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CURRENT AFFAIRS Handout

29th July 2025



CONTEXT: The write up highlights the backlog of cases at various courts in india leading to "a Long wait for Justice".

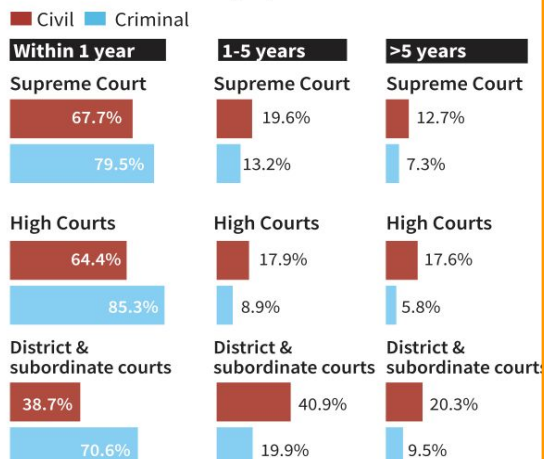
Vital Stats

- **Acc. to National Judicial Data Grid:**
 - **Supreme Court** – Over 86,700 cases are pending
 - **High Courts** – over 63.3 lakh cases
 - **District and subordinate courts** – 4.6 crore cases
- **Criminal cases**, generally considered as offences against the State, **are resolved faster than civil ones**, such as property, family or contractual disputes. (**Chart 1**)
- **Real concern lies in civil litigation at the district level**, which handles the bulk of India's pending cases.

Chart 1: Number of pending cases across courts in crore, as per latest data



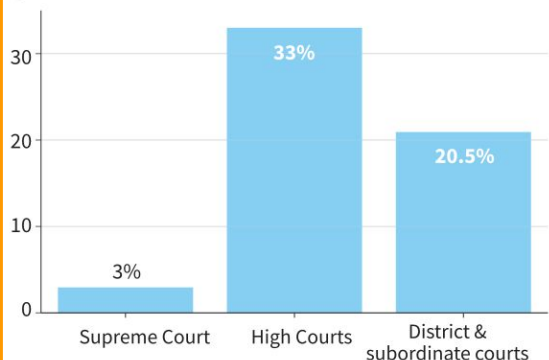
Chart 2: Time taken to resolve/dispose of cases across courts in civil and criminal cases, as per latest data



Reasons

- **Shortage of Judges:**
 - functions at just **79% of its capacity** (Out of 26,927 sanctioned posts, **5,665 are vacant**)
 - At full sanctioned strength – **19 judges per 10 lakh population** v/s 1987 **Law Commission's recommendation of 50**.
- **Less working days:**
 - SC works 188 days/ year
 - **Malimath Committee** – 206 days
- **Adjournment culture:**
 - no clear timelines for filings, witness examinations, or hearings.
- **Filing of Frivolous Cases:**
 - Supreme Court imposes ₹5 lakh fine for 'frivolous' PIL challenging Charles Darwin's and Albert Einstein's conclusions.
- **Government Litigation:** Accounts for **50% of pending cases** (tax/land or Service disputes).
- **Delays in Evidence Collection:** Lack of forensic labs and slow investigations prolong trials (E.g., Aarushi Talwar Case).

Chart 3: The % of vacant posts of judges across courts, as per latest data



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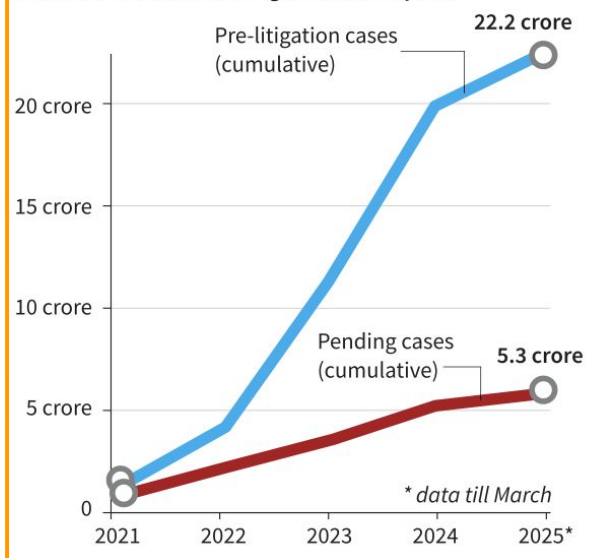
Impacts

