

The Hindu Important News Articles & Editorial For UPSC CSE

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Page 07 : GS 3 : Science and Technology

The use of DNA profiling in criminal investigations is often perceived as definitive in determining guilt or innocence.

- ➔ However, recent cases and judicial insights highlight its limitations and the necessity for corroborating evidence, emphasising that DNA analysis should be considered probabilistic rather than conclusive in legal proceedings.

DNA profiling and its value in establishing guilt or innocence

Though the accuracy of DNA evidence is increasing, we have not reached a juncture where it may be said to be infallible. Thus, it cannot be said that the absence of DNA evidence would lead to an adverse inference against a party, especially in the presence of other evidence in favour of such party

Ramya Kannan

Thanks, perhaps, to the amount of crime drama we now consume as entertainment, the layperson today appears to believe that DNA evidence in a case is clinching – it can make or break a case. But unclouded by what we see on our screens, what is the reality regarding the probative value of DNA in establishing guilt or innocence?

In mid-June, the Madras High Court set aside the conviction of a man who had been accused of rape in a POCSO case. The bench of Justices M. S. Ramesh and Sunder Mohan J. found merit in an appeal by the man, who argued that though it was subsequently proved that the victim falsely accused him of raping her, the DNA test establishing his paternity had dealt the blow, leading to his conviction. The judges held that the prosecution had not proved the case against the appellant beyond reasonable doubt, and therefore, set the conviction aside.

But that was not all. The judgement also examined, in detail, the wisdom of relying on DNA evidence alone to establish guilt. The facts in the case were thus: The victim had originally stated that the appellant had committed penetrative sexual assault on her, however, in her deposition, she said she had blamed the appellant, as she did not want her love affair with another man to come into the open for fear of criticism by relatives. The prosecution witness 1 too turned hostile, and in these circumstances, it would not have been possible to render a finding of guilt against the appellant, his counsel argued in court. Thus, the conviction was based on the DNA report, which compared blood samples collected from him and the victim's child. The report stated that the cumulative probability of the paternity of the appellant being the father of the child (of the victim) was 99.999999998%.

How DNA works?
DNA is deoxyribonucleic acid, and it is genetic material present in the nuclei of cells in living organisms. Justices Mohan and Ramesh relied on an article published by the Central Forensic Science Laboratory, Kolkata, explaining this in detail. An average human body is composed of about 100 trillion cells. DNA is present in the nucleus of a cell as a double helix, supercoiled to form chromosomes along with intercalated proteins. Twenty-three pairs of chromosomes are present in each nucleated cell, and an individual inherits 23 chromosomes from the mother and 23 from the father transmitted through the ova and sperm, respectively. All information about internal organisation,

physical characteristics, and physiological functions of the body is encoded in DNA molecules in a language (sequence) of alphabets of four nucleotides or bases: Adenine (A), Guanine (G), Thymine (T), and Cytosine (C), along with the sugar phosphate backbone.

Since the same DNA sequence is present in every cell of the body (apart from mature red blood cells) therefore, DNA can be sourced from any biological material. This includes saliva, semen, vaginal fluids, blood, body tissues, teeth, hair, and bones. The quantity of DNA contained in biological material varies. Blood and saliva are richer sources of DNA as compared to teeth and hair roots, which are DNA deficient. DNA may be left behind on objects during physical contact, which is commonly referred to as touch DNA or trace DNA. Touch DNA contains very low amounts of DNA and is not an ideal source for DNA profiling, explains a paper in the *Forensic Science India Report (2013-2017)*, which looks at the science underlying forensic DNA profiling and its value in criminal proceedings, notably admitting that there are inherent limitations to the process.

There is apparently much to say about the method for the collection, packaging, storage, and transportation of a DNA sample. Though it differs based on the source of the biological material and the conditions in which it is found, the idea is to ensure that the quality and quantity of DNA are preserved. There are well defined techniques for both the collection and transportation of various kinds of samples to prevent contamination and ensure the quality of the sample extracted.

How reliable is DNA?
But the moot question is: how reliable is DNA profiling in criminology? The basic fact we need to know is that the DNA in

are definite pitfalls, he says, particularly with sample contamination, where there is a delay in lifting the sample or testing it, when the sample becomes unviable, or the samples themselves are switched. "Then the tests turn out inconclusive. One way to ensure at least the right samples are tested is to videograph the entire process - something we have been following in Tamil Nadu - thanks to a directive by Justice P.N. Prakash." He's very clear that convictions cannot be made only on the strength of a DNA analysis, without other corroborating evidence.

