

WEEKLY UPDATES – (31stDec-06thJan)

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ENVIRONMENT

Disasters and Disaster Management – Sendai Framework, Floods, Cyclones, etc.

Context:

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has pioneered an innovative Distress Alert Transmitter (DAT) to enhance the safety of fishermen at sea.

This second-generation DAT, known as DAT-SG, offers advanced capabilities and features, revolutionizing how emergency messages are communicated from fishing boats.

About Distress Alert Transmitter (DAT-SG)

Operational Since 2010: The initial version of DAT became operational in 2010, enabling fishermen to send emergency messages through a communication satellite.

Central Control Station: Messages were received at the Indian Mission Control Centre (INMCC), a central control station, where alert signals were decoded to identify the distressed fishing boat.

Coordination with MRCCs: The extracted information was then forwarded to Maritime Rescue Coordination Centres (MRCCs) under the Indian Coast Guard (ICG), facilitating coordinated search and rescue operations.

Widespread Use: Over 20,000 DATs were deployed and utilized for distress communication.

Evolution to DAT-SG

- **Technological Advancements:** ISRO leveraged advancements in satellite communication and navigation to create the second-generation DAT (DAT-SG).
- **Acknowledgement Feature:** DAT-SG now includes an acknowledgement feature, providing assurance to fishermen that their distress alert has been received and that help is on the way.
- **Two-Way Communication:** In addition to sending distress signals, DAT-SG can receive messages from control centers. This allows the transmission of advance alerts regarding adverse weather conditions, cyclones, tsunamis, or other emergencies, enabling fishermen to make informed decisions for their safety.
- **Enhanced Fishing Zone Information:** DAT-SG also disseminates information about potential fishing zones to fishermen at regular intervals, optimizing their catch and conserving time and fuel.
- **Mobile Connectivity:** DAT-SG can be connected to mobile phones via Bluetooth, and messages can be displayed in the fishermen's native language using a dedicated mobile app.

Central Control and Coordination

- **Sagarmitra Network:** The central control station, INMCC, employs a web-based network management system called Sagarmitra. This system maintains a database of registered DAT-SGs and facilitates real-time access for MRCCs.

- **Real-time Coordination:** Sagarmitra enables Indian Coast Guard personnel to swiftly respond to distress calls without delay, enhancing search and rescue operations.
- **Operational 24/7:** DAT-SG services are available round-the-clock, ensuring continuous support to fishermen facing emergencies at sea.

Earthquake and Tsunami strikes Central Japan

Context: On January 1, 2024, a 7.5-magnitude earthquake hit Ishikawa prefecture in Japan, triggering tsunami waves over a meter high

Japan's Geographical Vulnerability

- Japan's geographical vulnerability, particularly concerning plate tectonics, is a critical aspect of its environmental and disaster management challenges.
- The country's location at the convergence of several major tectonic plates makes it highly susceptible to seismic activities.

Here's a detailed look at how plate tectonics contribute to Japan's geographical vulnerability:

[1] Convergent Plate Boundaries:

- **Pacific Ring of Fire:** Japan is located on the Pacific Ring of Fire, an area with a high level of seismic activity due to the presence of numerous tectonic plate boundaries.
- **Plates Involved:** The primary tectonic plates interacting near Japan are the Pacific Plate, the Philippine Sea Plate, the Eurasian Plate, and the North American Plate.
- **Subduction Zones:** The Pacific and Philippine Sea plates are subducting beneath the Eurasian and North American plates. This subduction process is a significant source of seismic activity, including powerful earthquakes and volcanic eruptions.

[2] Earthquake Activity:

- **Frequent Earthquakes:** The movement of these plates results in frequent earthquakes. Japan experiences thousands of tremors annually, ranging from minor to catastrophic.
- **Major Earthquakes:** Historical events like the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and the 1995 Great Hanshin Earthquake demonstrate the potential for massive destruction and loss of life due to Japan's tectonic setting.

[3] Tsunami Risk:

- **Generation of Tsunamis:** Earthquakes occurring under the sea or along the coast can displace large volumes of water, leading to tsunamis. The 2011 tsunami, triggered by a massive undersea earthquake, caused widespread devastation and the Fukushima nuclear disaster.
- **Coastal Impact:** Japan's extensive coastline makes it particularly vulnerable to tsunamis, which can arrive within minutes of an undersea earthquake, leaving little time for evacuation.

[4] Volcanic Activity:

- **Volcanic Eruptions:** The subduction of the Pacific and Philippine Sea plates not only causes earthquakes but also contributes to significant volcanic activity. Magma generated by the melting of the subducted plate rises to the surface, leading to volcanic eruptions.
- **Active Volcanoes:** Japan has over 100 active volcanoes, a direct result of its tectonic setting. Eruptions pose risks to nearby populations and can disrupt air travel and local economies.

[5] Geological Complexity:

- **Intersecting Faults:** The interaction of multiple tectonic plates creates a complex network of faults, increasing the unpredictability and variability of seismic events.
- **Diverse Seismic Phenomena:** This complexity leads to a range of seismic phenomena, including deep-focus earthquakes, which occur at greater depths and can affect broader areas.

Kyrgyzstan declares Snow Leopard as National Symbol

Context: Kyrgyzstan, a Central Asian country, has declared the snow leopard as its national symbol.

About Snow Leopard

Details	
Habitat	Mountainous regions of Central and Southern Asia; in India: western and eastern Himalayas.
Indian Geographical Range	Western Himalayas (J&K, Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand) and Eastern Himalayas (Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh).
Project Snow Leopard (2009)	Aims to strengthen wildlife conservation in the Himalayan high altitudes, involving local communities.
Conservation Status	IUCN Red List: Vulnerable CITES: Appendix I Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 (India): Schedule I
India's Conservation Efforts	Flagship species for high altitude Himalayas. Part of GSLEP Programme since 2013. Himalaya Sanrakshak community programme (2020). National Protocol on Snow Leopard Population Assessment (2019) SECURE Himalaya project (GEF-UNDP funded). Listed in 21 critically endangered species for recovery by MoEF&CC. Conservation breeding at Padmaja Naidu Himalayan Zoological Park.
GSLEP Programme	Inter-governmental alliance of 12 snow leopard countries (India, Nepal, Bhutan, China, Mongolia, Russia, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan), focusing on ecosystem value awareness.
Living Himalaya Network Initiative	WWF's initiative across Bhutan, India (North-East), and Nepal for conservation impact in the Eastern Himalayas.

