standards:** There is an ongoing debate about the suitability of WHO Growth Standards in India, with concerns about overestimating undernutrition and questions regarding their applicability due to genetic growth potential and maternal heights.





5. **Sampling Challenges:** Obtaining samples that meet the criteria of a favorable growth environment, as defined by the MGRS, is challenging in India due to inequality and underrepresentation in surveys.
6. **Impact on Programs:** Inappropriately high standards could lead to misdiagnosis and potential overfeeding, contributing to an increase in childhood overweight and obesity. However, improving meal quality under government programs can address this concern.
7. **ICMR's Recommendation:** The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has proposed revising growth references for India, with the possibility of conducting a nationwide study to develop national growth charts if deemed necessary.

Mains easy language

The issue of child undernutrition in India has prompted a debate about the use of World Health Organization (WHO) Growth Standards, derived from the Multicentre Growth Reference Study (MGRS). Critics argue that these standards may overestimate undernutrition and may not be fully applicable to India due to differences in genetic growth potential and maternal heights.

However, the sampling challenges and the prescriptive nature of the MGRS standards need to be considered. Adequate samples meeting the MGRS criteria are scarce in India's diverse and unequal population. Furthermore, maternal height and genetic potential play a role in child growth, making rapid improvements in one generation difficult.

Misdiagnosis resulting from overly high standards is a concern, but addressing this should not deter efforts to improve the quality of meals under government programs, promote dietary diversity, and enhance overall child nutrition.

While India's commitment to revising growth references is commendable, maintaining the aspirational yet achievable WHO-MGRS standards is logical. These standards provide comparability for international and intra-country trends, an advantage that would be lost with a new country-specific standard.

[The quest for 'happiness' in the Viksit Bharat odyssey-The Hindu Editorial](#)

Governance

Key Takeaways:

1. **Viksit Bharat's Goal:** India aims to become a developed nation by its 100th Independence Day in 2047, but the concept of development requires scrutiny.
2. **Economic Emphasis:** Viksit Bharat places significant emphasis on economic development, but critics argue that this approach may not address the broader well-being of the population.
3. **Pursuit of Happiness:** Instead of focusing solely on economic growth, the theme should be 'Happy India-Developed India' (Khushhal Bharat-Viksit Bharat), making happiness the central pursuit.
4. **Happiness Index:** Happiness should be measured and considered a goal of public policy. The World Happiness Report offers a framework for assessing happiness, considering factors like GDP per capita, social support, and freedom to make life choices.
5. **Social Connections:** Social connections and relationships are key to happiness and well-being. Countries like Finland and Denmark, the happiest nations, have strong social support systems.
6. **Balanced Development:** The current model of economic development can disrupt social orders, leading to imbalances and contradictions. India's social and cultural fabric makes a happiness-induced development model more pertinent.
7. **Beyond GDP:** To achieve holistic development, India should consider incorporating social indicators, such as the Human Development Index, Environmental Sustainability Index, Rule of Law Index, and Gender Equality Index, alongside GDP.

Mains easy language

Viksit Bharat, India's plan to become a developed nation by 2047, should shift its focus from mere economic growth to prioritize happiness as a central goal. Economic development, while essential, doesn't necessarily ensure the well-being and happiness of the population.

Many developed nations with high GDP and income levels struggle with social and psychological well-being indicators. Therefore, the pursuit of happiness should be a key element of India's development agenda.

The World Happiness Report provides a comprehensive framework for measuring happiness, considering factors like GDP per capita, social support, freedom to make life choices, and more. It emphasizes the importance of social connections and relationships in contributing to happiness.

In India, where social relationships and cultural values play a significant role, a happiness-induced development model aligns better with the societal fabric than a purely economic-focused approach.





To achieve holistic development, India should go beyond GDP and incorporate social indicators into its development framework. This includes considering indices like the Human Development Index, Environmental Sustainability Index, Rule of Law Index, Gender Equality Index, and others.

By prioritizing happiness alongside economic growth, Viksit Bharat can chart a more balanced and inclusive path towards becoming a developed nation by 2047.

Scientists are using fruit flies to find clues to Huntington's disease-The Hindu Science

Science

Key Takeaways:

- **1. Huntington's Disease Overview:**
 - Huntington's disease is a devastating neurodegenerative disorder with no cure.
 - It leads to progressive loss of motor and cognitive functions.
- **2. Genetic Mutation and Abnormal Protein:**
 - The disease is caused by a mutated version of the HTT gene.
 - The mutation results in the production of abnormal huntingtin (Htt) proteins.
 - These abnormal proteins destroy neurons in the brain.
- **3. Severity Linked to Glutamine Repeats:**
 - The number of repeated glutamine amino acids in the Htt protein is linked to disease severity.
 - More repetitions lead to earlier and more severe symptoms.
- **4. Fruit Fly Model Study:**
 - Researchers genetically modified fruit flies to express mutated human HTT genes.
 - Fruit flies with 120 repeated units of glutamine exhibited symptoms resembling Huntington's disease.
- **5. Identification of Yod1 Gene:**
 - Scientists identified a gene called Yod1.
 - Overexpression of Yod1 in fruit flies alleviated disease-like effects.
 - Effects included neurodegeneration, impaired motor function, reduced viability, and shortened lifespan.
- **6. Potential for Human Application:**
 - The study suggests that Yod1 may play a role in mitigating the effects of Huntington's disease.
 - Further research is needed to determine if overexpressing the human Yod1 gene could be beneficial in humans.

Mains easy language

Huntington's disease, a debilitating neurodegenerative disorder, has been investigated at the molecular level using a fruit fly model. This genetic mutation leads to the production of abnormal Htt proteins that destroy neurons in the brain. The severity of the disease is associated with the number of repeated glutamine amino acids in the Htt protein.

Researchers used genetically modified fruit flies to express mutated HTT genes with extended glutamine tracts, resulting in symptoms similar to Huntington's disease in humans. The study identified the Yod1 gene, and when overexpressed in fruit flies, it reversed disease-like effects, including neurodegeneration and motor impairments. This finding suggests that Yod1 may have a role in mitigating Huntington's disease effects, though further research is necessary to confirm its effectiveness in humans. The study underscores the importance of model organisms like fruit flies in exploring disease gene mechanisms.

Significant climate milestones of 2023-The Hindu Science

Environment

Key Takeaways

1. **Hottest Year:** 2023 is on track to be officially declared the hottest year in recorded history, surpassing the previous record.





2. **Unprecedented Ocean Heat:** Widespread marine heatwaves affected 48% of global oceans in 2023, leading to exceptionally high sea surface temperatures from April to July.
3. **Low Antarctic Sea Ice:** Antarctic sea ice experienced a record-low growth in 2023, with the annual maximum extent on September 10th being the lowest since 1979, falling 1.03 million sq. km below the previous record.
4. **Record CO2 Emissions:** Global carbon dioxide emissions reached a new high in 2023, rising by 1.1% compared to 2022. However, emissions plateaued somewhat due to a slight decrease in deforestation, as reported in the Global Carbon Budget
5. **Loss and Damage Fund:** In 2023, the world established its first-ever fund for climate change loss and damage at COP28, with governments pledging \$792 million. However, additional funding is required to fully meet its objectives. The fund will be administered independently but hosted by the World Bank.
6. **Food Industry Pledge:** At COP28, 134 countries representing over 5.7 billion people committed to addressing the climate impact of the food industry. This sector accounts for 70% of global food production and 76% of total emissions. While this commitment was historic, it lacks specific numerical targets.

