

Mains Master

Is the urban water system breaking?

Context

- India's urban centers, including Bengaluru, are facing severe water crises compounded by drought.

Background

- Major reservoirs in southern India are at 25% capacity or less.
- This is not the first time an Indian city has faced such a crisis, highlighting issues with water infrastructure.

What is the urban water crisis?

- A result of water mismanagement, fueled by unplanned urbanization and loss of natural resources.
- Bengaluru specifically has seen:
 - 1055% increase in concrete area over 5 decades.
 - 79% loss of water bodies.
 - 18% loss of vegetation.

Reasons behind the crisis

- Over-reliance on groundwater (40% of Bengaluru's supply).
- Loss of forest cover in the Cauvery watershed (down to 18%).
- Climate change impacts.
- Fragmented governance with multiple, poorly managed water agencies.

Is it man-made?

- Yes, primarily due to poor urban planning, destruction of natural water systems, and lack of integrated water management.

Can it be managed or improved?

- Experts argue yes, but it requires:**
 - Shift from water supply focus to a holistic water management approach.
 - Prioritizing rainwater harvesting, lake rejuvenation, and wastewater treatment.
 - Creation of effective river basin authorities.
 - Decentralized urban water management with a focus on ecological health.

Practical measures

- Rooftop rainwater harvesting.
- Lake rejuvenation and restoration of their interconnectivity to manage floods.
- Decentralizing water management and de-concretizing cities.

Way forward

- Institutional reforms to prioritize ecological water management.
- Accountability in governance and tackling corruption.
- Public awareness of the link between a healthy Cauvery River and Bengaluru's survival.
- Investment in expertise and sustainable solutions.
- Considering decentralized development models to reduce the burden on major cities.

Path to Viksit Bharat: why India should target per capita, not aggregate GDP

The Importance of GDP: Aggregate vs. Per Capita

Aggregate GDP and Global Influence

- A large aggregate GDP translates into geopolitical weight.

China surpassing the US in GDP will be significant, even if their populations and quality of life differ vastly.

- India could become the world's 3rd largest economy by 2028 with 6% annual growth, while Japan and Germany grow at only 2%.

Per Capita GDP: The True Measure of Development

- Per capita GDP divides economic output by population, revealing the average person's standard of living.
 - High per capita GDP in tiny nations like Monaco doesn't equal superpower status.
 - For India, with its huge population, per capita GDP is crucial for widespread development.

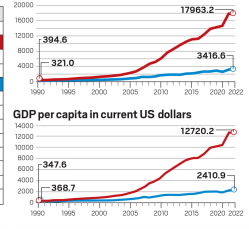
India's Growth: Potential and Progress

Growth of the Indian and Chinese economies (1990-2022)

World GDP rankings in descending order

1990	2000	2010	2013	2022
US	US	US	US	US
Japan	Japan	CHINA	CHINA	CHINA
Germany	Germany	Japan	Japan	Japan
France	UK	Germany	Germany	Germany
Italy	France	France	France	INDIA
UK	CHINA	UK	UK	--
Canada	Italy	Brazil	Brazil	--
Spain	Canada	Italy	Russia	--
Russia	Mexico	INDIA	Italy	--
Brazil	Brazil	--	INDIA	--
CHINA	Spain	--	--	--
INDIA	Korea	--	--	--
--	INDIA	--	--	--

GDP in current US dollars



Source: World Bank Database

The Impact of Cumulative Growth

- Even a seemingly modest 5% annual GDP growth rate results in the economy expanding by 4.32 times over 30 years ("the law of cumulative growth").
 - India has benefited from an average 6% annual GDP growth since 1990 – transformative, but less so than China's exceptional 8.9% rate over the same period.

India's Development Status

- China's per capita GDP grew from \$348 in 1990 (below India's) to \$12,720 in 2022. India's rose to \$2,411 over the same time span.
 - India is currently a "lower-middle income" country. To become "developed," it needs to reach the World Bank's "high income" threshold of \$13,846 per capita GNI.

The Goal: "Viksit Bharat" by 2047

- Aiming for a Higher Standard of Living**
 - The Modi government's target of a "developed India" by 2047 is fundamentally tied to raising per capita GDP towards the "high income" level.

Conclusion

India needs a two-pronged approach:


- Seek higher aggregate GDP growth for greater global influence.
- Prioritize a relentless focus on increasing per capita GDP to secure a significantly improved quality of life for its citizens.


Prelims booster


Govt. to record parents' religion to register births


Govt. body hikes prices of essential medicines again, says 'it's minuscule'


The recent minimal hike in essential medicine prices by the government, based on the Wholesale Price Index, has sparked concerns among pharmaceutical companies due to high input costs and India's reliance on China for raw materials. The article mentions the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) and the Drug Prices Control Order (DPCO). Here are the key points mentioned about them:


 NPPA (National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority) was established by the Government of India in 1997 under the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers to regulate drug pricing.


 NPPA's primary objective is to ensure the availability and accessibility of medicines at affordable prices for the general public.


 NPPA holds the authority to direct a price hike of over 10% for drugs and devices listed on the National List of Essential Medicines (NLEM) to maintain a balance between affordability and sustainability.