How conclusive is DNA profiling?
The Madras High Court, in its verdict in the case, also explained possible outcomes, based on scientific resources. There are three possible outcomes of a profile comparison: (1) Match : If the DNA profiles obtained from the two samples are indistinguishable, they are said to have matched. (2) Exclusion : If the comparison of profiles shows differences, it can only be explained by the two samples originating from different sources. (3) Inconclusive : The data does not support a conclusion.

It also quotes a Law Commission of India report, 'A Review of the Indian Evidence Act, 2003', which observed that: "If the samples match, that does not mean the identity is conclusively proved. Rather, an expert will be able to derive from a database of DNA samples an approximate number reflecting how often a similar DNA "profile" or "fingerprint" is found. It may be, for example, that the relevant profile is found in 1 person in every 1,00,000 : This is described as the "random occurrence ratio". Thus, DNA may be more useful for purposes of investigation but not for raising any presumption of identity in a court of law."

In *Pattu Rajan v. State of T.N. 2019*, judges considered the value to be attached to a DNA report: "Like all other opinion evidence, the probative value accorded to DNA evidence also varies from case to case, depending on facts and circumstances and the weight accorded to other evidence on record, whether contrary or corroborative. This is all the more important to remember, given that even though the accuracy of DNA evidence may be increasing with the advancement of science and technology with every passing day, thereby making it more and more reliable, we have not yet reached a juncture where it may be said to be infallible. Thus, it cannot be said that the absence of DNA evidence would lead to an adverse inference against a party, especially in the presence of other cogent and reliable evidence on record in favour of such party."
(ramya.kannan@thehindu.co.in)



Genetic analyzer and 16 Capillary DNA sequencer and profiling equipment at the Centre for DNA Fingerprinting and Diagnostics lab in Hyderabad. FILE PHOTO

In mid-June, the Madras High Court set aside the conviction of a man who had been accused of rape. The judgement examined the wisdom of relying on DNA evidence alone to establish guilt

all human beings is 99.9% identical. In forensic DNA profiling, a few locations in the remaining 0.1% of DNA are chosen to create a person's DNA profile. These specific locations at which the DNA is examined are called loci. These loci have repetitive sequences of DNA called Short Tandem Repeats, or STRs. While every individual has the same sequence, or STR, on a locus, the number of times that it repeats itself may vary across individuals. This variation in the number of repetitions is referred to as alleles. At a given locus, an individual has two alleles, one inherited from the father and the other from the mother. The current genetic markers of choice for forensic purposes are STRs. STRs present on the Y chromosome are used in sexual assault cases or to determine paternal lineage.

DNA profiling is complicated, and each sequential step involved in generating a profile can vary depending on the facilities available in the laboratory. The analysis principles, however, remain: isolation, purification and quantitation of DNA, amplification of selected genetic markers, visualising the fragments and genotyping, statistical analysis and interpretation, the Kolkata lab explainer adds.

Manikanda Raj, head of forensic medicine and toxicology at Chengalpattu Medical College and Hospital, says DNA analysis as a process is based on probability and, in that sense, cannot be considered conclusive evidence. There

Definition and Concept of DNA Profiling

- **DNA Profiling Definition:** DNA profiling, also known as genetic fingerprinting, is a forensic technique used to identify individuals by analysing specific patterns in their DNA. These patterns are unique to each individual (except identical twins) and are used to match DNA samples from crime scenes with suspects.
- **Concept of DNA Profiling:**
- **DNA Structure:** DNA, or deoxyribonucleic acid, is the hereditary material in humans and other organisms. It consists of sequences of four nucleotides (adenine, guanine, thymine, and cytosine) that form a unique genetic code.
- **STRs:** DNA profiling focuses on short tandem repeats (STRs), which are repetitive sequences of DNA at specific locations (loci). The number of times these sequences repeat varies among individuals, providing a unique DNA profile.
- **Loci Examination:** In forensic DNA profiling, a few specific loci are chosen to create a DNA profile. By comparing these loci, forensic scientists can determine whether two DNA samples match.