Mains easy language

In 2023, the world witnessed a series of noteworthy climate milestones. The year is poised to become the hottest on record, surpassing previous temperature highs. Sea surface temperatures remained alarmingly elevated, with marine heat waves affecting 48% of global oceans in August 2023. Additionally, the Antarctic saw a dramatic reduction in sea ice extent, reaching its lowest levels since 1979.

Carbon dioxide emissions continued to rise, with a 1.1% increase from the previous year, despite a slight reduction in deforestation. A significant development was the establishment of the world's first loss and damage fund during COP28, with pledges of \$792 million from governments, though funding fell short of the required amount.

Notably, 134 countries committed to addressing the climate impact of the food industry at COP28. While this represents a substantial step forward, the commitment lacks specific quantitative targets. These climate milestones underscore the pressing need for global climate action and the complex challenges ahead.

29th December 2023

When real gets the power of artificial-Indian Express Explained

Science and technology

Key takeaways

1. **AI Integration:** Artificial Intelligence will be more deeply integrated into everyday technology, personalizing user experiences in devices like smartphones and laptops.
2. **Rapid AI Evolution:** AI is evolving at an unprecedented rate, significantly influencing technology and its applications.
3. **AI Regulation and Ethics:** The need for stringent regulation and ethical considerations in AI deployment, particularly in sensitive areas like deep fakes and misinformation.
4. **Responsible AI Practices:** AI platforms are expected to focus more on self-regulation and responsible use to prevent misuse.
5. **Local Manufacturing Growth:** There's a trend towards increasing local manufacturing of tech products in India, supported by government initiatives.
6. **Shift to Sustainable Tech:** A notable shift towards greener, more sustainable technology practices in the tech industry.
7. **Changes in Internet Privacy:** The decline of cookies and similar tracking technologies will lead to enhanced online privacy but reduced personalization.
8. **Advancements in AR and XR:** Augmented and Extended Reality technologies are expected to create new, immersive experiences, potentially revolutionizing how we interact with digital content.
9. **The Role of AI in 2024:** The article emphasizes the dual nature of AI as both a powerful tool and a responsibility. It stresses the importance of harnessing AI's potential while being vigilant about its darker aspects, especially in an election year.

Mains easy language

The article provides an insightful overview of the significant impact and advancements expected in Artificial Intelligence (AI) for the upcoming year. It emphasizes how AI will be more deeply integrated into daily-use devices like smartphones and laptops, enhancing personalization for users. This integration signifies a movement towards technology that is more tailored to individual needs.



| Clear your doubts now.



A key focus is the rapid evolution of AI, which is reshaping various technological fields at an unprecedented pace. The article highlights the importance of ethical considerations and regulation in AI, particularly in areas like deep fakes and misinformation, especially relevant during significant democratic events like elections.

The article also discusses the increasing trend of local manufacturing of tech products in India, driven by government incentives, and the industry's shift towards greener and more sustainable technology practices. Additionally, it notes the changes in internet privacy due to the decline of cookies, leading to more private browsing experiences but potentially less personalized content.

Furthermore, advancements in Augmented Reality (AR) and Extended Reality (XR) are mentioned as upcoming trends, set to offer new, immersive ways of experiencing and sharing digital content. Overall, the article underscores the need for a balanced approach to leveraging AI's potential while addressing its ethical implications and promoting responsible use.

IN GOOD HEALTH-Indian Express Editorial

Economy

Key takeaways

1. **Significant Reduction in Bad Loans:** The reports highlight a substantial decrease in bad loans, both in public and private sector banks. The ratio of non-performing loans has dropped from 11.6% in March 2018 to 3.2% by September 2023.
2. **Improved Profitability:** High-interest margins have contributed to increased profitability in the banking sector, reinforcing its financial stability.
3. **Strong Capital Position:** Indian banks have maintained a robust capital position, which is crucial for their ability to support credit growth. This strong capital base ensures their resilience even in adverse economic conditions.
4. **Moderated Slippage Ratio:** The slippage ratio, measuring the addition of new bad loans, has moderated, indicating improved credit quality and risk management within the banking system.
5. **Positive Trends in Non-Banking Financial Companies:** Notably, non-banking financial companies have also witnessed a decline in bad loans, and their capital positions remain strong, contributing to overall financial stability.
6. **Concerns about Unsecured Personal Loans:** While the reports note concerns about the rapid growth of unsecured personal loans, measures have been taken to control this growth and ensure lenders have sufficient buffers. Nevertheless, the asset quality of these loans has not significantly deteriorated.

Mains easy language

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) reports paint an encouraging picture of the Indian financial sector's health. Notably, bad loans have seen a significant decline, plummeting from 11.6% in March 2018 to 3.2% in September 2023, with even large industries showcasing improved repayment behavior. This signifies a remarkable enhancement in asset quality.

Profitability has also surged, partly due to high-interest margins, fortifying both financial institutions and the sector's stability. Banks' robust capital positions are another positive aspect, enabling them to support credit growth effectively.

Furthermore, the moderation in the slippage ratio, measuring the addition of new bad loans, suggests better risk management practices. It's anticipated that bad loans will continue to decrease, projected to reach 2.1-2.5% by March 2025.

Non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) have mirrored these improvements, witnessing reduced bad loans and maintaining strong capital positions. However, the rapid growth of unsecured personal loans raises concerns, though the asset quality remains stable.

In summary, the RBI reports depict a largely optimistic outlook for the Indian financial sector, underlining its resilience, stability, and potential for sustained growth.

In a year marked by the passing of the Women's Reservation Bill in Parliament, the question is: Are women finally claiming their rightful space or is it more tokenism? -She is going places -Agree and Disagree-Indian Express Editorial

Sociology

Key takeaways

1. **Women's Reservation Bill:** The recent passage of the Women's Reservation Bill, reserving one-third of parliamentary and state assembly seats for women, marks a pivotal stride towards gender equality and more inclusive governance in India.
2. **Inspirational Female Role Models:** The presence of influential female leaders like President Droupadi Murmu and Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman serves as a powerful source of inspiration, motivating young Indian women to challenge norms and pursue their aspirations.





3. **Changing Aspirations in Small Towns:** Women in small towns are rejecting traditional expectations, including early marriages, and are instead seeking diverse career paths and entrepreneurship, reflecting shifting societal norms and a pursuit of economic independence.
4. **Digital Empowerment:** Widespread digital access in India has empowered women to leverage online platforms to showcase their talents and expertise, contributing to their economic and professional growth and fostering a spirit of entrepreneurship.
5. **Global Recognition and Influence:** Indian women are gaining international recognition, with figures like Nigar Shaji leading India's solar mission. Their accomplishments challenge stereotypes, exemplify the vast potential available to women, and inspire others globally.