- **Affects Constitutional rights:**
 - **Article 21** – Hussainara Khatoon case (1979) recognised the right to a speedy trial.
 - **Article 39A:** To secure equitable access to justice for all
- **Black Coat Syndrome**
- **Weakens Rule of Law**
- **Burden on Judges:**
 - **Department of Justice** – 25,600 judges to hear over 4.7 crore pending cases in Indian courts as of **May 2022**.
- **Overcrowded Prisons:**
 - **Prison Statistics 2020:** undertrials accounted for **76% of the total inmates** in around 1,300 prisons.
- **GDP Loss:** Judicial delays cost **1.5% of GDP annually** – Bengaluru-based DAKSH's State of the Indian Judiciary report, 2016.
- **Judicial evasion:**
 - petitions questioning electoral bonds were filed in 2018 – judgement in 2024.

Steps Taken

- **E-Courts Project**
- **Fast-Track Courts:** December 2023, 757 FTSCs including 411 exclusive POCOS (e-POCOS) Courts.
- **National Litigation Policy (2010)** – aimed to reduce government cases.
- **Encouraging Alternative Dispute Resolution**
- **Financial Penalties on Frivolous Litigation:** Discourages meritless cases
 - **Supreme Court imposes ₹5 lakh fine for 'frivolous' PIL** challenging Charles Darwin's and Albert Einstein's conclusions.

Chart 4: Cumulative number of cases disposed of in National Lok Adalats during the last four years



Way Forward

- **Timely appointment of judges**
- Supreme Court even suggested **using retired judges as ad hoc appointees in High Courts**
- **Split the Supreme Court into Two Divisions:** The Tenth Law Commission – Constitutional Division and the Legal Division
- **Increase the number of Workdays:** **Malimath Committee** – 206 days
- **Encourage ADR mechanism:** civil and commercial disputes
- **Establishment of All India Judicial Service**

Mains Practice Question

“Judicial delays in India not only undermine public trust in the legal system but also impose significant economic and social costs. Critically examine the causes of judicial delays in India and suggest comprehensive measures to address the issue.”

(15 Marks, 250 words)



CONTEXT: NEP has completed 5 years.

About National Education Policy 2020

- **Ministry of Human Resource Development** had constituted a Committee for drafting the new education policy (**Chairman: Dr. K. Kasturirangan**) in June 2017.
- The NEP **replaced** the **National Policy on Education, 1986**.
- It is country's **third such policy** since Independence.
- **Emphasis:** development of the **creative potential of each individual**.

What has worked ?

- **School curriculum is changing, slowly:** The 10+2 system has been replaced with a new structure — foundational (pre-primary to class 2), preparatory (classes 3-5), middle (6-8), and secondary (9-12).

- **NCERT has produced new textbooks for classes 1-8 based on this framework.**
 - New books for classes 9-12 are expected next.
- **Making pre-primary learning universal by 2030:**
 - NCERT's Jaadui Pitara learning kits
 - Women and Child Development Ministry has issued a national ECCE curriculum.
- **National focus for foundational skills: NIPUN Bharat**, launched in 2021
 - A recent government survey found average scores were 64% for language and 60% for math.
- **Credit-based flexibility:**
 - Academic Bank of Credits
 - National Credit Framework for school students

NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY 2020



Universalization of Education from pre-school to secondary level with **100% GER in school education by 2030**



GER in higher education to be raised to **50% by 2035**; **3.5 crore seats** to be added in higher education

No rigid separation between academic streams, extracurricular, vocational streams in schools

NEP 2020 will bring **2 crore** out of school children back into the main stream

Vocational Education to start from **Class 6 with Internships**

New 5+3+3+4 school curriculum with **12 years** of **schooling** and **3 years** of **Anganwadi/Pre-schooling**

Teaching upto at least **Grade 5** to be in **mother tongue/regional language**



CONTEXT: NEP has completed 5 years.