Value in Establishing Guilt or Innocence

- **Identification:** DNA profiling is a powerful tool for identifying or excluding suspects in criminal investigations by matching DNA from a crime scene with potential perpetrators.
- **Corroborative Evidence:** While DNA evidence can strongly support a case, it is often used in conjunction with other types of evidence (e.g., eyewitness testimony, physical evidence) to establish guilt or innocence.
- **Limitations:** The reliability of DNA evidence depends on proper collection, storage, and analysis of samples. Contamination, degradation, or mishandling of DNA samples can lead to inconclusive or inaccurate results.
- **Probability-Based:** DNA analysis is based on probability, meaning it can provide a statistical likelihood of a match rather than absolute certainty. The random occurrence ratio helps indicate how common a particular DNA profile might be.
- **Non-Exclusivity:** A match does not conclusively prove identity, as similar profiles can occur in unrelated individuals. DNA evidence should be considered alongside other evidence in court to establish guilt or innocence.
- **Investigation vs. Courtroom:** DNA profiling is highly valuable for investigative purposes, guiding police in identifying suspects, but its role in court relies on corroboration and the context of the case.

UPSC Prelims PYQ : 2020

Ques : With reference to Indian elephants, consider the following statements:

1. The leader of an elephant group is a female.
2. The maximum gestation period can be 22 months.
3. An elephant can normally go on calving till the age of 40 years only.
4. Among the States in India, the highest elephant population is in Kerala.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Ans: (a)

The global economy is navigating uncertainty as financial markets react to interest rate changes and employment data.

- ➔ The Bank of Japan's rate hike disrupted Asian markets, highlighting challenges in implementing monetary policy amid volatile global markets and the interconnectedness of domestic policies and international financial activities.

On monetary policy and financial markets

The recent rapid turnarounds in global markets have come on the back of attempts by central banks to combat the problems of inflation and repressed economic activity using the tool of interest rates. It indicates the difficulty in implementing monetary policy in the presence of strong financial markets

ECONOMIC NOTES

Rahul Menon

Global financial markets may be exhibiting recovery following the dramatic falls in value, but the global economy is still in uncharted waters. Employment generation in the U.S. has been weaker than expected, threatening the fragile post-pandemic recovery. The Bank of Japan's decision to raise interest rates after years of keeping them low has also rattled financial markets, setting off a reversal of equity flows and a collapse in Asian markets. These rapid turnarounds have come on the back of attempts by central banks to combat the problems of inflation and repressed economic activity using the tool of interest rates. What the current situation indicates is the difficulty in implementing monetary policy in the presence of global financial markets, where expectations display heightened volatility and large-scale drops in asset values can occur much faster than the ability of policy-makers to respond.

Was there a threat of recession?

The current consensus regarding monetary policy is to assume a trade-off between unemployment and inflation. Central banks raise interest rates as inflation rises, reducing investment and hence slowing aggregate demand. This leads to a reduction in the demand for labour, reducing the ability of wage-earners to push for higher wages, and ease inflationary pressures.

There is, of course, a lot to debate regarding the proper conduct of monetary policy. Several have criticised the normal conduct of monetary policy, stressing that solving inflation by increasing unemployment represents an unfair burden being placed on workers everywhere, who are already grappling with a cost-of-living crisis. Instead, they argue, inflation could be better tamed by forcing companies to reduce their profit



GETTY IMAGES

margins and by breaking monopolies.

Let us accept the current consensus regarding the conduct of monetary policy. The release of a jobs report that showed a less-than-expected increase in employment led to fears of a recession, and caused a rapid sell-off of equity stocks. This, coupled with concerns regarding the less-than-expected performance of big tech giants, led to a rout in the stock markets.

What is of note is that the economy wasn't actually in a recession, the market just expected one to occur. The rise in unemployment rates triggered the "Sahm rule" which mandates the automatic disbursement of unemployment checks to households when the increase in unemployment rates breaches a certain threshold. This measure is not an indicator that the economy has entered recession, but is correlated with one. However, correlation does not always

indicate certainty; the economy may be displaying the potential for recession, but the threat of a future recession was enough to spark fear amongst investors.

This indicates one of the problems of conducting monetary policy in the presence of a strong financial sector. The gradual reduction of inflation was being held as proof of the successful conduct of monetary policy. Less-than-expected performance in terms of employment creation in one quarter alone has caused financial markets to react and respond at a pace that is too fast for policy-makers to deal with. The market has acted on the expectation that a recession will occur without the economy ever being in one.