Mains easy language

In a year marked by the passage of the Women's Reservation Bill in Parliament, the question arises: Are women finally claiming their rightful space or is it mere tokenism? The Nari Shakti Vandana Adhiniyam was recently passed, reserving one-third of seats in the Lok Sabha and state assemblies for women, a historic move towards inclusive governance. Strong female role models are emerging across various fields, inspiring young women to break barriers and aspire to greatness.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's prudent budgets and India's economic rise underpin this progress. Women in small towns are rejecting societal norms, pursuing entrepreneurship, and occupying managerial roles, bridging the urban-rural gap. Digital access has enabled women to chase their dreams, from YouTube chefs to social media influencers. Observing accomplished women in public life empowers others to believe in their potential.

Positive portrayals of women in cultural media signify changing attitudes. This focus on female role models can shape future leaders and bring about positive change. The Indian woman is rewriting her narrative, challenging stereotypes, and ushering in a silent revolution, breaking down barriers and propelling herself to new heights.

India's stationary course in the shipping value chain-The Hindu Editorial

Economy

Key takeaways

1. **Yangtze River's Vital Role:** The Yangtze River, steeped in tradition and modernity, serves as China's lifeline for trade, boasting multiple convoys of merchant ships navigating its waters.
2. **India's Shipping Legacy:** India once led in merchant shipping but has fallen behind China. It had a tradition of ship-owning and English-speaking seafarers who became global assets.
3. **Indian Seafarers and Management:** Indian seafarers and ship management companies bring in substantial foreign exchange earnings, showcasing India's prowess in this field.
4. **Challenges in Ship Owning:** India's progress in ship owning, chartering, financing, and building remains limited. China, on the other hand, dominates shipbuilding and owning.
5. **Government Initiatives:** India's attempts to increase its share in global shipbuilding have fallen short of expectations. Recent initiatives focus on logistics, environment, and infrastructure but overlook shipbuilding.
6. **Strategic Importance:** Shipbuilding and owning can enhance India's position in global trade and strengthen its naval power. These capabilities are integral to India's overall industrial and military might.

Mains easy language

The Yangtze River symbolizes China's thriving shipping industry, serving as a vital trade route with multiple convoys of merchant ships. India, once a leader in merchant shipping, contributed English-speaking seafarers to the global workforce and had a tradition of ship-owning. Indian seafarers and ship management companies continue to play a crucial role, contributing significantly to foreign exchange earnings.

However, India faces challenges in advancing in the shipping value chain, while China dominates shipbuilding and ownership. Government initiatives like Maritime India Vision 2030 focus on logistics and port infrastructure but overlook shipbuilding.

Shipbuilding and ownership are not just economic pursuits; they have strategic importance. They can enhance India's global trade presence and strengthen its naval capabilities, integral to its overall industrial and military strength. Developing these capabilities is crucial for India's maritime future.

Despair in distress-The Hindu Editorial

Sociology





Key Takeaways:

1. **Rising Illegal Migration:** The farming crisis in India is driving many youths to take the perilous route of illegal migration to developed countries, despite the inherent risks.
2. **Recent Forced Return Incident:** The forced return of 303 Indians from a French airport raises concerns about human trafficking or forced migration. While some sought asylum in France, most returned to Mumbai.
3. **Alarming Increase in Attempts:** The data from U.S. Customs and Border Protection shows a significant increase in the number of Indians attempting to enter the U.S., with nearly 100,000 attempts between October 2022 and September the following year.
4. **Routes and Risks:** Many of these attempts involve risky routes, including crossing the heavily guarded Mexican border or attempting to use the sparsely manned Canadian border.
5. **Desperation or Misled:** Indians taking such risks to become illegal immigrants in the U.S. may be driven by desperation or misled by human trafficking networks.
6. **Root Causes:** The reasons behind these migrations include alleged religious persecution and distress in farming. The Indian government must address the issue of human trafficking, especially in rural areas like Punjab and Haryana, where vulnerable individuals fall prey to promises of a better future.
7. **Farming Crisis:** The farming crisis in India, marked by plummeting incomes and overexploited farmlands, has exacerbated the situation, pushing youths towards illegal migration.
8. **Need for Crackdown:** To combat this issue, there is a need for a crackdown on exploitative middlemen in the labor market, as it can only be the initial step in addressing the problem.

Mains easy language

The farming crisis in India is pushing desperate youths towards illegal migration to developed countries, notably the United States. A recent incident involving the forced return of 303 Indians detained at a French airport sheds light on this alarming trend, raising concerns of human trafficking. U.S. Customs and Border Protection data shows a significant surge in such migration attempts, with nearly 100,000 recorded between October 2022 and September the following year, often involving risky routes.

Motivations behind these journeys range from alleged religious persecution to distress in farming. Regardless of the reasons, the Indian government must address the widespread issue of human trafficking, particularly in rural regions like Punjab and Haryana. The farming crisis, marked by plummeting incomes and overexploited farmlands, exacerbates the situation, leaving youths with limited options.

To combat this issue, cracking down on exploitative middlemen in the labor market is crucial, but it represents just the first step in addressing the broader problem of illegal migration driven by distress and desperation.

Old and strong-The Hindu Editorial

International relations

Key takeaways

1. **Significance of Jaishankar's Visit:** External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar's five-day visit to Russia underscores the importance both nations place on strengthening their bilateral ties.
2. **Unusual Duration and Presidential Meeting:** The extended visit is unusual, especially considering the Russian leadership's typical avoidance of high-level foreign visits during the holiday season. President Vladimir Putin's meeting with Jaishankar demonstrates the warmth in the relationship.
3. **Addressing Perceived Differences:** Jaishankar's mission aimed to address concerns and perceptions of differences between India and Russia, particularly in the wake of the Ukraine war.
4. **Agreements on Multiple Fronts:** Several agreements were reached during the visit, including collaborations in nuclear power projects, trade, connectivity, and discussions on the Eurasian Economic Union-India free trade agreement.
5. **Multilateral Cooperation:** India and Russia continue to cooperate on the multilateral front, with Russia set to host the expanded BRICS summit next year, and both nations coordinating positions at the UN and SCO.
6. **Strengthening the Relationship:** Jaishankar's affirmation of the annual leadership summit's resumption in 2024 reflects efforts to eliminate any static in the India-Russia relationship. The geopolitical and strategic convergence between the two nations in a changing multipolar world is of significant interest to observers and critics alike.

Mains easy language





External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar's recent five-day visit to Russia held diplomatic significance, despite the holiday season. Putin's meeting with Jaishankar, despite his lower-ranking position, highlighted the visit's importance. Modi's absence from the annual leadership summit had raised questions about the India-Russia relationship.

Jaishankar aimed to address these differences and enhance cooperation. Agreements signed during the visit underscored their commitment to nuclear projects, trade, and connectivity. Russia will host the expanded BRICS summit, showcasing their global efforts. The resumption of the leadership summit in 2024 reflects efforts to stabilize relations.