 NPPA actively monitors prices to prevent overcharging by pharmaceutical companies under the relevant provisions of DPCO 2013, safeguarding consumer interests.


 DPCO (Drug Prices Control Order) 2013 allows for the price regulation of scheduled formulations, ensuring that essential medicines remain within reach for the population.


 DPCO sets ceiling prices for essential medicines, preventing exorbitant pricing and ensuring that these medications are affordable for all segments of society.


 DPCO permits annual price revisions based on changes in the Wholesale Price Index (WPI), allowing for adjustments that reflect market dynamics while maintaining affordability for consumers.

 The Union Ministry of Home Affairs has introduced Model Rules that mandate parents to declare their religion separately when registering the birth of a child, a departure from the previous practice of only recording the family's religion. This initiative aims to enhance the demographic data collected during birth registration processes and ensure a more comprehensive record of religious affiliations within families.


 Under the proposed "Form No.1-Birth Report," parents will now be required to specify the religion of both the father and mother in addition to the child's family religion. This expansion of data collection is intended to provide a more detailed insight into the religious demographics of families and contribute to a more nuanced understanding of societal diversity.


 The birth and death database, as per the Registration of Births and Deaths (Amendment) Act, 2023, may serve as a crucial source for updating various official records, including the National Population Register, electoral rolls, Aadhaar numbers, ration cards, passports, and other essential documents. This integration of data aims to streamline administrative processes and ensure accurate demographic information across different government databases.


 The Act also mandates the digital registration of all births and deaths in the country through the Civil Registration System portal, facilitating a more efficient and centralized approach to maintaining vital records. The issuance of digital birth certificates under this system will serve as a comprehensive document for verifying the date of birth, particularly for services like admissions to educational institutions.


 Furthermore, the initiative emphasizes the importance of data sharing and coordination among Chief Registrars and Registrars to maintain a national-level database of registered births and deaths. This collaborative effort aims to enhance data accuracy, facilitate socio-economic planning, and evaluate the effectiveness of social sector programs based on vital statistics and demographic trends.


Next generation of medics to lead fightback against AMR

 The world is currently at a critical juncture where the effectiveness of powerful drugs is diminishing due to the development of resistance by pathogens, posing a significant threat to global health.


 The groundbreaking discovery of antibiotics in the 1920s marked a monumental advancement in the treatment of diseases that were once fatal. However, the overprescription and excessive use of antibiotics, including in the animal and poultry industries, have contributed to the emergence of antimicrobial resistance (AMR).


 India is grappling with a substantial burden of AMR, driven by various factors such as a high prevalence of infectious diseases, inadequate infection prevention practices, a strained public health system, widespread availability of antibiotics without prescriptions, and limited surveillance mechanisms to track drug-resistant patterns and consumption.


 In response to the escalating challenge of AMR, a collaborative initiative between the AMR Declaration Trust and Rotaract Medicrow has been launched to equip the next generation of medical professionals with cutting-edge stewardship practices through education and practical integration.


 The project 'Prescriber Today, Steward Tomorrow' underscores the importance of early education in medical training to cultivate a future healthcare landscape where antimicrobial stewardship is not only encouraged but deeply ingrained in healthcare practices.


55 companies' electoral bond donations topped the 7.5% cap in 2022-24

 55 companies exceeded the 7.5% cap on electoral bond donations in 2022-24, with a total amount donated above the cap reaching ₹1,377.9 crore


 The Supreme Court's February 15 verdict deemed the deletion of a provision allowing unlimited corporate contributions to political parties as violative of the Indian constitution


 Analysis of electoral bond data from 385 companies revealed that 55 firms surpassed the 7.5% cap, contributing ₹1,377.9 crore above the limit


 The BJP received the highest amount of electoral bond donations, with 71% of the total donations amounting to ₹1,414 crore


 The analysis conducted by The Hindu and an independent research team utilized bond data and financial information from 221 of the 385 firms


How are symbols allotted to political parties?

 The allocation of symbols to political parties is a critical process overseen by the Election Commission of India (ECI) in accordance with the Election Symbols (Reservation and Allotment) Order, 1968. This order outlines the guidelines for assigning symbols to parties and candidates participating in elections, ensuring a fair and organized electoral process.

 To be recognized as a 'national' or 'state' party, specific criteria must be met, such as winning a certain number of seats in the Lok Sabha or Legislative Assembly or securing a percentage of votes in a general election. Symbols are allotted to parties and candidates based on these criteria, as stipulated in the Symbols Order, to maintain transparency and consistency in the electoral system.

 Symbols hold significant importance in the voting process, particularly in a diverse democracy like India where a considerable portion of the population may be illiterate. These symbols aid voters in identifying their preferred candidates on the ballot, simplifying the voting process and ensuring clarity in candidate selection.

 Registered but unrecognized parties have the opportunity to receive a common symbol during elections if they fulfill specific requirements, such as contesting in a minimum number of constituencies. This provision allows smaller parties to participate effectively in the electoral process and ensures equal representation on the ballot.

 The allocation of symbols operates on a 'first-come-first-served' basis, requiring parties to apply for symbols within a designated timeframe. This process ensures that symbols are assigned in an orderly manner, preventing conflicts and ensuring that each party receives a fair opportunity to select their preferred symbol for representation.