The carry trade

On the other side of the world, Asian markets were rattled by the increase in interest rates by the Japanese Central Bank following long periods of low rates.

A long period of economic slowdown in Japan has led to central banks keeping interest rates at levels close to 0. Low Japanese interest rates have led to what is known as the "carry trade", where foreign investors take advantage of low rates to borrow from Japan and invest in foreign markets. The increase in interest rates caused a disruption in this form of trade, leading to investors selling stocks in other markets to deal with higher borrowing costs. This, it has been said, has added to selling pressures in other markets.

This represents an added complication for policy. Low interest rates in Japan to combat a decades-long slowdown indirectly subsidised the activities of foreign capital. Domestic policy imperatives of certain economies exercise undue effects on other economies through the action of global finance.

This is not the first time the actions of global finance caused difficulties for domestic policy in other countries. Interest rates in the U.S. were low following the great recession in 2008. This led to investors borrowing at cheap rates in the U.S. and investing in other markets like India. As interest rates in the U.S. rose following a resumption of growth, capital flew out from India, leading to pressure on its external account: this was called "taper tantrum".

Monetary policy in financial markets

Financial markets have shown signs of recovery following these intense bouts of selling pressure, with many claiming that threats of recession are overblown, even though vulnerabilities remain. But these incidents highlight the potentially destabilising nature of finance. The speed with which financial assets can be bought and sold and the ease at which national borders can be traversed, represents burdens upon the normal conduct of monetary policy. As Keynes once said, "When the capital development of a country becomes a by-product of a casino, the job is likely to be ill-done."

Rahul Menon is Associate Professor at O.P. Jindal Global University.

THE GIST

- ➔ The Bank of Japan's decision to raise interest rates after years of keeping them low has rattled financial markets, setting off a reversal of equity flows and a collapse in Asian markets.

- ➔ The current consensus regarding monetary policy is to assume a trade-off between unemployment and inflation. Central banks raise interest rates as inflation rises, reducing investment and hence slowing aggregate demand. This leads to a reduction in the demand for labour, reducing the ability of wage-earners to push for higher wages, and ease inflationary pressures.

- ➔ Financial markets have shown signs of recovery following these intense bouts of selling pressure, with many claiming that threats of recession are overblown, even though vulnerabilities remain.

About Monetary Policy

- ➔ Monetary policy refers to the actions undertaken by a country's central bank or monetary authority to control the money supply, manage interest rates, and achieve macroeconomic objectives such as controlling inflation, consumption, growth, and liquidity.
- ➔ By adjusting the policy interest rates and other instruments, central banks influence economic activity, impacting borrowing, spending, and investment decisions.
- ➔ In expansionary monetary policy, interest rates are lowered to stimulate economic growth, while contractionary policy involves raising interest rates to curb inflation.

- Through these measures, monetary policy aims to stabilise the economy, maintain price stability, and foster conditions conducive to sustainable economic growth and employment.

Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)

➤ The Committee

- Under Section 45ZB of the amended RBI Act, 1934, the central government is empowered to constitute a six-member Monetary Policy Committee (MPC).
- MPC will determine the policy interest rate required to achieve the inflation target. The first such MPC was constituted in September 2016.

➤ Members of MPC

- the RBI Governor as its ex officio chairperson,
- the Deputy Governor in charge of monetary policy,
- an officer of the Bank to be nominated by the Central Board, and
- three persons to be appointed by the central government.

➤ Functions of MPC

- **Setting Policy Interest Rates:** The primary function of the MPC is to determine the policy interest rates, specifically the repo rate.
- **Inflation Targeting:** The current inflation target set by the government is a Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation target of 4% with a tolerance band of +/- 2%.
- **Economic Analysis and Forecasting:** The MPC conducts thorough analysis and forecasting of various economic indicators, including inflation, GDP growth, employment, fiscal conditions, and global economic developments.
- **Decision-Making:** The MPC meets at least four times a year to review the monetary policy stance.

Global Economic Uncertainty

- Despite a seeming recovery in global financial markets after significant value drops, the global economy remains uncertain.
- Employment generation in the U.S. is weaker than expected, threatening post-pandemic recovery efforts.
- The Bank of Japan's decision to raise interest rates after maintaining them at low levels for years has unsettled financial markets, causing a reversal in equity flows and a decline in Asian markets.
- These developments highlight the challenges central banks face in combating inflation and sluggish economic activity through interest rate adjustments.