Jaishankar emphasized that the India-Russia relationship has remained consistent in global politics for six decades, differentiating it from recent challenges with the U.S. and China. Key areas of focus include the rupee-rouble payment mechanism and timely S-400 delivery. In summary, Jaishankar's visit reaffirmed the India-Russia relationship in an evolving multipolar world.

Houthi attacks: a threat to global shipping?-The Hindu Text and Context

International relations

Key takeaways

1. **Escalating Maritime Threats:** Recent drone attacks by Houthi rebels in the Red Sea have raised concerns about maritime security, disrupting global trade routes and potentially impacting economies.
2. **Rerouting and Increased Costs:** The attacks prompted some shipping companies to reroute vessels, avoiding the Red Sea, which has increased operational costs.
3. **India's Response:** India has heightened its presence in the region, deploying various resources to counter potential threats and monitor maritime activity.
4. **Critical Shipping Artery:** The Red Sea is a critical shipping artery for global commerce, with approximately 12% of global trade passing through it.
5. **Sophisticated Weaponry:** The Houthi rebels' use of sophisticated weaponry, including ballistic missiles and long-range drones, poses a significant threat to maritime traffic far from the shores.
6. **Implications for Global Trade:** The situation in the Red Sea has implications for the revenue generated by the Suez Canal and the operational dynamics of ports in the region, potentially leading to delays and price rises in global trade.

Mains easy language

The recent drone attacks by Houthi rebels in the Red Sea have raised concerns about maritime security and its potential to disrupt global trade. This poses a significant threat, given that about 12% of global trade passes through this vital shipping artery. In response to these attacks, some shipping companies have chosen to reroute their vessels to avoid the Red Sea, which increases operational costs and affects supply chain efficiency.

India has stepped up its presence in the region, with the Indian Navy and Coast Guard deploying resources to counter potential threats and monitor maritime activities. However, uncertainties persist about future attacks and response strategies, along with concerns about the broader impact on global trade and economies in case of a major incident.

This situation underscores the need for ongoing vigilance and international cooperation to safeguard maritime security and ensure the stability of global trade routes.

Is Pegasus spyware targeting journalists in India?-The Hindu text and context

Science and technology

Key takeaways

1. **Latest Allegations Against Pegasus Spyware:**
 - Recent reports reveal Pegasus spyware targeted Indian journalists, including Siddharth Varadarajan of The Wire and Anand Mangnale of OCCRP. This came to light in October 2023 after Apple warned of 'state-sponsored attacks' on iPhones.
2. **Amnesty International's Findings:**
 - Amnesty International found evidence of Pegasus activity on infected devices. A "zero-click exploit" was used to install Pegasus on Mr. Mangnale's iPhone via iMessage. Mr. Varadarajan was targeted with a similar method, suggesting a common attacker.
3. **Understanding Zero-Click Exploit:**
 - A "zero-click exploit" installs spyware without user consent or interaction. BLASTPAST, the exploit used, operates in two phases: linking with Apple HomeKit and delivering the spyware payload.





NSO's Response:

- NSO, Pegasus' maker, claims its technology is licensed to vetted law enforcement and intelligence agencies for counterterrorism and crime-fighting, with no access to targets or collected data.

4. Legal Controversy and Impact:

- Activists filed petitions with India's Supreme Court, alleging government mass surveillance to stifle dissent. The court sought a detailed affidavit from the Centre, which refused due to national security concerns.
- Amnesty's findings raise concerns about Pegasus' use for surveillance and its impact on free speech and democracy in India, sparking legal debate.

Mains easy language

The Pegasus spyware's alleged use in India has stirred controversy, with reports suggesting it targeted journalists, such as Siddharth Varadarajan from The Wire and Anand Mangnale linked to OCCRP. These claims emerged in October 2023 when Apple warned iPhone users, including MPs, of possible "state-sponsored attacks."

Amnesty International conducted an analysis, finding traces of Pegasus activity on infected devices, implicating a "zero-click exploit" via iMessage. Both Varadarajan and Mangnale were targeted using the same attacker-controlled email address.

A "zero-click exploit" allows spyware to infiltrate a device without user consent or action. The specific exploit, BLASTPAST, operates in two phases: establishing a link with Apple HomeKit and delivering the full spyware "payload." While attempts were made, evidence of successful device infection wasn't found.

NSO, Pegasus's creator, emphasized their technology's exclusive licensing to vetted law enforcement and intelligence agencies, claiming no access to targets or data.

Amnesty's findings prompted legal challenges, as activists filed petitions in India's Supreme Court, alleging government surveillance suppressing dissent and free speech. The court requested a detailed affidavit from the Centre, which was declined due to national security concerns. These revelations have sparked legal debates on Pegasus's use and its impact on free speech and democracy in India.

30th December 2023

[Order at sea-Indian Express Editorial](#)

International relations

Key takeaways

1. **Naval Power is Paramount:** The text underscores the critical role of naval power in safeguarding a nation's interests, including trade, commerce, and access to valuable resources through maritime routes.
2. **Global Shipping's Economic Significance:** Shipping remains the most efficient and cost-effective method for transporting goods across vast distances, underpinning the global economy. The Indian Ocean alone handles a substantial portion of the world's oil and cargo shipments.
3. **Choke Points are Vulnerable:** The presence of narrow passages known as "choke points" in the Indian Ocean makes maritime trade susceptible to disruptions, whether from state actors, pirates, or terrorists.
4. **Houthi Attacks on Maritime Trade:** The Houthi rebels in Yemen have initiated missile and drone attacks specifically targeting merchant vessels, primarily those associated with Israel. These attacks raise concerns about the security of maritime trade routes.
5. **Complex Yemen Conflict:** The ongoing Yemeni civil war is marked by its complexity, with various regional and international actors, such as Saudi Arabia, Iran, and several Middle Eastern nations, involved to varying degrees.
6. **Houthi Ideological Objectives:** In contrast to typical pirates motivated by financial gain, the Houthis claim to have ideological reasons for their attacks on shipping. They seek to pressure Israel into ending its prolonged bombardment of Gaza, citing civilian casualties.
7. **Diplomacy and Restraint Are Key:** Given the intricacies of the situation, the text highlights the urgent need for diplomatic efforts and restraint to prevent further escalation of conflicts in the West Asian region and ensure the safety of global trade routes. Diplomatic channels involving nations like India, Iran, and Israel can play a crucial role in achieving this goal.

Mains easy language

This text underscores the critical role of naval power in ensuring a nation's economic well-being and security, particularly in the context of maritime trade and resource access. It emphasizes that navies are vital for maintaining order at sea, securing trade





routes, and protecting national interests. Shipping remains the most cost-effective means of global goods transportation, with the Indian Ocean handling a significant portion of worldwide oil and cargo trade.

However, the text also highlights the vulnerability of maritime trade due to narrow passages known as "choke points," which can be exploited by states, pirates, or terrorists. Notably, Houthi rebels in Yemen have launched missile and drone attacks on merchant vessels, particularly those linked to Israel, as a means to pressure Israel regarding its Gaza operations.