- **Common test for college entry:** Common University Entrance Test (CUET), introduced in 2022.
- **Indian campuses abroad and vice versa:** IIT Madras, IIT Delhi, and IIM Ahmedabad have set up international campuses in Zanzibar, Abu Dhabi, and Dubai respectively.

What's in progress?

- **Changes in board exams:** allow class 10 students to sit for board exams twice – Karnataka
- **Holistic report cards:** PARAKH, a unit under NCERT
- **Slow progress for four-year UG degrees:** Kerala has followed
- **Mother tongue in classrooms:**
 - mother tongue as the medium of instruction till at least class 5
 - NCERT is working on textbooks in more Indian languages.

What's stuck and why?

- **Three-language formula:**
 - **Tamil Nadu**, which follows a Tamil-English model, sees this as an attempt to impose Hindi.
- **Teacher education overhaul:**
 - National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education, due in 2021, is yet to be released.
- **UGC's proposed successor delayed:** Higher Education Commission of India
- **No breakfast in schools yet:**
 - 2021, the Finance Ministry rejected the Education Ministry's proposal to add breakfast for pre-primary and elementary classes.

- **Policy divide between Centre and states:**
 - MoUs with the Centre to set up PM-SHRI schools
 - Centre has withheld Samagra Shiksha funds

Other issues

- **Fragmented Learning under Credit-Based Mobility**
- **Syllabus Truncation:** For instance, complex literary works like Walt Whitman's "Passage to India" are taught only in fragments
- **Dilution of Core Disciplines**
 - Economics Honours at St. Xavier's University, only one out of eight papers focuses directly on the core subject, affecting domain expertise.
- **Excessive Assessment Load**
- **Digital Divide**

Way Forward

- **Cooperative federalism**
- **Address logistics challenges**
- **Enact Higher Education Commission of India bill**
- **Strike a balance b/w domain expertise & Multidisciplinary approach**
- **Improve digital infrastructure in rural areas**

Mains Practice Question

"The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 aims to transform the Indian education system through flexibility, multidisciplinary learning, and technology integration. However, its implementation has raised concerns about dilution of academic rigor, digital divide, and resource constraints. Critically examine the progress made and the key challenges in the implementation of NEP 2020."

(15 Marks, 250 words)



Syllabus: GS 3: Climate Change
Newspaper: Indian Express, Page No. 11

FOR ONCE, A ruling of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) at The Hague is making waves in Hyderabad. In a rare instance of policy resonance, the advisory opinion on climate change delivered by the 15-judge panel of the ICJ on July 23 has sparked conversation far beyond decision-makers in India. The ICJ's unanimous declaration of climate change as an existential threat is being discussed not only in think tanks in Delhi and boardrooms in Mumbai, but also among environmentally conscious students in Patancheru, Telangana, where I teach public policy.

The case was initiated by Vanuatu, a Pacific island nation with a population of just 3,00,000. In March 2023, it led a coalition of small island states to secure consensual approval from the United Nations General Assembly to ask the ICJ two questions: What are states legally required to do to address climate change, and what are the consequences if they do not fulfil these duties?

Over 130 countries joined as co-sponsors. India did not join, but it did not oppose it either. This cautious posture reflects India's complex position in global climate diplomacy.

Despite these constraints, India has taken ambitious climate actions. By 2030, it aims for half its electricity to come from renewables. Emissions intensity has declined, afforestation has expanded, and electric buses now run in several Indian cities, including Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru and Hyderabad. India leads the International Solar Alliance and the Mission LiFE campaign promoting sustainable consumption. During its G20 presidency, it ensured that climate finance remained in the global spotlight.