Recession Fears and Monetary Policy

- The common approach to monetary policy involves a trade-off between unemployment and inflation.
- Central banks typically raise interest rates to combat rising inflation, which reduces investment and aggregate demand, leading to decreased labour demand and easing inflationary pressures.
- Critics argue that this approach unfairly burdens workers already dealing with a cost-of-living crisis and suggest tackling inflation by reducing company profit margins and breaking monopolies.

- A weaker-than-expected U.S. jobs report sparked fears of recession and triggered a sell-off in equity markets, exacerbated by concerns over the performance of major tech companies.
- The economy was not in a recession, but market expectations alone led to panic among investors.

Market Reactions and Financial Sector Impact

- The rise in unemployment rates triggered the "Sahm rule," which involves automatic disbursement of unemployment checks when unemployment increases significantly, correlating with potential recession indicators.
- This situation highlights the challenges of conducting monetary policy in a financial sector where market reactions can be swift and outpace policy responses.

The Carry Trade and Global Finance

- The Bank of Japan's interest rate increase disrupted the "carry trade," where investors borrowed at low rates in Japan to invest in foreign markets.
- The rate hike led to higher borrowing costs and selling pressures in other markets as investors adjusted their portfolios.
- Domestic policy decisions, such as low interest rates in Japan, have significant ripple effects on global financial activities and other economies.

Challenges for Monetary Policy

- Financial markets' recovery suggests recession fears may be exaggerated, but vulnerabilities persist.
- These events underscore the destabilising potential of global finance and the challenges it poses to effective monetary policy.
- The rapid movement of financial assets across borders adds complexity to national economic policies, aligning with Keynes's view on the instability of finance-driven capital development.

UPSC Prelims PYQ : 2017

Ques : Which of the following statements is/are correct regarding the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)?

1. It decides the RBI's benchmark interest rates.
2. It is a 12-member body including the Governor of RBI and is reconstituted every year.
3. It functions under the chairmanship of the Union Finance Minister.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Ans: (a)

**GS 1 : Indian Society – Urbanization, their problems and their remedies;
GS 3 : Environment – Environmental pollution and degradation**

Rapid urban growth in the Indian Himalayan Range (IHR) from 2011 to 2021 presents unique challenges for managing civic infrastructure and environmental sustainability.

- Issues like inadequate planning, resource shortages, and unchecked expansion are compounded by rising tourism and climatic changes, necessitating a shift towards eco-centric urban planning and improved financial support.

Why Himalayan towns need a different kind of development

Do cities along the Indian Himalayan Range have adequate funds and resources to manage civic issues?

Tikender Singh Panwar

The story so far:

The Indian Himalayan Range (IHR), comprising 11 States and two Union Territories, had a decadal urban growth rate of more than 40% from 2011 to 2021. Towns have expanded, and more urban settlements are developing. However, Himalayan towns require a different definition of urbanisation.

What is happening in IHR towns?

Almost all Himalayan towns, including State capitals, struggle with managing civic issues. For example, cities like Srinagar, Guwahati, Shillong, and Shimla, as well as smaller towns, face significant challenges in managing sanitation, solid and liquid waste, and water. Planning institutions in these States often fail because they use models copied from the plains and have only limited capacities to implement these plans. City governments

are short of human resources by almost 75%. For instance, in the Kashmir Valley, excluding the Srinagar Municipal Corporation, there are only 15 executive officers across over 40 urban local bodies.

Cities continue to expand into the peripheries, encroaching on the commons of villages. Srinagar, Guwahati are examples of such expansion, leading to the plundering of open spaces, forest land, and watersheds. In Srinagar, land use changes between 2000 and 2020 showed a 75.58% increase. Water bodies have eroded by almost 25%, from 19.36 square kilometres to 14.44 square kilometres. These areas have been taken over by built-up real estate, increasing from 34.53 square kilometres to 60.63 square kilometres, a rise from 13.35% to 23.44% of the total municipal area. Nearly 90% of the liquid waste enters water bodies without treatment.

Why is this happening?