The Yemeni civil war is depicted as a complex conflict involving various regional and international actors. The text emphasizes the importance of diplomacy and restraint to prevent further West Asian conflict escalation. Diplomatic efforts, involving nations like India, Iran, and Israel, are deemed essential for securing global trade routes and mitigating regional tensions that could impact international commerce. In summary, the text underscores the critical nexus between naval power, global trade, regional conflicts, and the necessity for diplomatic solutions to protect economic interests and maritime security.

THE PM-KISAN MODEL-Indian Express Editorial

Economy(agriculture)

Key takeaways

1. **PM-Kisan Expansion:** The government is increasing the coverage of the PM-Kisan scheme, providing direct income support of Rs 6,000 annually to eligible landowning farmers, regardless of their farming practices.
2. **Refinement through Per-Acre Payments:** There's a suggestion to refine the scheme by offering income support on a per-acre basis, similar to Telangana's Rythu Bandhu, to ensure larger landholders receive additional support.
3. **Balancing Support for Farmers:** Per-acre payments aim to recognize the contributions of middle farmers with larger land holdings, who often have higher expenses, while maintaining support for smaller farmers.
4. **Funding Reallocated from Subsidies:** To finance per-acre payments, the proposal is to redirect funds by eliminating market-distorting subsidies on farm inputs and outputs, potentially improving the efficiency of the support system.
5. **Equitable and Efficient Support:** The overall goal is to create a more equitable and efficient income support system for farmers, while eliminating subsidies that distort agricultural markets.

Mains easy language

The article discusses the expansion and potential refinements of India's Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-Kisan) scheme, which provides direct income support to eligible landowning farmers. Currently, the scheme offers a flat Rs 6,000 annually to farmers, regardless of their farming practices. While the expansion of the scheme to reach more beneficiaries is seen as a positive step, the article suggests a refinement by considering per-acre payments, as seen in Telangana's Rythu Bandhu scheme.

Per-acre payments aim to provide additional support to larger landholders, recognizing their higher farming expenses. This adjustment could create a more balanced support system, acknowledging the contributions of middle farmers with larger land holdings. To fund this shift toward per-acre payments, the article proposes redirecting funds by eliminating market-distorting subsidies on farm inputs and outputs, such as fertilizers. This reallocation of funds could enhance the efficiency of the support system.

In summary, the article highlights the importance of direct income support for farmers and suggests potential improvements to the PM-Kisan scheme to make it more equitable and efficient while eliminating subsidies that distort agricultural markets.

FIRST, DON'T PANIC -Indian Express Editorial

Science and technology

Key Takeaways:

1. **The Rise of LLMs and AI:** The public launch of Large Language Model (LLM) ChatGPT by OpenAI in 2022 marked a significant moment in technology, democratizing access to sophisticated AI with human-like interfaces and vast knowledge.
2. **Dichotomy in AI Discussion:** The discussion around AI is characterized by a dichotomy between its potential advantages, such as advanced gene sequencing and virtual assistants, and its perceived dangers, including concerns about its impact on jobs, creativity, and society.
3. **Threat to White-Collar Jobs:** Unlike earlier technological disruptions that primarily affected manufacturing jobs, the current threat lies in white-collar jobs that rely on intellectual and cognitive abilities, such as lawyers, doctors, artists, and writers.
4. **The Dual Dangers of Panic:** Panic around AI poses two dangers: the potential for excessive regulation that stifles innovation and the possibility of obscuring critical issues related to AI's impact on society.





5. **Emerging Concerns:** Concerns about AI include issues of plagiarism, copyright, surveillance, facial recognition, and predictive policing, all of which have significant implications for privacy and human rights.

Mains easy language

The article delves into the transformative influence of AI, particularly Large Language Models (LLMs) like ChatGPT, and its repercussions on technology governance in 2023. It underscores the existence of a dual narrative concerning AI—an acknowledgment of its potential advantages, such as its contributions to scientific research and educational support, along with a growing apprehension regarding its perceived threats, including job displacement and societal impacts. Notably, the threat primarily lies in white-collar jobs dependent on intellectual and cognitive abilities.

However, the article raises a cautionary flag regarding the hazards of excessive panic amidst AI advances. Such unwarranted fear may induce rushed regulatory responses, inadvertently stifling innovation and obstructing the democratization of knowledge and skills. Furthermore, it could cloud vital concerns, including those pertaining to plagiarism, copyright disputes, and the ethical implications of AI, especially in domains such as surveillance and predictive policing.

In light of these apprehensions, the article advocates for a balanced approach wherein society actively steers technology's course. It underscores the need for society to lead and steer technology to harness its maximum potential while effectively addressing its challenges. This comprehensive strategy should encompass safeguards to protect privacy and uphold human rights as we advance into the year 2024.

A fraying fabric-Indian Express Editorial

International relations

Key takeaways

1. **Election Manifesto Priorities:** Bangladesh's Awami League, led by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, has outlined its election manifesto with a strong focus on job creation, social security, and good governance as core political objectives.
2. **Economic Challenges:** The Bangladeshi economy has faced significant macroeconomic stress since mid-2022, partly due to the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Ukraine-Russia conflict. This economic strain has also resulted from financial sector mismanagement and ineffective monetary policies.
3. **BNP's Political Demands:** The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) has set a condition for its participation in the upcoming national election, demanding the resignation of the prime minister and the reinstatement of a caretaker government to oversee the polls.
4. **Historic Political Animosity:** Bangladesh's political landscape remains marked by long-standing animosities between the leading political dynasties, the Sheikhs and the Zias, contributing to a confrontational political environment.
5. **Western Interest and Speculation:** Western nations, particularly the United States, have taken a keen interest in Bangladesh's political affairs, expressing a desire for a free, fair, and peaceful national election. Speculation surrounds the motivations behind this Western involvement, including concerns about democratic regression and strategic interests.
6. **Effect on India-Bangladesh Relations:**
 - As former Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee stated, *"India and Bangladesh are not just neighbors, we are two nations bound by the threads of history, religion, and culture."*
 - Bangladesh's political situation and alignment with major global powers, including India, China, and the United States, can influence regional dynamics. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's neutral foreign policy has allowed Bangladesh to maintain balanced relations with these powers.
 - Any shifts in Bangladesh's foreign policy could have repercussions on its relationship with neighboring India and regional stability, echoing the sentiment that *"our destinies are interlinked"* as stated by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Mains easy language

The article discusses Bangladesh's political and economic situation ahead of its 12th national election. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's Awami League has prioritized job creation, social security, and good governance in its election manifesto. While Bangladesh has seen significant economic growth and poverty reduction under Sheikh Hasina's leadership, recent economic challenges and political rivalries pose concerns.

Historical animosities between political dynasties, the Sheikhs and the Zias, have led to a confrontational political environment. The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) conditions its election participation on the prime minister's resignation and the return of a caretaker government.





Western nations, led by the United States, are closely monitoring Bangladesh's politics, advocating for a fair 2024 election. Motivations behind their interest, such as concerns about democratic regression and regional strategy, are speculative.