Significance of the Snow Leopard

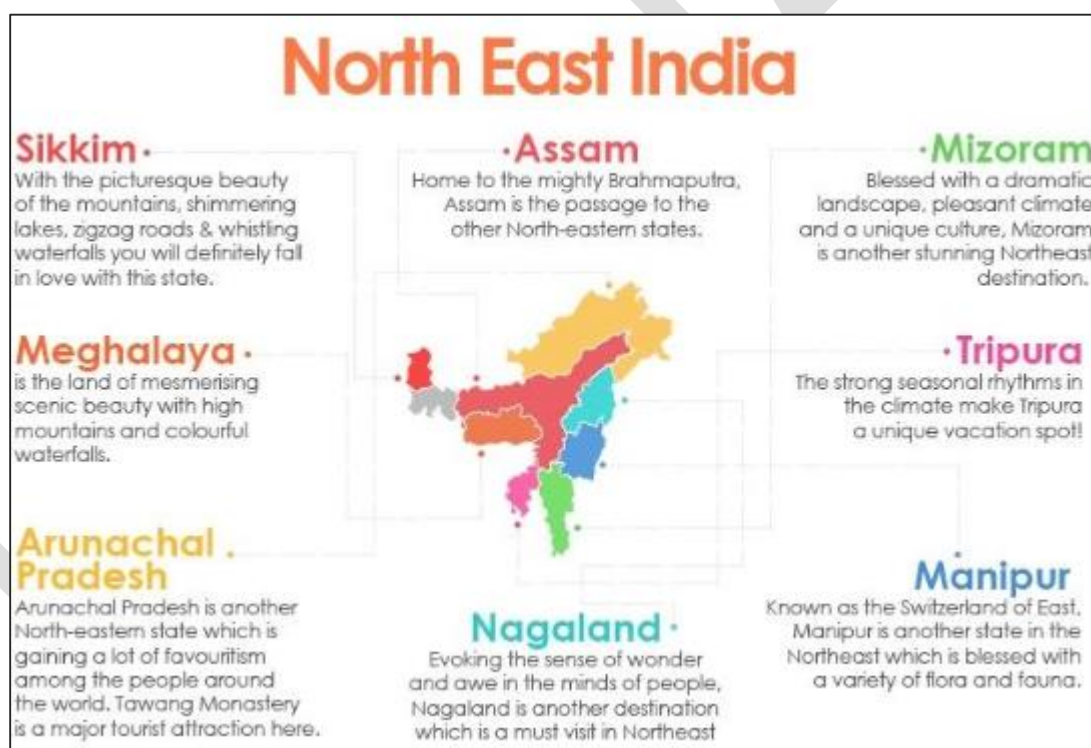
- The snow leopard symbolizes the health and stability of mountain ecosystems, which cover a significant portion of the global territory.
- The snow leopard has been a totem animal in ancient Kyrgyz culture, associated with the legendary figure Manas.
- The harmony between humans and nature, symbolized by the snow leopard, is portrayed in Chyngyz Aitmatov's novel "When Mountains Fall."

POLITY

How the Northeast was 'invented', 52 years ago?

Context: On December 30, 1971, two pivotal laws were enacted, reshaping the administrative landscape of Northeast India.

These laws marked a transition from the traditional unit of Assam to the broader concept of 'Northeast India'.



Formation and Composition of Northeast India

- **States in the Northeast:** The region officially includes Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, and Tripura, under the North-Eastern Council.
- **Pre-Independence Structure:** Before Independence, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, and Mizoram were part of colonial Assam. Manipur and Tripura were princely states with

British political officers, while Sikkim, under British paramountcy, became an independent country in 1947 and was annexed by India in 1975. Sikkim joined the North-Eastern Council in 2001.

Colonial Context and Frontier Province Dynamics

Assam as a Frontier Province: Colonial Assam was a frontier province in British India, akin to the North West Frontier Province (now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan).

Administrative Divisions: The province was divided into 'settled districts' (like present-day Assam and Sylhet in Bangladesh) and 'excluded areas' or 'Hill areas' (like modern-day Arunachal Pradesh and parts of Nagaland).

Post-Independence Security and Administrative Shifts

- **Unique Post-1947 Challenges:** After 1947, the region's borders became largely international, with a narrow land corridor connecting it to the rest of India.
- **Creation of Nagaland:** The state of Nagaland was created in 1963, following the Sino-Indian War of 1962, as part of efforts to integrate the Naga people into the Indian state.

North-Eastern Areas (Reorganisation) Act of 1971

- **Statehood and Union Territories:** Manipur and Tripura were elevated to statehood, Meghalaya was formed from Assam, and Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh were established as union territories, later becoming states in 1987.
- **Strategic Reorganization:** This Act represented a strategic shift from the colonial frontier governance to a modern state structure.

Concept and Implications of 'Northeast India'

- **Directional Naming and Identity:** The term 'Northeast India' highlights the region's distinct identity and its hierarchical relation to the Indian heartland.
- **Racial and Cultural Dimensions:** The term 'Northeasterner' has often led to racial stereotyping and issues of identity and recognition.

Conclusion

- **Complex Administrative Evolution:** The formation of Northeast India is a testament to the region's complex history and the Indian state's response to unique geopolitical challenges.
- **Continued Struggle for Recognition:** Despite legislative milestones, Northeast India continues to face challenges in national integration, identity politics, and equitable development.

In news: Electoral Bond Scheme

Context: The government has announced a fresh tranche of electoral bond sales for a 10-day period starting through the authorised branches of State Bank of India across the country.

About the Electoral Bond Scheme

Definition	Banking instruments for political party donations with donor anonymity.
Launch	2017-18 Union Budget
Purchase Method	Available to Indian citizens and Indian-incorporated companies from select State Bank of India branches. Can be bought digitally or via cheque.
Donation Process	Purchasers can donate these bonds to eligible political parties of their choice.
Denominations	Available in multiples of ₹1,000, ₹10,000, ₹10 lakh, and ₹1 crore.
KYC Requirements	Purchasers must fulfill existing KYC norms and pay from a bank account.
Lifespan of Bonds	Bonds have a 15-day life to prevent them from becoming a parallel currency.
Identity Disclosure	Donors contributing less than ₹20,000 need not provide identity details like PAN.
Redemption	Electoral Bonds can be encashed only by eligible political parties through an Authorized Bank.
Eligibility of Parties	Only parties meeting specific criteria, including securing at least 1% of votes in the last General Election, can receive Electoral Bonds.
Restrictions Lifted	Foreign and Indian companies can now donate without disclosing contributions as per the Companies Act.
Objective	To enhance transparency in political funding and ensure funds collected by political parties are accounted or clean money.

Kapil Sibal writes: The Collegium system has failed India

Context: The author highlights the challenges faced by the Indian judiciary, emphasizing the need for unbiased judges and a political system that separates religion from politics. The use of religious sentiments for divisive purposes is criticized, calling for a transparent and merit-based judicial appointment system.

Key Highlights:

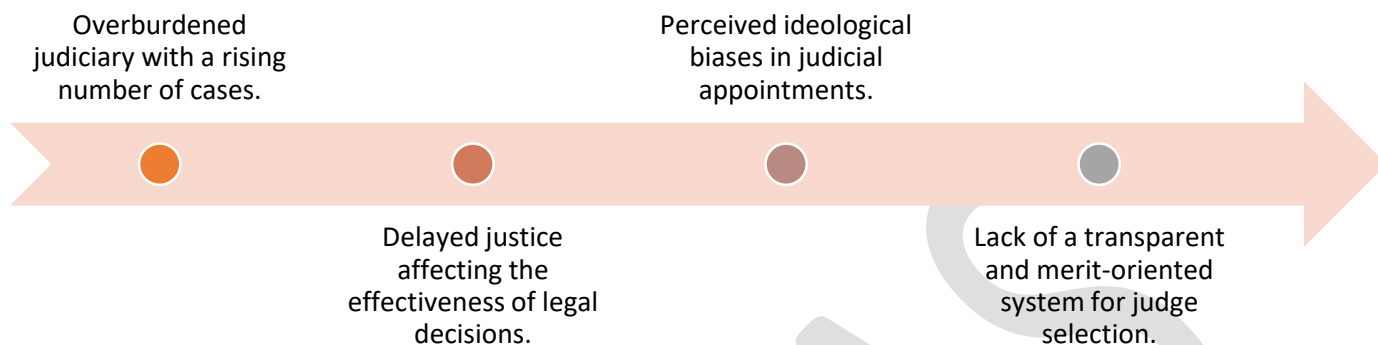
Judicial challenges in handling a growing population and increasing litigations.