CARBON STOCK ADDITIONS IN INDIA'S FORESTS

| Years | Carbon stock* | CO ₂ equivalent* |
|---------|---------------|-----------------------------|
| 2015-17 | 44 | 161 |
| 2017-19 | 80 | 293 |
| 2019-21 | 81 | 297 |

*in million tonnes
Source: India State of Forest Reports



About Vanuatu:

- Vanuatu is an archipelago (Part of Melanesia) in South Pacific Ocean.
- It is situated east of northern Australia and west of Fiji.
- **Capital:** Port Vila
- **Located in the Pacific-Ring of Fire**, making it prone to Earthquakes, Tsunamis and Volcanic Eruptions.
- Vanuatu was once an **Anglo-French condominium** (where both Britain and France shared control)
- It became an independent country in 1980.



Syllabus: GS 3: Climate Change
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Yet, the new legal terrain raises at least three public policy challenges for India.

First is legal preparedness. Indian courts already interpret the right to a healthy environment as part of the right to life. The ICJ ruling may spur a wave of litigation demanding stronger climate action or even compensation. The Indian state could also face lawsuits from within or from affected neighbouring island states. Anticipating such claims will be vital for legal and policy stability. Otherwise, a torrent of litigation could emerge without clear legal standards.

Second is enforcement. India's environ-

mental laws are strong on paper but patchy in practice. Pollution control agencies remain underfunded and compliance varies widely across different states and sectors. The ICJ has reinforced the importance of due diligence. Strengthening regulatory capacity must now become a national priority.

Third is the issue of fossil fuel subsidies. These remain crucial for economically vulnerable households, especially for cooking gas and kerosene. But they also delay the shift to cleaner alternatives. The ICJ opinion, including the separate declaration appended by Judge Dalveer Bhandari of India, makes clear that subsidies have legal as well as fiscal implications. India must rethink how it provides support to the poor without locking them into polluting fuels. That will demand both financial resources and policy innovation.

mental harm, reduce emissions, adapt to climate impacts, and cooperate internationally. These duties are no longer moral appeals. They carry legal weight.

The Court also ruled that climate change violates rights to life, health, and housing. States must act based on the best available science, adopt ambitious national plans, and

For communities that have long suffered without recourse, this is a potential game changer. It affirms the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. India has long argued that those who contributed most to climate change must do more to address it. The ICJ has now given that argument legal grounding. It will bolster developing countries in global negotiations.

The diplomatic challenge lies in aligning climate ambition with fairness. India must continue taking climate action while defending the context of its development needs. Climate justice must not become a new form of injustice.

The milestone ICJ opinion is not just a verdict from afar, but a compass. It signals the end of voluntary climate ambition and invites all countries to chart a harder, but fairer course. For India, the challenge now is to align duty with dignity and ambition with justice.



How Nigeria's GDP jumped from No.58 to No. 55 in a day?



Syllabus: Prelims: Economy
Newspaper: Indian Express, Page No. 13

ON JULY 20, the West African country of Nigeria was the 58th largest economy in the world. The very next day, it jumped to No. 55, having added more than \$50 billion, or roughly 30 per cent, to its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for 2024. On its way up, Nigeria overtook Ukraine, Qatar, and Hungary.

On July 21, Nigeria's National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) published the results of its GDP rebasing exercise, in which the base year of the indicator was changed to 2019 from 2010, among other changes.

The result? Nigeria's GDP in 2024 is now estimated at \$243 billion in nominal terms, rising from \$187 billion forecast by the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

A previous rebasing

The exercise, the NBS said, was "by far the most comprehensive rebasing" it had ever carried out. However, this is not the first time that Nigeria has seen such a huge

increase in its GDP due to a revision in the base year.

More than a decade ago, a change in the base year from 1990 to 2010 had helped propel the country to the position of Africa's largest economy, thanks to an even larger increase of 89 per cent in its GDP – to \$510 billion in 2014.

But wait – \$510 billion? Does that mean the Nigerian economy has shrunk by half in the last 10 years to \$243 billion now?

Well, sort of. At least in US dollar terms.

EXPL
ECON

Change in methodology

A new base year – which essentially means measurement of GDP, or the final

value of goods and services in any particular year, with respect to the prices prevailing in that year – does not automatically lead to a larger economy.