International endorsements or sanctions could impact Bangladesh's economy, particularly its vital ready-made garments industry. Despite the upcoming election, deep political divisions persist, hindering hopes for a more collaborative and consensus-driven politics, which could also affect relations with neighboring India.

ULFA peace accord:history of its 44-year-long insurgency,peace talks-Indian Express Explained

Polity

Key Takeaways from ULFA Peace Accord:

1. **Historic Peace Deal:** The pro-talks faction of the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) signed a historic tripartite peace agreement with the Indian government and the Assam state government, marking a significant milestone in the region's insurgency history.
2. **Roots in Assamese Anxieties:** ULFA's origins can be traced back to Assamese anxieties over resource competition, cultural identity, and an influx of migrants into the state.
3. **Decades of Conflict:** ULFA's armed struggle, spanning over 44 years, included activities such as kidnappings, extortion, bombings, and violence, resulting in numerous casualties.
4. **Government Response:** The Indian government responded with counterinsurgency operations, imposing the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA), and declaring Assam a "disturbed area" to quell the insurgency.
5. **External Factors:** ULFA's survival was partly attributed to external support, with camps in Myanmar and alleged links to various insurgent groups, terrorist organizations, and even Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI).
6. **Incomplete Peace:** While the recent peace agreement is a positive step, questions remain about its completeness and effectiveness, especially given the ongoing demands for Assam's sovereignty by ULFA's leader, Paresh Baruah, and potential challenges in achieving a comprehensive and lasting peace.

Mains easy language

The recent signing of a tripartite peace accord involving the pro-talks faction of ULFA, the Indian government, and the Assam state government marks a significant moment in the four-decade-long insurgency in the region. ULFA, founded in 1979, emerged from Assamese concerns about cultural identity and resource competition, leading to a violent insurgency marked by kidnappings, bombings, and extortion.

In response, the Indian government imposed AFSPA, declared Assam a "disturbed area," and launched counterinsurgency operations. ULFA survived with camps in Myanmar and alleged connections to insurgent and terrorist groups, including Pakistan's ISI.

The recent peace agreement is a positive step, but questions remain about its completeness and effectiveness. ULFA leader Paresh Baruah's demand for Assam's sovereignty and potential challenges in achieving lasting peace are ongoing concerns. While the agreement is significant, the path to lasting peace in Assam may still be uncertain and challenging.

A call for disability inclusion that must be heeded-The Hindu Editorial

Sociology

Key Takeaways:

1. **UN's Emphasis on Transformative Solutions:** The United Nations underscores the importance of transformative solutions to reduce disability and promote inclusive development.
2. **Diverse Neuropsychiatric Disorders:** Neuropsychiatric disorders encompass a wide range of conditions across the lifespan, including childhood disorders like autism and ADHD, mental health issues, and neurodegenerative diseases in adulthood.
3. **Rising Rehabilitation Needs:** The global burden of individuals in need of rehabilitation services has increased significantly, with over 2.4 billion people benefiting from such services, marking a 63% rise from 1990 to 2019.
4. **Broadening Rehabilitation Services:** Rehabilitation services must expand their scope to address a diverse range of neurological and mental health problems instead of focusing narrowly on specific disabilities.
5. **Awareness and Professional Empowerment:** Building awareness in communities regarding the treatability of disabilities is crucial, as is encouraging medical professionals and caregivers to prioritize rehabilitation services. Empowering professionals' growth and development is essential.





6. **Multidisciplinary Holistic Approach:** Effective rehabilitation services should adopt a multidisciplinary, holistic approach involving various professionals such as physical and occupational therapists, speech and language therapists, psychological therapists, and caregivers.
7. **Non-Invasive Brain Stimulation Techniques:** Innovative treatments like Repetitive Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (rTMS), Functional Magnetic Stimulation (FMS), and transcranial electrical stimulation (TES) show promise in improving outcomes for various neurological and mental health conditions.
8. **Collaboration for Inclusion:** Collaboration between governments, public, and private sectors is essential to finding innovative solutions and promoting disability inclusion, especially in the context of leaving no one behind in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Mains easy language

The article underscores the significance of innovative solutions in the realm of neuropsychiatry to improve the quality of life for individuals with disabilities. It highlights the diverse range of neuropsychiatric disorders affecting people throughout their lives, emphasizing the need for robust rehabilitation services.

To address the growing demand for rehabilitation, services must broaden their scope beyond specific disabilities. This expansion requires increased awareness in communities about the treatability of disabilities and the prioritization of rehabilitation services by medical professionals and caregivers.

The multidisciplinary and holistic approach to rehabilitation, involving various professionals, is vital for achieving better outcomes. Additionally, non-invasive brain stimulation techniques offer promising avenues for treatment.

In conclusion, collaboration between governments and the public and private sectors is pivotal in realizing the United Nations' vision of disability inclusion and creating a more equitable and accessible world.

A quiet reprieve-The Hindu Editorial

International relations

Key takeaways

1. **Qatari Court's Leniency:** The Qatari court of appeals has reduced the capital punishment initially given to eight former Indian naval personnel, providing a significant reprieve for them and their families.
2. **Diplomatic Pursuits:** The Indian government has actively engaged in diplomatic efforts to seek leniency for the convicted individuals, demonstrating its commitment to resolving the case through peaceful means.
3. **Three Potential Courses of Action:** If all judicial appeals fail, the government has three options: continue pressing for a review of the conviction, appeal for clemency and a pardon, or allow the individuals to serve their sentences in India under a bilateral agreement.
4. **Quiet Diplomacy:** India has maintained a diplomatic approach to the case, refraining from public rhetoric or media targeting of Qatar, a strategy seen as more productive and less counterproductive.
5. **Avoiding Regional Tensions:** The Indian government has wisely kept the case separate from regional tensions, such as the conflict involving Israel's bombardment of Gaza, ensuring that it does not become entangled in broader geopolitical issues.
6. **Hope for Safe Return:** India's focus is on ensuring the safe return of the eight Indian nationals involved in the case through consistent, calibrated diplomatic efforts and quiet determination.

Mains easy language

The Qatari court's decision to reduce the capital punishment of eight former Indian naval personnel has provided relief to the individuals and their families. The Indian government's active pursuit of diplomatic channels for leniency is commendable. While the conviction stands, the government must reassess its legal strategy for a potential review petition with Qatar's Court of Cassation.

The government has three possible courses of action if judicial appeals fail: continued efforts for a review, appeals for clemency and pardon, or having the individuals serve sentences in India. Diplomatic and political efforts, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi's outreach, are essential to convey the case's priority for India.

India's avoidance of public rhetoric and media targeting, along with its non-involvement in regional tensions, is a prudent approach. A quiet but determined resolution is hoped for, emphasizing the safety and return of the eight Indians involved.