Delayed justice in the Supreme Court, impacting the relevance of decisions.

Concerns about the quality of judges and perceived ideological alignments in appointments.

Critique of the current collegium system and its lack of transparency.

Key Challenges:



Key Terms:

- Collegium System: The system of appointing judges through a committee of senior judges.
- Ideological Alignment: Alleged connections between judges and specific political or religious ideologies.
- Judicial Hierarchy: The levels of the judicial system, with the Supreme Court being the highest.

Key Examples and References:

- Reference to the Chief Justice addressing dormant cases but acknowledging the urgency needed.
- Critique of the appointment of judges based on perceived proximity to political power.

Key Facts and Data:

- Increase in litigants seeking justice due to a burgeoning population.
- Delayed hearings and decisions in the Supreme Court.
- Issues with the current system of appointing judges.

Critical Analysis:

The author criticizes the judiciary's current state, highlighting issues of delayed justice, ideological biases, and the failure of the collegium system. Emphasis is placed on the need for transparency and merit in the appointment process.

Way Forward:

- Reforming the judicial appointment process to ensure transparency and meritocracy.
- Addressing the backlog of cases to expedite justice delivery.
- Advocating for a political system that separates religion from politics to avoid divisive agendas.

Raj Bhavan needs radical reforms

Context: The conduct of Governors in Opposition-ruled States, exemplified by the recent actions of Kerala's Governor, raises concerns about adherence to constitutional morality, necessitating a reevaluation of their roles and legal consequences.

Key Highlights:

Kerala's Governor, Arif Mohammed Khan, faced criticism for instructing the removal of posters and accusing the Chief Minister of supporting activists against him.

Breaches of protocol, such as an unannounced tour of Kozhikode, added to the growing trend of Governors' controversial actions.

While the Constitution outlines functions, powers, and duties of Governors, the concept of constitutional morality should guide their public behavior.

Reference to NCT of Delhi v. Union of India highlights the responsibility of individuals occupying constitutional offices.

Article 361 provides limited immunity for Governors, exempting them from court scrutiny for official acts.

Rameshwar Prasad v. Union of India establishes judicial review for cases of Governor's motivated and whimsical conduct, suggesting accountability.

Kaushal Kishor v. State of Uttar Pradesh clarifies that public functionaries' freedom of expression is subject to reasonable restrictions.

Ministers can be held personally liable for statements inconsistent with government views, emphasizing personal responsibility.

Sarkaria Commission Report (1988) criticized Governors for lacking impartiality and becoming agents of the Union, emphasizing the need for detachment.

Justice M.M. Punchhi Commission (2010) recommended restricting Governors from roles not envisaged by the Constitution, citing potential controversies.

Critical Analysis:

- The Governor's actions in Kerala highlight a deviation from democratic norms and raise questions about the democratic legitimacy of gubernatorial decisions.
- Commission reports expose longstanding issues with Governor appointments and their roles, calling for systemic changes.

Way Forward:

- Future regimes should consider amending Article 155 to ensure Chief Minister consultation in Governor appointments, addressing recommendations from the Sarkaria report.
- Establishment of an independent body for Governor selection, with input from the Chief Justice of India, may enhance the quality of the selection process.
- Legal prohibitions against Governors' further rehabilitation in official capacities could contribute to improving the functioning of Raj Bhavans.

Debate on VVPAT Verification in Indian Elections

Context: Free and Fair Elections.

Recent Developments: A political alliance, has requested a meeting with the Election Commission of India (ECI) to discuss and suggest changes regarding the use of Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) machines.

Proposal: The alliance proposes that VVPAT slips be handed to voters to place in a separate ballot box, with 100% counting of these slips, to enhance trust in the electoral process.

What are VVPATs?

Function and Purpose: VVPAT machines, attached to EVMs, print a slip showing the voter's choice, allowing voters to verify their vote for seven seconds before the slip drops into a secured box.

Development History: The concept emerged in 2010, leading to the creation of prototypes by Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) and Electronics Corporation of India (ECIL). After trials and feedback, the design was approved in February 2013.

Implementation: The Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961, were amended to incorporate VVPATs. They were first used in Nagaland's Noksen Assembly constituency in 2013 and were implemented in all polling stations by the 2019 Lok Sabha elections.

Current VVPAT Slip Counting Protocol

- **EC's Decision Process:** In 2018, the ECI consulted the Indian Statistical Institute (ISI) to determine a statistically robust sample size for VVPAT slip verification.
- **Existing Protocol:** Initially, VVPAT slips of one randomly selected polling station per Assembly constituency were counted. This was increased to five polling stations per Assembly seat after a Supreme Court judgment in 2019.
- **ISI Recommendation:** The ISI suggested counting VVPAT slips from 479 EVMs to ensure a high confidence level that the proportion of defective EVMs is less than 2%.

Election Commission's Stance

- **Current Verification Adequacy:** The EC argues that the current practice of verifying VVPATs from five polling stations per Assembly seat exceeds the ISI's recommendation.

- **Reliability Record:** The EC highlights that in past elections, no cases of vote misattribution were detected in VVPAT checks, attributing discrepancies to human errors.
- **Concerns over Full Verification:** The EC views 100% VVPAT verification as regressive, time-consuming, and prone to human error, akin to manual ballot voting.