However, Nigeria's base-year revision exercise included other, more meaningful changes in the manner in which the country calculates GDP. Among them was increasing the scope of the methodology to include previously undercounted sectors such as digital services, pension fund operations, and e-commerce activities among others.

Technological development, structural changes, and changes in production and consumption patterns meant that "the methods and data used in estimating GDP must change with the times to reflect current economic realities", the NBS said.

Significant concerns

While this month's rebasing has brought Nigeria \$50 billion closer to its goal of becoming a \$1 trillion economy by 2030, actually hitting that target is well nigh impossible following the sharp devaluations of its currency naira in 2023 and 2024. As a result, on an annual average basis, the official naira/US dollar exchange rate weakened by

AINED
OMICS

The GDP rebasing exercise has spotlighted changes in the Nigerian economy that point to significant concerns.

One, the share of agriculture in the country's GDP has increased to almost 26 per cent in 2019 from 22 per cent estimated earlier, while that of industry has declined to 21 per cent from 27.65 per cent.

Two, the contribution of the informal sector to the GDP has increased to 42.5 per cent from 41.4 per cent.

And while a larger GDP has helped reduce the debt-to-GDP ratio to 38 per cent from 51



How Nigeria's GDP jumped from No.58 to No. 55 in a day?



Syllabus: Prelims: Economy
Newspaper: Indian Express, Page No. 13

"Long-running issues that have plagued sectors like agriculture from insecurity to climate risk remain. And President [Bola] Tinubu's ambitious 6 per cent per annum [growth] target will require significant improvements in human capital levels as well [as] reforms to help lift the persistently low investment rate. And while the rebasing exercise may have helped to lower the debt-to-GDP ratio, the government's revenue-generating capacity and capacity to repay the debt hasn't changed. Fiscal discipline and tax reforms are still needed to keep public finance risks in check," David Omojomolo, Africa

The Indian experience

India is no stranger to GDP revisions; in fact, the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) is currently in the process of updating the GDP base year to 2022-23 from 2011-12. The rebased GDP numbers will be released in February 2026.

The last time India's key macroeconomic indicator underwent a major revision was in 2015. At the time, questions were raised about the accuracy of the numbers even by the Reserve Bank of India after the GDP growth rate for 2013-14 was revised upwards to 6.9 per cent from 4.7 per cent.

Then Governor Raghuram Rajan had said the central bank found it "hard to see the economy as rollicking in 2013-2014".

According to latest IMF data, India's nominal GDP in 2024 in US dollar terms was \$3.91 trillion, putting it in fifth place in the world, just \$117 billion behind Japan in fourth.

- The revision slated for 2026 will be the eighth such (last – 2015).
- At present, the base year is 2011-12 which is used as a "base" over which the GDP growth of any following year is calculated.
- **26-member Advisory Committee** on National Accounts Statistics (under chairmanship of **Biswanath Goldar**) to update the GDP base year.
- Advisory Committee on NAS will **review data sources** to align GDP with inflation and industrial indices.
- **To effectively capture evolving Economic Structure:** new industries can be included and outdated ones removed from the calculations.
- **To get more accurate understanding of how the real economy is growing.**
- **Improvements in Data and Methodology:**
 - Expand sectoral coverage.
 - Use updated datasets.
 - Reflect new economic activities (e.g., digital economy)
- **Aid in global comparisons**



Syllabus: Prelims: Current events of National & International importance.
Newspaper: Indian Express, **Page No. 13**

AFTER DAYS of deadly fighting, Cambodia and Thailand on Monday agreed to an “immediate and unconditional ceasefire”. The ceasefire was negotiated by Prime Ministers Hun Manet of Cambodia and Phumtham Wechayachai of Thailand at a meeting hosted by Malaysian PM Anwar Ibrahim in Kuala Lumpur.

The clashes followed months of tensions over a century-old border dispute between the Southeast Asian neighbours. What is the history of this dispute, and what happens now?

The fighting began on Thursday after a land mine explosion along the border wounded five Thai sol-

Tensions come to a boil

Tensions between Cambodia and Thailand had been simmering since May, when they skirmished at a contested area of the border, leading to the death of a Cambodian soldier.