31st December . , 2023

Princesestan to Article 370: Our Tryst with Balkanisation- Indian Express Opinion

History

Key Takeaways

1. **Jawaharlal Nehru's "Tryst with Destiny" Speech:** Recognized as one of the greatest speeches of the 20th century, delivered on the eve of India's Independence.
2. **Attempt to Form Princesestan:** A plan by some powerful princes, under the patronage of key figures including Muhammad Ali Jinnah and Winston Churchill, aimed to establish Princesestan as a separate entity alongside India and Pakistan.
3. **Nehru, Patel, and Mountbatten's Role:** These leaders played a crucial role in foiling the British plan to balkanize India by integrating the princely states into the Indian Union.
4. **Declaration of Independence of India:** Announced at the 1929 Lahore session of the Indian National Congress, setting January 26, 1930, as Independence Day to fuel the independence movement.
5. **British Realization and Mountbatten's Decision:** Post-World War II, Britain realized its inability to maintain control over India, leading to Lord Mountbatten choosing August 15, 1947, for the transfer of power.
6. **Partition of India and Independence Act of 1947:** The British government agreed to partition India into India and Pakistan, which received independence on August 15, 1947, as per the Indian Independence Act passed by the UK Parliament.
7. **Communal Violence and Refugee Crisis:** The partition led to significant bloodshed and a massive movement of refugees across the newly formed borders.
8. **Formation of Pakistan and Independent India:** Pakistan was established on August 14, 1947, and India became independent on August 15, 1947, with Nehru as the first Prime Minister and Lord Mountbatten as the first governor-general.
9. **Article 370 and Jammu & Kashmir:** The article discusses the implications of the BJP government's decision to make Article 370 inoperable, leading to a significant change in the status of Jammu & Kashmir.
10. **India's Geopolitical Role in the 21st Century:** India has emerged as a significant economic, strategic, and geopolitical force, especially as a counterbalance to China.
11. **Indian Diplomacy and Kashmir Issue:** India's diplomatic efforts have led to a decline in international interest in the Kashmir issue, despite Pakistan's attempts to leverage it.
12. **Supreme Court's Stance on Article 370:** The Supreme Court upheld the inoperability of Article 370, with a call for the establishment of a truth and reconciliation commission to address the region's issues.
13. **Integration of Jammu & Kashmir into India:** The article concludes with the observation that the integration of Jammu & Kashmir has been largely accepted and seen as a step towards a united and integrated India.

Easy Language

Just before India gained independence, Jawaharlal Nehru delivered a very famous speech, known as "Tryst with Destiny," considered one of the great speeches of the 20th century. Around this time, there was a plot by some powerful rulers of princely states, backed by significant figures like Muhammad Ali Jinnah and British leaders, to form their own country called 'Princesestan' separate from India and Pakistan. However, Indian leaders Nehru, Sardar Patel, and British Lord Mountbatten worked together to make sure these princely states joined India, preventing the country from being divided into smaller parts.

In 1929, the Indian National Congress declared their intention for full independence from British rule and started celebrating January 26 as Independence Day from 1930 to encourage the freedom movement. After World War II, Britain, weakened and financially drained, decided it couldn't keep controlling India. They chose August 15, 1947, for the transfer of power, which also marked the anniversary of Japan's surrender in the war.

The British government agreed to divide British India into two new countries, India and Pakistan, leading to independence on August 15, 1947. This partition caused a lot of violence and forced millions of people to leave their homes, creating a huge refugee crisis.

Pakistan was formed on August 14, 1947, and India became independent the next day with Nehru as the first Prime Minister. The article then discusses the controversial Article 370 in the Indian constitution, which gave special status to Jammu and Kashmir. The Indian government's recent decision to remove this special status was a significant and contentious change.





In the global arena, India has emerged as an important country, especially as a counterbalance to China. Its diplomatic efforts have lessened international focus on the Kashmir issue. The Supreme Court of India supported the decision to remove Kashmir's special status and suggested setting up a commission to address the region's problems.

The article concludes by noting that the integration of Kashmir into India has been largely accepted and is seen as a step towards a more united India. This summary captures India's path to independence, its initial challenges, the partition with Pakistan, recent changes in Kashmir, and India's evolving role on the world stage.

[Levy 2030% health tax on food high in sugar, salt, fat: study- The Hindu Science](#)

Science Tech

Key Takeaways

1. **Health Tax Proposal on Sugary Products:** Public health researchers recommend a health tax of 20% to 30% on top of GST on sugar, sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs), and high sugar, salt, and fat (HFSS) foods. This suggestion is based on a study published in the Journal of Health Policy and Planning.
2. **UNICEF-Funded Project's Outcome:** The recommendation comes from a UNICEF-funded project aiming to influence policies to reduce sugar consumption.
3. **Niti Aayog's Interest:** Niti Aayog is exploring the impact of health taxes and warning labels on food products to promote healthy eating among Indian consumers.
4. **Study's Focus:** The study, co-authored by Dr. Beena Varghese, a health economist, suggests taxing bulk sugar consumers like confectionery manufacturers, not households. This could lead to decreased demand for sugar as costs increase for consumers.
5. **Sugar Consumption in India:** Confectionery manufacturers buy up to 55% of India's annual sugar production.
6. **Price Elasticity and Tax Impact:** The study uses 'Price Elasticity' to estimate demand reduction if sugar prices increase. A 10% price hike could lead to a 2% demand drop, and an additional 30% tax on top of 18% GST could decrease sugar demand by 13-18%.
7. **Projected Decline in Demand:** For SSBs, a 10-30% health tax could result in a 7-30% demand decline, and for HFSS products, a 10-30% tax could lead to a 5-24% decline in demand.
8. **Increase in Government Revenue:** Additional taxes could boost government tax revenues by 12-200% across different scenarios.
9. **Current Tax Rates on Sugary Products:** Sugar attracts 18% GST, SSBs 28% GST plus a 12% additional cess, and HFSS products only 12% GST.
10. **Potential Benefits of Taxing Unhealthy Foods:** Higher taxes on unhealthy foods might reduce demand and increase government revenues, which can be reinvested in public health programs to combat obesity and non-communicable diseases.
11. **India's High Sugar Consumption:** India is the world's largest sugar consumer, with an average Indian consuming 25 kg per year, including sugar from beverages and traditional sources like jaggery.
12. **Rising Health Concerns:** India faces a sugar epidemic, with increasing sales of aerated drinks and a significant portion of caloric intake coming from HFSS foods. Continued consumption of SSBs could increase obesity and type 2 diabetes incidence.
13. **Encouraging Manufacturers to Reformulate Products:** The proposed tax rate encourages manufacturers to reduce the sugar content in drinks.
14. **Global Precedent:** Over 70 countries, including Mexico, Chile, and Saudi Arabia, have implemented health taxes on sugar, SSBs, and HFSS, leading to reduced consumption of taxed beverages and improved health outcomes in some cases.

Easy Language

Researchers are suggesting a new tax on sugar and sugary drinks like colas and juices, as well as foods high in sugar, salt, and fat. They think this extra tax, which would be on top of the regular GST, could help people eat healthier. This idea comes from a study that was funded by UNICEF and is meant to influence government policies.