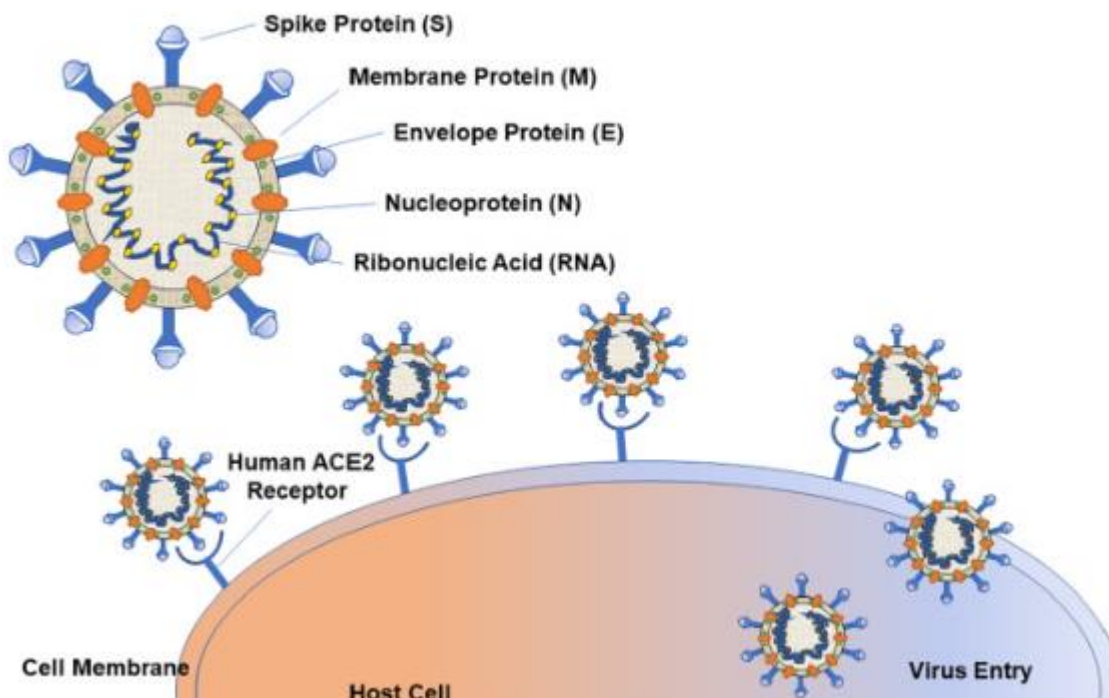
Conclusion

- **Debate on Electoral Integrity:** The discussion around VVPAT verification reflects ongoing concerns about ensuring electoral integrity and public trust in the voting process.
- **Challenges Ahead:** Balancing the need for efficient electoral processes with the imperative of maintaining voter confidence remains a critical challenge for the ECI and political parties in India.

GOVERNANCE

Responding to the new COVID-19 sub-variants

Context: Dr. Chandrakant Lahariya discusses the emergence of the JN.1 sub-variant of SARS-CoV-2, highlighting its classification as a Variant of Interest (VoI). He emphasizes the need for ongoing genomic sequencing and data tracking while reassuring that, as of now, there's no evidence of increased severity or immune escape. The central idea is to approach COVID-19 like any respiratory illness, maintaining standard preventive measures and avoiding unnecessary concerns.



Key Highlights:

- Dr. Chandrakant Lahariya, a medical doctor with extensive WHO experience, addresses the emergence of the JN.1 sub-variant of the Omicron variant of SARS-CoV-2.
- Over 1,000 subvariants have been reported since the novel coronavirus outbreak in 2019.
- The designation of JN.1 as a Variant of Interest (VoI) prompts increased genomic sequencing for monitoring.

Key Examples and References:

- JN.1 is a subvariant of BA.2.86, part of the Omicron variant of SARS-CoV-2.
- Waste-water surveillance in some Indian cities suggested JN.1 circulated widely without a significant increase in reported cases.

Critical Analysis:

- Dr. Lahariya emphasizes the need for nuanced government responses, responsible citizen behavior, and clear science communication.
- The spike in COVID-19 cases may be due to increased testing, and deaths attributed to COVID-19 might be incidental in already sick individuals.

Key Challenges:

- Continuous tracking of virus variants is challenging due to the unpredictable nature of genetic changes.
- Distinguishing between inconsequential and significant genetic alterations requires careful assessment by

Way Forward:

- Handle SARS-CoV-2 like any other respiratory illness, focusing on standard public health measures.
- Individual and community levels should maintain routine activities, and school closure should not be considered in response to a COVID-19 case surge.
- Continuous surveillance, waste-water monitoring, and improved health facility services are essential for effective response.

Proposed Health Tax on Sugar and High-Calorie Foods in India

Context: Public health researchers recommend a health tax of 20% to 30% on sugar, sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs), and high-fat, salt, and sugar (HFSS) products, in addition to the existing GST.

Study Insights and Recommendations

Targeting Bulk Consumers

The study suggests taxing bulk consumers like confectionery manufacturers, rather than household sugar purchases.

Definition of Sugar

The study includes all forms of refined, unrefined sugar, and gur (brown cane sugar) used by manufacturers.

Impact on Manufacturers

Manufacturers, who buy up to 55% of India's annual sugar production, are expected to be more price-sensitive than households.

Tax Implications and Demand Reduction

- **Niti Aayog's Interest:** Niti Aayog is exploring the impact of health taxes and warning labels on food products to promote healthy eating in India.
- **Current and Proposed Tax Rates:** Sugar is currently taxed at 18% GST. The proposed additional tax could raise the total tax to 38-48%.
- **Price Elasticity Metric:** The study uses 'Price Elasticity' to estimate demand reduction. A 10% price increase could lead to a 2% demand reduction for households and a 13-18% reduction for manufacturers.
- **Health Tax on Beverages and HFSS Products:** A 10-30% health tax on SSBs could decrease demand by 7-30%, while a similar tax on HFSS products might lead to a 5-24% decline.

Government Revenue and Public Health Impact

- **Increase in Tax Revenues:** Additional taxes could boost government revenues by 12-200% across different scenarios.
- **Current Tax Rates on Products:** Sugar attracts 18% GST, SSBs 28% GST plus 12% cess, and HFSS products 12% GST.
- **Public Health Benefits:** Higher taxes on unhealthy foods could reduce obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, and certain cancers.

India's Sugar Consumption and Health Risks

India's Sugar Intake: India is the world's largest sugar consumer, with an average consumption of 25 kg per person per year, exceeding WHO recommendations.

Rise in Sugar-Related Health Issues: There has been a significant increase in the sale of aerated drinks and HFSS food products, contributing to obesity and diabetes.

Taxation and Reformulation

- **Encouraging Product Reformulation:** The proposed tax rate is linked to sugar volume, encouraging manufacturers to reduce sugar content in products.
- **Taxing Sugar Replacements:** The study also recommends taxing artificial sweeteners to prevent manufacturers from switching to cheaper, unhealthy alternatives.

Global Precedents and Outcomes

- **Health Tax Implementation Worldwide:** Over 70 countries, including Mexico, Chile, and South Africa, have implemented health taxes on sugar and related products.
- **Positive Outcomes in Mexico:** In Mexico, the taxation on SSBs led to decreased consumption of taxed beverages and a reduction in mean BMI among younger age groups.

Conclusion

- **Potential for Health Improvement:** Imposing a health tax on sugar and related products could significantly contribute to public health improvement in India.
- **Consideration of Economic Factors:** The success of such a policy will depend on balancing health benefits with economic impacts on consumers and manufacturers.

Kochi-Lakshadweep Islands Submarine Optical Fiber Connection (KLI-SOFC) Project

Context: The Prime Minister has inaugurated Kochi-Lakshadweep islands submarine optical fiber connection (KLI-SOFC) project.



About KLI-SOFC Project:

- The KLI-SOFC project extends submarine cable connectivity **from Kochi to eleven Lakshadweep Islands**, including Kavaratti, Agatti, and Minicoy.
- The project aims to **provide high-speed wireline broadband connectivity** through FTTH and 5G/4G Mobile networks to the Lakshadweep Islands population.
- **Funded by the Universal Services Obligation Fund (USOF)**, Department of Telecommunication.
- The total link distance of the project is **1,868 kms**.
- **Implementing agencies include BSNL** as the Project Executing Agency and M/s NEC Corporation India Pvt Ltd for contract work.