Nationalist rhetoric in both countries and a series of tit-for-tat actions followed. Cambodia banned the import of Thai fruits and broadcast of Thai films and soap operas; Thailand closed all land crossings.

Last Wednesday, Thailand withdrew its ambassador from Cambodia and expelled the Cambodian envoy after a Thai soldier lost a leg in a land mine blast. Thailand claimed the mine was laid by Cambodian troops in Thai territory.

Cambodia responded by downgrading diplomatic relations and recalling all Cambodian staff from its embassy in Bangkok. Clashes broke out at half a dozen places along the border between the Thai provinces of Surin and Sisaket, and Cambodian provinces of Oddar Meanchey and Preah Vihear.

On Thursday, Thailand launched air strikes on Cambodian military sites, and Cambodia responded with rocket and artillery fire. Exchanges of artillery and machine gun fire followed, in which at least 35 people were killed and more than 2.6 lakh civilians were displaced on both sides of the border, Reuters reported.

Vietnam Thailand Cambodia Laos Location Map



Making of a conflict

The 817-km land border between Cambodia and Thailand was drawn in 1907 by France, then the colonial power in Cambodia. Like many other borders drawn by colonial administrators, this too has long been disputed.

The two predominantly Theravada-Buddhist neighbours are more alike than any other country in the region, sharing ethnic and linguistic ties, social norms, culinary traditions, and cultural activities. But both claim to be the “original” owners of their heritage. This is what drives the animosity between them.



Syllabus: Prelims: Current events of National & International importance.
Newspaper: Indian Express, **Page No. 13**

Case of Preah Vihear

At the centre of the border dispute is the Preah Vihear temple, which is called Phra Viharn in Thai. "The temple has meaning — both as a cultural symbol and a religious place of worship — to people on both sides of the border," John D Ciorciari, a professor

The temple was built in the 11th and 12th centuries during the golden age of the Khmer Empire, who at the time ruled much of South Asia, including Siam (Thailand). But beginning in the 15th century, as the Khmer Empire declined, Siam gradually chipped away at Cambodian territory. In 1867, Cambodia officially handed the area around Preah Vihear to Siam.

But by this time, France had entered the picture. After colonising Cambodia and Laos, it reduced the Siamese kingdom to a weak position in the neighbourhood. Siam and France signed a treaty in 1904 that said the northern frontier of Cambodia would run along the watershed line of the Dangrek Mountains.

While this principle would put most of the Preah Vihear complex in Siam, the official map, drawn by the French in 1907, put the temple in Cambodia. Siam's objections were muted then — but in 1941, after entering into an alliance with Japan, it seized Preah Vihear, only to return it to France at the end of World War II.

After Cambodia's independence, Thai troops once again occupied Preah Vihear in 1954. Cambodia moved the International Court of Justice (ICJ), which in 1962 upheld its claim over Preah Vihear. But this did not put the issue to bed.

Tensions flared up in 2008 after



Cambodia sought to list the Preah Vihear temple as a UNESCO World Heritage site. The Thai opposition used the issue to attack the government, accusing it of "forfeiting Thai dignity and sovereignty", Ciorciari wrote. Cambodian leaders too used the issue to rally nationalist sentiment in the country.

Over the next several years, Cambodian and Thai troops frequently skirmished at the border. In 2013, the ICJ re-affirmed Cambodia's position vis-à-vis Preah Vihear, creating a demilitarised zone around the temple, although this was never implemented. Thailand has since rejected the ICJ's jurisdiction.



Syllabus: Prelims: Environment
Newspaper: The Hindu, **Page No. 12**

Jacob Koshy
NEW DELHI

The Union Environment Ministry has notified new rules under the Environment Protection Act that lays out a process to address sites that are chemically contaminated.

The Environment Protection (Management of Contaminated Sites) Rules, 2025, give a legal structure to the process of contamination, which was missing until now. Contaminated sites, according to the Central Pollution Control Board, are those where hazardous and other waste had been dumped historically. Some of the sites were contaminated when there was no regulation on management of hazardous waste.