Niti Aayog, a policy think tank in India, is also interested in this idea. They want to see if putting health taxes and warning labels on food can make people choose healthier foods. The study says this tax shouldn't affect regular families buying sugar for their homes. Instead, it should target big companies that use a lot of sugar to make sweets and other products. If these companies have to pay more tax, they might use less sugar, and people might end up buying fewer sugary products.

Right now, different foods have different tax rates. For example, sugar has an 18% GST, but sugary drinks have a 28% GST and an extra 12% tax. Foods that are high in fat, salt, and sugar only have a 12% GST.





The researchers say that if unhealthy foods are taxed more, people might buy less of them. This could be good for public health and also increase the government's money, which can be used for health programs. They point out that India consumes a lot of sugar, and this is causing health problems like obesity and diabetes. They also mention that other countries have tried similar taxes and have seen some positive results, like people buying fewer sugary drinks.

Missing TB cases in the Private Sector: The Hindu Science

Science tech

Key Takeaways

1. **Mandatory TB Notification Since 2012:** India made it compulsory to report TB cases in 2012 to tackle delayed diagnoses, poor care quality, wrong diagnostic and treatment methods, and high dropout rates, especially in the private sector.
2. **Increase in Private Sector Notifications:** Initially, only 2% of TB cases were reported from the private sector in 2013. Due to initiatives by the National TB Elimination Programme (NTEP), this percentage has increased significantly over the years, reaching 32% in 2021 but slightly dropping to 30% in 2022.
3. **Shortfall from National Strategic Plan Targets:** Despite these increases, the private sector notifications are still below the targets set by the National Strategic Plan (NSP) for 2020-2025. The actual notifications were significantly lower than the targeted 35% in 2020, 45% in 2021, and 56% in 2022.
4. **Missed TB Cases in the Private Sector:** In 2022, there were 1.2 million missed TB cases in the private sector, with only 0.73 million cases reported against the expected 1.93 million.
5. **Public Sector Outperforming Private Sector:** The public sector achieved 92.4% of its expected notifications, higher than the private sector's 77% in 2022.
6. **WHO's Observation on Missing TB Cases:** The World Health Organization (WHO) noted that a significant number of TB cases, especially diagnosed and treated in the private sector, remain unreported.
7. **Recommendations for Private Provider Engagement:** The NSP suggested rapid scaling up of private provider engagement to find and successfully treat two million patients between 2020 and 2021.
8. **TB Care Seeking Behavior:** According to the National TB Prevalence Survey India (2019-2021), 50% of TB patients seek care in the private sector, while the NSP estimates it at 70%.
9. **Unnotified Patients in the Private Sector:** A large number of TB patients who sought care in the private sector were not reported. The NSP estimates about 0.54 million TB patients remain uncaptured in private health systems or the community.
10. **Estimation Based on Anti-TB Drug Sales:** Analysis of anti-TB drug sales indicated that the private sector treated 2.2 million TB patients in 2014, but only 0.1 million were reported.
11. **Concerns Over True TB Incidence:** There are worries that the actual number of TB cases may be much higher than estimated, considering potential overdiagnosis and unreported cases.
12. **TB Prevalence Survey Results:** The survey found a TB prevalence of 312 per 100,000 population in 2021. However, the case notification rate was much lower, indicating a large gap in reported cases.

In Easy Language:

Since 2012, India requires all TB cases to be reported, especially to catch cases missed in private healthcare. Initially, very few cases were reported from private clinics and hospitals, but this has improved a lot thanks to the government's efforts. However, the number of reported cases is still less than what the government aimed for. In 2022, for example, many TB cases in the private sector were not reported.

The public hospitals and clinics are doing a better job of reporting TB cases than private ones. The World Health Organization pointed out that many TB cases are treated in private healthcare but aren't reported. The government has been trying to get private doctors and hospitals to report more TB cases.

Studies show that many people with TB first go to private doctors. But a lot of these cases don't get reported to the government. When researchers looked at how much TB medicine was sold, they realized that private healthcare must be treating many more TB patients than they report.

There's a concern that the actual number of TB patients might be even higher than we think. A recent survey found that TB is more common than the number of cases reported suggests. This shows that many TB cases in India are still not being caught and reported, especially in private healthcare.





What may 2024 hold for the economy?- The Hindu FAQ

Economy

Key Takeaways

1. **Economic Resilience in 2023:** Despite initial fears of a hard recession due to the Ukraine-Russia conflict and high oil prices, the Indian economy performed better than expected. Stock markets reached record highs and GST collections increased significantly.
2. **GDP Growth and Forecasts:** India's GDP growth was robust in 2023, reaching 7.7% between April and September. The RBI has revised its growth forecast for 2023-24 to 7%, while the Finance Ministry expects an uptick of over 6.5%.
3. **Sectoral Growth:** Key sectors like construction, manufacturing, and financial services showed strong growth. Even sectors that lagged behind due to COVID-19, like trade and transport, have fully recovered.
4. **External Risks to Growth:** Global demand slackening and geopolitical tensions, especially in West Asia, pose risks to India's growth. The IT sector might face challenges as global economies struggle.
5. **Policy and Political Economy in 2024:** The first half of 2024 may see subdued activity due to Lok Sabha elections. An interim Budget is expected without major announcements, but the full Budget in July could bring significant policy changes.
6. **Private Investment Trends:** There's a gradual rebound in private investment in sectors like steel, cement, and auto. The government may reduce public spending to focus on fiscal consolidation.
7. **Global Political Impact:** Elections in major countries like Russia, India, the EU, and the U.S. could influence global economic policies, with a shift towards protectionism.
8. **Expectations of Rate Cuts:** The RBI and other central banks may start reducing interest rates in the latter half of 2024, which could boost demand for Indian goods and services.
9. **Petroleum and GST Rate Changes:** There's anticipation of changes in petrol and diesel prices, which have been frozen since mid-2022, and a potential GST rate rationalization after the elections.
10. **Inflation and Consumption Concerns:** Inflation in India is under better control, but food prices remain a concern. Uneven consumption patterns persist, with luxury goods thriving while affordable segments struggle. Weak farm sector performance and hiring trends in IT could also impact urban demand.

Easy language:

Despite worries about a global economic slowdown due to the Ukraine-Russia conflict and high oil prices, India's economy did better than expected in 2023. The stock market hit record highs, and the government collected a lot of tax money. The Indian economy grew by 7.7% for part of the year, and experts think it will keep growing in 2024.

Important parts of the economy like construction and manufacturing are doing well. However, India faces risks from lower global demand for its products and new geopolitical issues, like troubles in West Asia.

Looking ahead to 2024, things might be quiet at first because of the big national election. The government will present a temporary budget in February and a full one in July. This full budget might include important changes. There's hope that private companies will start investing more in different sectors.

Elections in big countries like the U.S. and India could affect global trade and economic policies. People are also expecting the Reserve Bank of India and other central banks to lower interest rates, which could help increase demand.

Changes in fuel prices and taxes on goods and services might happen after the election. Inflation seems to be under control, but food prices are still a worry. This could affect how much people in rural and urban areas can spend. Without a general increase in spending, it will be hard for the economy to grow as much as it needs to.