Benefits of the Project

- Contributes to 'Digital India' and 'National Broadband Mission', enabling e-governance projects in Lakshadweep.
- Boosts E-Governance, Tourism, Education, Health, Commerce, and Industries, potentially improving living standards and accelerating social and economic development.
- The bandwidth created will be available to all Telecom Service Providers (TSPs) to enhance telecom services in the Lakshadweep Islands.

Nationwide Transportation Strike: Protests against Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita

Context: The nationwide transportation strike entered its second day, causing huge disruptions across the country. The strike, involving truck, bus, and tanker drivers, is a protest against stringent regulations under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) for hit-and-run cases.

Background of the Strike: BNS Provisions

- **Implementation of BNS:** The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, which introduces tougher penalties for hit-and-run cases, has not yet been implemented.
- **Comparison with IPC:** The new law replaces Section 304A of the Indian Penal Code, which had a lesser punishment for causing death by negligence.
- **Section 106 Controversy:** Transporters are protesting Section 106 of the BNS, which increases punishment for rash and negligent driving to a maximum of 10 years.
- **Section 106(1) and 106(2):** These sections provide for punishments in hit-and-run cases, with Section 106(1) offering a lesser sentence for those who report accidents.
- **Abiding to Supreme Court Observations:** The increase in sentence duration to 10 years is based on the Supreme Court's recommendations for stricter actions against reckless drivers who flee accident scenes.

Protesters' Concerns and Demands

Fear of Unjust Punishments

Transport operators argue that the new law could lead to unfair punishments and expose drivers to mob violence.

Lack of Stakeholder Consultation

There is a sentiment that the law was passed without adequate discussion with relevant stakeholders.

Skepticism about Government Promises

All India Motor Transport Congress expressed doubts about the government's assurances, predicting fuel shortages and driver protests

Impact of the Strike

- **Widespread Disruptions:** The strike has significantly impacted transportation, especially in northern states like Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, and others, as well as West Bengal, Odisha, and southern states.
- **Fuel Shortages:** Long queues at petrol pumps have been reported, indicating a hit to fuel supply.

Conclusion

- **Continued Protests:** Despite some transport bodies calling off the strike, others continue to protest, affecting transportation and fuel supply.
- **Need for Dialogue:** The situation underscores the need for further dialogue between the government and transport stakeholders to address concerns and find a resolution.

Why is Upskilling necessary for the Rural Youth?

Context: Trend of Urbanization: Despite the UN's projection that nearly 50% of India's population will reside in urban areas by 2047, many rural youths express a preference to stay in their villages.

Life Skills Collaborative Discussion: A group discussion revealed that rural youth aspire to remain in their villages, highlighting the need to focus on those who choose not to migrate to urban areas.



Rural Income Sources and Occupational Shifts

- **Primary Livelihood:** Farming is the predominant source of income in rural areas, often supplemented by children working on family farms.
- **Agrarian Crisis Indicators:** A significant shift from agriculture to non-farming jobs is occurring, with National Sample Survey Office data showing 34 million farmers moving to other sectors between 2004-05 and 2011-12.

Strategies to Control Migration

- **Vocational Training:** Providing vocational training in rural areas is key to controlling migration. This training should focus on skills relevant to rural life, allowing youth to secure livelihoods within their communities.
- **Educational Aspirations:** Most rural students' aspirations are limited to opportunities within their village vicinity. Upskilling initiatives like Delhi's 'Skills On Wheel' should be made accessible in rural areas.

Current State of Vocational Education in Rural India



Industrial Training Institutes: While these institutes aim to upskill rural populations, they often lack placement opportunities.

Lack of Skill Development Focus: Rural education currently does not emphasize skill development, which is crucial for the majority of youth who depend on schools for life skills.



LSC Voices 2023 Survey Findings: The survey revealed that two-thirds of youth aged 19-22 had never taken any vocational training, with only 5% enrolled in such courses.

Improving Rural Education

- **Tailored Education:** Rural education should integrate technical and life skills, making them accessible through formal education.
- **International Examples:** Mexico's tele-schools and Bhutan's well-being-infused curriculum offer valuable models. Tele-schools provide value-based education, improving attitudes and aspirations, which can benefit the local economy.
- **Indian Initiatives:** Organizations like NIIT Foundation and Pratham Institute are providing upskilling opportunities in rural areas. Hybrid life skilling programs are offered, focusing on industry-specific skills and life skills.

Conclusion

- **Empowering Rural Youth:** By offering skills in areas like agricultural mechanisation, pollution monitoring, nursing, and digital technologies, rural India can enhance employability in both traditional and non-traditional trades.
- **Creating a Dynamic Economy:** Effective vocational training and education reforms can lead to a vibrant rural economy, where the aspirations of staying in villages are supported by sustainable livelihood opportunities.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Genocide Convention invoked in Israel-Palestinian War

Context: South Africa has petitioned the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to declare Israel in breach of the 1948 Genocide Convention.

Genocide Convention, 1948

Details	
Full Name	Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide
Adoption Date	December 9, 1948
Primary Aim	To prevent and punish the crime of genocide
Definition of Genocide	Acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial, or religious group
Key Provisions	Includes killing or causing harm to members of a group, deliberately inflicting destructive conditions, imposing measures to prevent births, and forcibly transferring children
Punishable Acts	Genocide, conspiracy, incitement, attempt, and complicity in genocide
Implementation and Enforcement	States must enact legislation to give effect to the Convention's provisions and provide penalties for perpetrators; Genocide recognized as a crime under international law
Historical Context	Created post-Holocaust and World War II as a global commitment against atrocities
Legal Framework Impact	Established legal basis for defining and prosecuting genocide, influencing international criminal law
India's Involvement	Ratified by India on August 27, 1959; Principles incorporated into India's domestic legal system

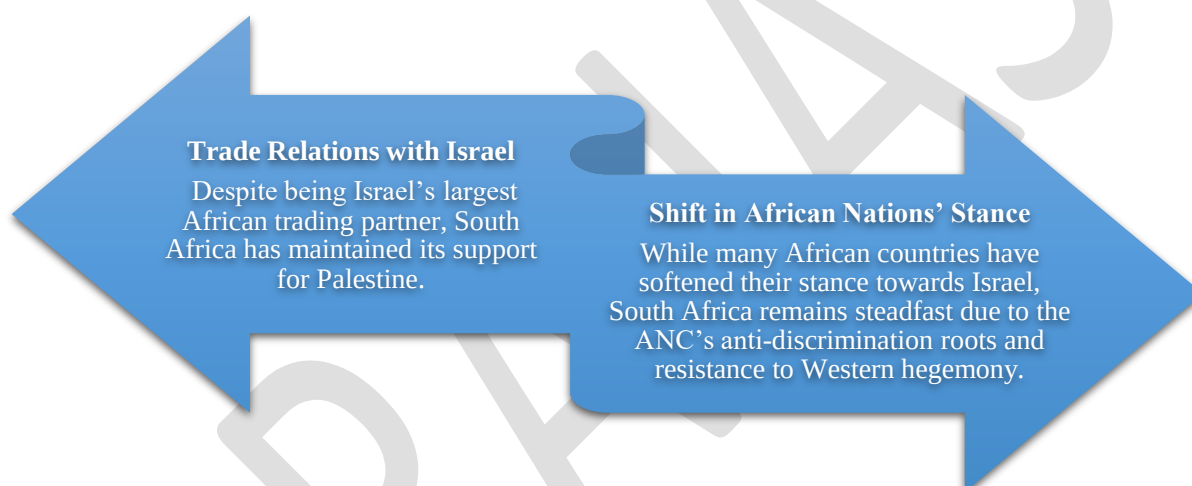
South Africa's Stance and Actions

- **Preventive Obligation:** Following its application to the ICJ, South Africa stated its obligation to prevent genocide, seeking urgent provisional measures to halt violence in Gaza.
- **Israel's Response:** Israel has strongly condemned South Africa's accusations, terming them as "blood libel."
- **Potential Impact of ICJ Ruling:** Even if the ICJ issues provisional measures, Israel, like Russia in the Ukraine case, may choose to ignore them.