In some instances, polluters have either shut their operations or the cost



Contaminated sites are those where hazardous waste had been dumped historically. FILE PHOTO

of remediation is beyond their capacity. Thus the sites remain a threat to the environment. These sites may include landfills, dumps, waste storage and treatment sites, spill sites, and chemical waste handling and storage sites. Remedial operation has commenced only in seven of the 103 such sites in the country.

A senior official in the Ministry told *The Hindu*

that the latest rules – made public on Friday – were part of a process of “legally codifying” the process in place once contaminated sites were identified. Under these rules, the district administration would prepare half-yearly reports on “suspected contaminated sites”.

A State Board, or a reference organisation, would examine these sites and provide a “preliminary as-

essment” within 90 days of being informed. Following these, it would have another three months to make a detailed survey and finalise if these sites were indeed “contaminated”.

A “reference organisation” – basically a body of experts – would be tasked with specifying a remediation plan. The State Board would also have 90 days to identify the person(s) responsible for the contamination. Those deemed responsible would have to pay for the cost of remediation of the site, else the Centre and the State – under a prescribed arrangement – would arrange for the costs of clean-up. “Any criminal liability, if it is proved that such contamination caused loss of life or damage would be under the provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (2023),” the official told *The Hindu*.

About Central Pollution Control Board

- A **statutory organisation** which was constituted in September, 1974 under the **Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974**.
- Was entrusted with the powers and functions under the **Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981**.
- Provides technical services to the **Ministry of Environment and Forests** of the provisions of the **Environment (Protection) Act, 1986**.
- **Principal Functions of the CPCB:**
 - To promote cleanliness of streams and wells in different areas of the States by prevention, control, and **abatement of water pollution**.
 - To improve the quality of air and to prevent, control or **abate air pollution** in the country.
- **coordinates the affairs of other State Pollution Control Boards, assists them, furnishes guidance, and helps in conflict resolution** in case of any disagreement among them.



Syllabus: Prelims: Environment
Newspaper: The Hindu, **Page No. 12**

CPCB develops Standards for:

- **National ambient air quality**
- **Water Quality** Criteria from different sources
- Standards for Emission or **Discharge of Environmental Pollutants** from various Industries (Issued under Environment Protection Rules, 1986)
- Standards for **Treatment and Disposal of Bio-Medical Waste** by Incineration.

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PYQ:

Q.How is the National Green Tribunal (NGT) different from the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB)? (2018)

1. The NGT has been established by an Act whereas the CPCB has been created by an executive order of the Government.
2. The NGT provides environmental justice and helps reduce the burden of litigation in the higher courts whereas the CPCB promotes cleanliness of streams and wells, and aims to improve the quality of air in the country.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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



Syllabus: Prelims: Economy
Newspaper: Indian Express, Page No. 15

LOW WAGES are holding women back from formal employment – 54 per cent of blue- and grey-collar women employees are unhappy with their pay and 80 per cent saving nothing or less than Rs 2,000 per month, according to a new report.

"Income is a make-or-break factor driving women's exit from the blue-grey collar workforce," the report by Quess Corp, India's largest staffing firm, and the Udaiti Foundation, said. "Women already face steep opportunity costs to join the workforce. Inadequate wages that ignore local realities simply drive them out," it added, flagging a "clear gap between minimum wage and living wage".

| Blue Collar Jobs | Grey Collar Jobs |
|---|--|
| Typically characterized by manual labor and physical work | Involve a combination of physical and intellectual labor, requiring specialized skills |
| Industrial or construction settings | Healthcare |
| E.g. construction workers and factory workers. | E.g. Firefighters, Nurses, technicians etc. |

Low pay, high costs push women out

The report found that blue- and grey-collar women employees earn just 70 per cent of what men do, and that low wages – combined with high opportunity costs like unpaid caregiving, time lost to commuting, or the cost of migration – make it difficult for women to "sustain at work".