The IHR faces increasing pressure from

urbanisation and development, compounded by high-intensity tourism, unsustainable infrastructure, and resource use (land and water), further aggravated by climatic variations like changing precipitation patterns and rising temperatures. This has led to water scarcity, deforestation, land degradation, biodiversity loss, and increased pollution, including plastics. These pressures have the potential to disrupt lives and livelihoods, impacting the socio-ecological fabric of the Himalayas.

Over the past few decades, tourism in the IHR has continued to expand and diversify, with an anticipated average annual growth rate of 7.9% from 2013 to 2023. Current tourism in the IHR often replaces eco-friendly infrastructure with inappropriate, unsightly, and dangerous constructions, poorly designed roads, and inadequate solid waste management, which leads to loss of natural resources damaging biodiversity and ecosystem services. Ecotourism, emphasising

environmentally friendly tourism, is crucial for long-term sustainability.

What needs to be done?

Planning institutions in IHR cities are still guided by land-use principles. Every town needs to be mapped, with layers identifying vulnerabilities from geological and hydrological perspectives. Climate-induced disasters annually erode infrastructures built without such mapping. Therefore, the planning process should involve locals and follow a bottom-up approach.

Consultant-driven urban planning processes should be shelved for Himalayan towns, with the urban design based on climate resilience.

Additionally, none of the cities in the IHR can generate capital for their infrastructure needs. The Finance Commission must include a separate chapter on urban financing for the IHR. The high costs of urban services and the lack of industrial corridors place these towns in a unique financial situation. Current intergovernmental transfers from the centre to urban local bodies constitute a mere 0.5% of GDP; this should be increased to at least 1%. Himalayan towns must engage in wider conversations about sustainability, with the focus on urban futures being through robust, eco-centric planning processes involving public participation.

Author is former Deputy Mayor, Shimla, and Member, Kerala Urban Commission.

THE GIST

▼ Cities like Srinagar, Guwahati, Shillong, and Shimla, as well as smaller towns, face significant challenges in managing sanitation, solid and liquid waste, and water.

▼ The IHR faces increasing pressure from urbanisation and development, compounded by high-intensity tourism, unsustainable infrastructure, and resource use (land and water), further aggravated by climatic variations like changing precipitation patterns and rising temperatures.

▼ Planning institutions in IHR cities are still guided by land-use principles. Every town needs to be mapped, with layers identifying vulnerabilities from geological and hydrological perspectives.

Urban Growth in the Indian Himalayan Range (IHR)

- **Urban Growth Rate:** The Indian Himalayan Range (IHR), spanning 11 States and two Union Territories, experienced a decadal urban growth rate exceeding 40% from 2011 to 2021.
- This rapid expansion of towns and settlements highlights the need for a tailored approach to urbanisation in the region.

Challenges in Himalayan Towns:

- Himalayan towns, including key state capitals, face significant civic management challenges.
- For instance, cities such as Srinagar, Guwahati, Shillong, and Shimla, along with smaller towns, are grappling with issues related to sanitation, solid and liquid waste management, and water supply.
- The root cause lies in the reliance on planning models designed for plains, which are ill-suited for the unique geographical and environmental conditions of the Himalayas.

- Additionally, city governments are severely understaffed, operating at just 25% of their required human resource capacity.
- For example, in the Kashmir Valley, excluding the Srinagar Municipal Corporation, there are only 15 executive officers managing over 40 urban local bodies.

Uncontrolled Urban Expansion:

- Urban expansion into peripheral areas is a growing concern. Cities like Srinagar and Guwahati are encroaching on village commons, leading to the depletion of open spaces, forest lands, and watersheds.
- In Srinagar, from 2000 to 2020, there was a 75.58% increase in built-up real estate, while water bodies shrank by nearly 25%.
- Moreover, almost 90% of liquid waste in these areas is discharged into water bodies without any treatment, exacerbating environmental degradation.

Underlying Causes:

- The Indian Himalayan Region (IHR) is under immense pressure from rapid urbanisation and development, compounded by high-intensity tourism, unsustainable infrastructure practices, and irresponsible resource use, particularly land and water.
- These issues are further aggravated by climate change impacts such as changing precipitation patterns and rising temperatures, leading to water scarcity, deforestation, land degradation, biodiversity loss, and increased pollution, including plastic waste.
- These pressures threaten to disrupt the socio-ecological fabric of the Himalayas, with potentially devastating consequences for local communities and ecosystems.
- Tourism in the IHR has expanded significantly, with an average annual growth rate of 7.9% from 2013 to 2023.
- However, this growth has often resulted in the replacement of eco-friendly infrastructure with inappropriate and unsafe constructions, poorly designed roads, and inadequate waste management systems.
- This has led to the depletion of natural resources, damaging biodiversity and essential ecosystem services.
- For long-term sustainability, a shift towards ecotourism, which prioritises environmentally friendly practices, is urgently needed.