Historical Roots of South Africa's Position

- **Longstanding Criticism of Israel:** South Africa has a history of criticizing Israel, including suspending diplomatic relations and expressing solidarity with Palestine.
- **Colonialism and Empathy for Palestine:** South Africa's own history of colonialism and apartheid has fostered empathy towards the Palestinian cause.
- **Influential Figures:** Leaders like Nelson Mandela have historically supported Palestinian rights.
- **Resistance to Western Influence:** South Africa's stance is partly influenced by a desire to resist Western-dominated worldviews, evident in its approach to global issues like the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

Economic and Political Considerations



Conclusion

- **Balancing Trade and Ideology:** South Africa's actions reflect a complex interplay of historical empathy, political ideology, and economic considerations in its foreign policy.
- **Global Implications:** This move at the ICJ underscores the ongoing tensions in international relations, particularly in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and broader geopolitical dynamics.

India, Pakistan conduct Annual Exchange of List of Nuclear Installations

Context: India and Pakistan has exchanged a list of their nuclear installations that cannot be attacked in case of an escalation in hostilities.

Non-Nuclear Aggression Agreement

- The Non-nuclear aggression agreement is a bilateral and nuclear weapons control treaty between India and Pakistan, on the reduction (or limitation) of nuclear arms.

- Both pledged not to attack or assist foreign powers to attack on each others nuclear installations and facilities.
- The treaty was **drafted in 1988**, and signed by PM **Rajiv Gandhi** and his counterpart **Benazir Bhutto** on 21 December 1988; it **entered into force on January 1991**.
- The treaty **barred its signatories from carrying out a surprise attack** (or to assist foreign powers to attack) on each other's nuclear installations and facilities.
- Starting in January 1992, India and Pakistan have **annually exchanged lists** of their respective military and civilian nuclear-related facilities.



Need for the treaty

- In 1986-87, the massive exercise, '**Brasstacks**' was carried out by the Indian Army, raising fears of an Indian attack on Pakistan's nuclear facilities.
- Since then, the Foreign ministries of both countries have been negotiating to reach an understanding towards the control of nuclear weapons.

Significance of the agreement

- The treaty barred its signatories from carrying out a surprise attack (or to assist foreign powers to attack) on each other's nuclear installations and facilities.
- The treaty provides a confidence-building security measure environment.

Other: Sharing of Prisoners information

- Both nations simultaneously share the list of prisoners in each other's custody.
- These lists are exchanged under the provisions of the **Agreement on Consular Access** signed in May 2008.
- Under this pact, the two countries should exchange comprehensive lists on January 1 and July 1 every year (i.e. twice a year).

Indian Society

India's Transition in Slum Definitions

Context: Research Citation: Nipesh Narayanan's research, published in the Economic & Political Weekly on October 21, 2023, delves into the changing conceptualization of slums in Indian parliamentary debates from 1953 to 2014.

Policy on Slums: These shifting narratives have significantly influenced government policies and approaches towards slums.

Evolution of Discourses on Slums

- **Parliamentary Debates Analysis:** Narayanan analyzed 1,228 debates in the Rajya Sabha and various policy documents, including Five-Year Plans, to trace the evolution of discourses surrounding slums.
- **Dynamic Definitions:** The study highlights the fluid nature of slum definitions and the tendency to overlook urban disparity as a causal factor in slum formation.

Eras of Changing Perspectives

1950s-1960s: Initially, slums were seen as a by-product of partition and rapid urbanization. The focus was on eradication due to health concerns and spatial constraints, side-lining socio-economic factors like migration. The Slum Areas Act of 1956 marked a significant shift, allowing government intervention in slum areas.

Early 1970s-Mid-1980s: The narrative shifted to viewing slums as necessary evils requiring development rather than eradication. Town planning emerged as a key tool, pushing slums to city peripheries and prioritizing basic amenities over demolition.

Mid-1980s-Late 1990s: With the National Commission on Urbanisation's report in 1985, cities and slums began to be seen as economic assets. This era saw a focus on housing policies and infrastructure development, with economic reasoning driving interventions.

2000s-2014: The 2001 Census provided comprehensive data on slums, leading to targeted schemes. Slums transitioned from social concerns to technical, economic objects. The focus was on upgradation strategies, legal rights, and property rights for slum dwellers.

Slum Formation and Government Response

- **Causality and Complexity:** The research identifies urban planning issues, population growth, land pressure, and housing affordability as key factors in slum formation.

- **Government Role:** The Union government's role shifted to funding State governments for urban improvement, with a focus on data-driven policies.

Technocratic Solutions and Challenges

- **Technological Reliance:** The increasing dependence on technological solutions for urban issues is evident in current government policies.
- **Critical Examination:** The article warns against using slums merely as a tool for anti-poverty policies and emphasizes understanding slum formation beyond numerical data.

Conclusion

- **Historical Insights:** Narayanan's analysis provides valuable insights into the historical shifts in government perceptions and actions towards slums.
- **Significance for Urban Studies:** This research contributes significantly to the understanding of urban dynamics, socio-economic inequalities, and the complexities of slum life in India.

Civil society under siege, in India

Context: The article discusses the threats faced by India's civic space, particularly organizations fighting against communalism. Emphasizes the importance of protecting constitutional freedoms.



Key Highlights:

- Constitutional freedoms are under siege in India's diverse and vibrant civil society.
- Organizations actively fighting communalism are facing severe attacks, affecting their funding and leadership.

- The state employs various instruments, including legal charges, amendments to laws, and tax-related measures, to curb civic space.
- Impact is significant on organizations supporting minority, Dalit, Adivasi rights, and equity promotion.

Key Challenges:

- High-intensity attacks leading to financial constraints and imprisonment for leaders of certain NGOs.
- Shrinking civic space even for neutral or non-communal organizations.
- Utilization of legal instruments like money laundering charges and investigations to intimidate NGOs.
- Amendments to laws, such as the FCRA, restricting access to foreign funds for NGOs.
- Intimidation of domestic donors through tax-related provisions.

Critical Analysis:

- The article presents a critical analysis of the state's tactics to limit civic space, affecting organizations fighting against communalism.
- It highlights the severity of attacks and the broader impact on democratic values.