Based on a survey of over 10,000 current and around 1,600 former women employees at Quess, it said workers in peri-urban zones, which host significant manufacturing activity, often have minimum wages that lag behind urban benchmarks, despite high living costs. "Costs are higher in Tier 1 cities, but 1 in 5 women earn below INR 20,000, which is typically the stipulated minimum wage... Those earning above INR 20,000 are 21% less likely to drop out in the near term, showing that

Issues faced by Women workers

For women, wages only part of the problem

While living wage standards would benefit all workers, the impact could be more significant for women, who face higher opportunity costs. This is particularly relevant given India's low female labour force participation rate (LFPR) – just 32 per cent for women above 15 years as of June, compared to 77.1 per cent for men, according to the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS). Several economists argue that India's female LFPR must cross the 50 per cent mark if the country is to achieve developed economy status.

In addition to low wages, women workers also contend with poor work culture, limited access to safe and affordable housing, and mobility constraints. In some states, regulatory barriers add to the challenge. "There are 54 laws that actually prohibit women from participating in the workforce. Among them are the night shift laws, which are now being removed state by state," said Pooja Sharma Goyal, founding CEO of Udaiti Foundation.

Syllabus: Prelims: Economy
Newspaper: Indian Express, **Page No. 15**

Living wage v/s Minimum wages

The need to align minimum wage with real living costs has also gained traction among top policy-makers. The Union Ministry of Labour and Employment, for instance, is discussing the concept of a living wage, which factors in expenditure on health and education that is currently excluded from minimum wage calculations. According to Vandana Gurnani, Labour and Employment Secretary, accounting for health- and education-related expenses in wage standards could "reduce the opportunity

Minimum wage

At the launch of the report on July 24, Gurnani said, "Conceptually, it's very good if you go beyond nutrition, housing, and clothing, which are currently counted for minimum wage, to expenditure on health and education, which is proposed."

"From a women's perspective, it is very important because the care model, like childcare, is going to cost them. (Inclusion of health and education) will reduce the opportunity cost that women face when they come out to work," she said. Gurnani added that the ministry is figuring out how to "do this in a diverse setting because things vary from state to state". She also highlighted the need for a "social dialogue" with employers and employees.



Q1. Regarding the issue of judicial backlogs in India, consider the following statements:

1. The Supreme Court of India accounts for the highest number of pending cases among all tiers of the Indian judiciary.
2. The National Judicial Data Grid (NJDG) provides real-time data on case pendency in District and Subordinate Courts.
3. One of the major reasons for judicial delay is the large number of vacancies in the lower judiciary.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Answer: b

Q2. Regarding the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, consider the following statements:

1. It proposes a 5+3+3+4 curricular structure corresponding to the age groups 3–8, 8–11, 11–14, and 14–18 years.
2. It aims to increase the Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) in higher education to 50% by 2035.
3. It mandates teaching of at least one foreign language at the foundational stage.
4. It recommends setting up the National Educational Technology Forum (NETF).

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- a) 1 and 2 only
- b) 1, 2 and 4 only
- c) 2 and 3 only
- d) 1, 3 and 4 only

Answer: b

Q3. Regarding the country of Vanuatu, consider the following statements:

1. It is located in the South Pacific Ocean and forms part of the Melanesian subregion.
2. It was once jointly administered by Britain and France before gaining independence.
3. It lies outside the Pacific Ring of Fire and is largely free from seismic activity.

How many of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) Only One
- b) Only Two
- c) All Three
- d) None

Answer: b

Q4. Which of the following statements regarding the geography of Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam are correct?

1. Vietnam shares a land border with both Laos and Thailand.
2. The Mekong River flows through all three countries.
3. Laos is a landlocked country with no access to the sea.
4. The Annamite Range forms a natural boundary between Vietnam and Laos.

Select the correct answer using the code below.

- a) 1 and 2 only
- b) 2 and 3 only
- c) 2, 3 and 4 only
- d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Answer: c

Q5. Regarding the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), consider the following statements:

1. It is a statutory body constituted under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.
2. It is entrusted with functions related to both water and air pollution control.
3. It provides technical assistance to the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.

How many of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) Only One
- b) Only Two
- c) All Three
- d) None

Answer: b





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