Way Forward:

- Strengthening opposition and regional leaders who take a clear secular position.
- Mobilizing anti-communal and progressive civic space to safeguard democracy.
- Advocating for the protection of constitutional freedoms and reviewing stringent laws impacting NGOs.
- Raising awareness about the importance of civic space in preserving India's democracy.

Sci & Tech

Evolution of Genomic Medicine: Research to Mainstream Healthcare

Context: Over the past two decades, genomics and the use of genetic information in healthcare have undergone significant transformations.

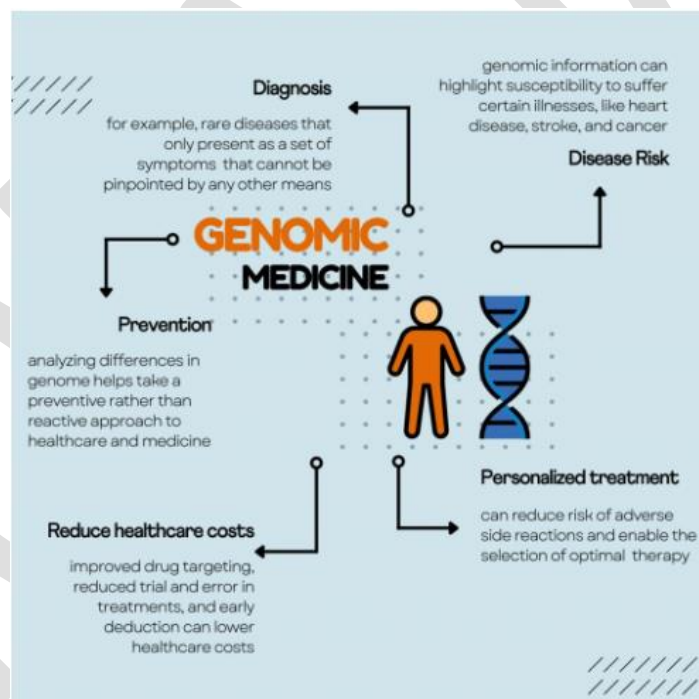
Once limited to major research centers, personal genome sequencing has become widely accessible, empowering individuals with detailed knowledge of their genetic makeup.

What is genome sequencing?

- Genome sequencing is the process of determining the complete DNA sequence of an organism's genome.
- The genome is the entire set of genetic material (DNA in the case of most organisms) that provides the instructions for building, maintaining, and functioning of the organism.
- Genome sequencing involves identifying the order of nucleotides (adenine, thymine, cytosine, and guanine) in an organism's DNA.

Applications of Personal Genome Sequencing

- **Disease Risk Assessment:** Personal genome sequencing can identify genetic variants associated with an increased risk of certain diseases, such as cardiovascular conditions, cancer, and neurodegenerative disorders.
- **Pharmacogenomics:** Personal genome sequencing helps predict how an individual will respond to specific medications, allowing for the customization of drug prescriptions based on genetic factors.
- **Cancer Genomics:** Personal genome sequencing of cancer cells helps identify specific mutations driving tumor growth.
- **Rare Genetic Disorders:** Personal genome sequencing is a powerful tool for diagnosing rare genetic disorders, particularly in cases where traditional diagnostic methods may be inconclusive.
- **Reproductive Health:** Couples planning to have children can undergo personal genome sequencing to assess the risk of passing on genetic conditions to their offspring.
- **Forensic Identification:** Personal genome sequencing can be used in forensics for human identification and the resolution of criminal investigations.
- **Research and Scientific Discovery:** Aggregated personal genomic data from large populations contribute to ongoing research, advancing our understanding of the genetic basis of diseases and human biology.



Case Study: Iceland's Genetics Research

- **Iceland's Unique Demographics:** Iceland's historical demographic isolation and early initiation of population-level genome sequencing have made it a focal point in genetics research.

- **Research on Lifespan and Genetic Variants:** A study in Iceland suggested that actionable incidental genetic variants could potentially improve lifespan, with significant findings related to cancer-related genotypes.

Future of Genome Sequencing and Healthcare

- **Increasing Accessibility:** As genome sequencing becomes more accessible and affordable, regular population-scale sequencing and newborn sequencing initiatives are becoming more feasible.
- **Benefits for Population Health:** Widespread implementation of these programs could provide medically actionable insights, enabling proactive and effective disease treatment and prevention.
- **Advancements in Technology:** Current genome sequencing technologies, often referred to as second-generation sequencing, have limitations in handling repetitive sequences and resolving structural variations. Third-generation sequencing technologies, such as single-molecule sequencing, are expected to overcome these challenges and provide longer read lengths, improving the accuracy and completeness of genome sequences.

Conclusion

- The advancements in genomics are paving the way for a more proactive and personalized approach to healthcare, with significant potential for disease prevention and management.

Parliament breach accused underwent Psychoanalysis

Context: The Delhi Police's use of psychoanalysis for assessing motives in the Parliament breach incident highlights its contemporary relevance.

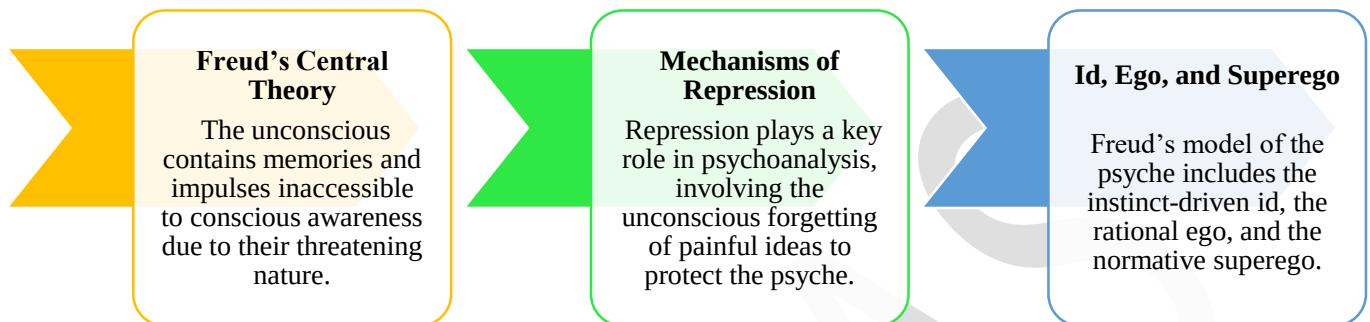


Origins of Psychoanalysis

- **Development by Freud:** Sigmund Freud, a Viennese psychiatrist, developed psychoanalysis as a modern Western system of psychotherapy.
- **Evolution over Time:** Initially a treatment for unexplained symptoms, psychoanalysis has evolved, influenced by various scientific disciplines.

- **Goal of Psychoanalysis:** It aims to enhance self-awareness by uncovering unconscious wishes and defenses.

Concept of the Unconscious



Fantasies, Defenses, and Resistance in Psychoanalysis

- **Role of Fantasies:** Fantasies, according to Freud, fulfill psychic needs and provide imaginary wish fulfillment.
- **Defense Mechanisms:** Intrapsychic processes like projection, reaction formation, and rationalization help avoid emotional pain.
- **Concept of Resistance:** Freud observed resistance in clients reluctant to engage in therapy, leading to the practice of free association.

Transference and Countertransference

- **Transference Dynamics:** Clients often project past relational templates onto the therapist, offering insights into their behavior.
- **Countertransference Issues:** Therapists' unresolved conflicts can affect their feelings towards clients, necessitating self-analysis.

Psychoanalysis as a Therapeutic Tool

- **Dream Interpretation:** Freud viewed dreams as forms of wish fulfillment, central to psychoanalytic therapy.
- **Making the Unconscious Conscious:** The goal is to bring unconscious drives into awareness to understand self-defeating behaviors.
- **Therapeutic Relationship:** The therapist-client relationship can provide new relational experiences, challenging maladaptive models.

Contemporary Psychoanalytic Practice

- **Shift to Shorter Sessions:** Modern psychoanalysis often involves fewer sessions per week, adapting to practical and individual needs.

- **Long-Term vs. Short-Term Therapy:** While some issues require long-term treatment, contemporary practice accommodates shorter, more focused consultations.

Conclusion

- **Enduring Relevance:** Despite its evolution, psychoanalysis remains a vital tool for understanding human behavior and mental health.
- **Adaptation and Integration:** Modern psychoanalytic practice has adapted to contemporary needs while retaining core principles.
- **Broader Applications:** Beyond therapy, psychoanalysis offers insights into various aspects of human behavior, as evidenced by its use in legal and investigative contexts.

Economics

India's 1991 Crisis and the RBI Governor's Role

Context:

- S. Venkitaramanan, former Governor of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), passed away, leaving behind a legacy of significant contributions.
- His tenure is marked by crucial interventions during India's economic crises and a commitment to open dialogue and innovative policies.

Navigating the Balance of Payments Crisis

- **Economic Turbulence in 1990:** India faced a severe balance of payments crisis due to reduced remittances and increased oil prices.
- **Critical Measures:** Under Venkitaramanan's leadership, the RBI took bold steps, including pledging gold reserves, to avert a default on international payments.
- **Impact of Gold Pledging:** This move, though criticized domestically, was crucial in maintaining India's international credibility and financial stability.

Role in Economic Reforms:

Import Compression Strategy

Venkitaramanan initiated a program of import compression, significantly reducing the current account deficit.

Foundation for Future Reforms

These measures laid the groundwork for the economic reforms introduced by the Narasimha Rao government and Dr. Manmohan Singh.



Challenges and Controversies

- **The Harshad Mehta Scam:** Venkitaramanan's tenure was marred by the securities scandal involving Harshad Mehta, overshadowing his earlier achievements.
- **Public Perception:** Despite his significant contributions, the public memory often overlooks his role in steering India through economic turmoil.

Remarkable Openness and Inclusivity

- **Engagement with Diverse Opinions:** Venkitaramanan was known for his openness to different viewpoints, engaging with economists and critics alike.
- **Innovative Approach to Policy Making:** His willingness to consider varied perspectives contributed to more inclusive and effective economic policies.

Legacy in the RBI and Beyond

- **Establishment of the Development Research Group:** Venkitaramanan's vision led to the creation of this group, aiming to foster interaction between the RBI and independent economists.
- **Influence on Current Economic Policies:** His belief in relying on India's intellectual resources continues to influence the RBI's approach, though challenges like inflation management persist.

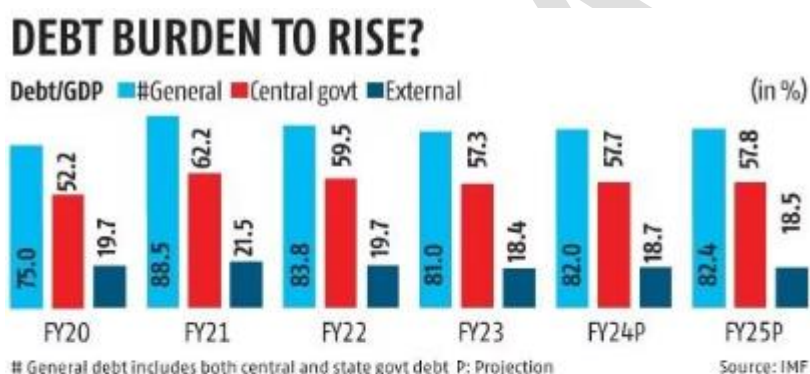
Conclusion

- **Enduring Impact:** S. Venkitaramanan's tenure as RBI Governor was marked by courageous decisions and a commitment to intellectual openness.

- **Remembering His Contributions:** While his term had its challenges, his role in safeguarding India's economy and fostering a culture of dialogue and research within the RBI remains a significant part of his legacy.
- **Inspiration for Future Leaders:** His approach to economic policy and management continues to serve as an inspiration for current and future leaders in the field.

The dispute on India's debt burden

Context: The article discusses concerns raised by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) regarding India's long-term debt sustainability and the reclassification of its exchange rate regime. It emphasizes the need for prudent debt management, considering potential adverse circumstances, and explores challenges India faces in credit ratings and fiscal responsibility.



POINT, COUNTERPOINT

Issue	IMF	INDIA
Govt securities	Sudden increase in sovereign risk premia may weigh on balance sheets, bank lending appetite	Concern far-fetched
Unsecured retail loans	Could stretch debt service capacity and pose balance sheet risks	Digitisation enabling credit growth, while mitigating credit risk
Inflation	High inflation or structural reforms may risk social discontent	No such evidence
Financial sector	External or domestic shock could lead to credit stress	Banking system in its best shape in over a decade

Key Highlights:

- IMF expresses concerns about India's long-term debt sustainability, projecting government debt to be 100% of GDP by 2028 under adverse circumstances.
- The reclassification of India's exchange rate regime by the IMF raises questions about the country's currency management.

- Challenges in managing public debt, maintaining credit ratings, and potential fiscal slippage in the face of increased subsidies and expenditure.

Key Challenges:

- Long-term risks associated with India's considerable investment needs for climate change mitigation and resilience to natural disasters, as highlighted by the IMF.
- India faces challenges in enhancing credit ratings despite being the fastest-growing major economy, attributed to weak fiscal performance and burdensome debt stock.
- The possibility of fiscal slippage in FY24 due to increased expenditure on employment guarantee schemes and subsidies, posing a challenge to fiscal correction.

Key Facts:

- Global public debt reached a record USD 92 trillion in 2022, with developing countries, including India, contributing almost 30%.
- Despite being the fastest-growing major economy, India's sovereign investment ratings have remained unchanged since August 2006.
- India's public debt-to-GDP ratio is higher than levels specified by the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act.

Critical Analysis:

The article critically examines the IMF's concerns and India's challenges in debt management, credit ratings, and fiscal responsibility. It discusses the potential impact of increased subsidies on fiscal slippage and the need for short-term fiscal correction.

Way Forward:

- Prudent debt management to address long-term sustainability concerns raised by the IMF.
- Enhance credit ratings by improving fiscal performance and addressing burdensome debt stock.
- Navigate short-term challenges, such as fiscal slippage, by adhering to fiscal correction paths and avoiding worst-case scenarios.