Strategic Recommendations:

- **Mapping and Vulnerability Assessment:**
 - Planning institutions in IHR cities must shift from traditional land-use principles to more comprehensive approaches that incorporate geological and hydrological vulnerabilities.
 - Every town should be mapped to identify these risks, and planning processes should involve local communities in a bottom-up approach.
- **Climate-Resilient Urban Design:**
 - Consultant-driven urban planning, which often fails to address the unique challenges of Himalayan towns, should be replaced with urban designs focused on climate resilience.

➔ **Urban Financing for IHR:**

- None of the cities in the IHR have the financial capacity to support their infrastructure needs.
- The Finance Commission should include a separate chapter on urban financing for the IHR, recognising the high costs of urban services and the absence of industrial corridors.
- Current intergovernmental transfers from the central government to urban local bodies account for only 0.5% of GDP; this should be increased to at least 1%.

➔ **Focus on Sustainability:**

- Himalayan towns must engage in broader discussions about sustainability, with a focus on creating urban futures through robust, eco-centric planning processes that actively involve public participation.

UPSC Prelims PYQ : 2022

Ques : Consider the following pairs:

Peak	:	Mountains
1. Namcha Barwa	:	Garhwal Himalaya
2. Nanda Devi	:	Kumaon Himalaya
3. Nokrek	:	Sikkim Himalaya

Which of the pairs given above is/are correctly matched?

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

Ans : b)

Page : 17 Prelims Fact

At the Paris Olympics, Arshad Nadeem of Pakistan won gold in the javelin throw, beating India's Neeraj Chopra, the reigning Olympic and world champion.

- Nadeem set a new Olympic record with throws of 92.97m and 91.79m. Neeraj secured silver with his second-best career throw of 89.45m.



Monster throw: Arshad gave Pakistan its first Olympic gold in 40 years with a humongous effort in his second attempt leaving Neeraj and others playing catch up. AP, GETTY IMAGES

Arshad's 92.97m dethrones Neeraj

The Pakistani's second throw breaches the Olympic mark; the Indian's only legal throw of 89.45 earns him a silver medal



The only one: Neeraj's silver was the first for India in Paris. RITU RAJ KONWAR



Jonathan Selvaraj
PARIS

To be the man, you got to beat the man.

Arshad Nadeem of Pakistan just beat the man.

At the Stade de France on Thursday night, he beat him as comprehensively as possible. On the sixth opportunity he finally got the better of the man he'd always considered a role model and looked up to.

He beat India's reigning Olympic and world cham-

pion Neeraj Chopra and it took an all time great Olympic performance to do it.

He bettered an Olympic record that had stood for 16 years, not once but twice. The first – a throw of 92.97m in his second throw of the competition ended it. The second of 91.79m in his final attempt put the final exclamation mark on a near flawless performance.

Fighting hard

Neeraj fought as hard as he could. He pushed himself harder than he ever had this season. In the qualification round he produced his biggest throw of the season. He improved on that in his second throw of the final. 89.45m. It was the second best throw of his career. It wasn't enough.

It says something of kind of confidence that Neeraj generates with his achievement that a silver medal – the best for the

country in Paris – seems like like an underachievement.

It is anything but. It took Neeraj pushing himself to his absolute best to even keep him on the podium.

Incredible standard

This was an incredible standard of competition. Julius Yego took fifth place here with a throw of 87.70 – it would have won gold in Tokyo.

While India Pakistan rivalries always carry a hint of tension, there is anything but in this one.

Arshad makes it a point to take a picture with Neeraj before every competition they take part in together.

Arshad had said last year after he took silver at the World Championship behind Neeraj that he wanted to see India and Pakistan finish 1-2 at the Olympics too.

Neeraj and Arshad did just that. But the order of medals was reversed.

Analysis of the news:

- At the Paris Olympics, Arshad Nadeem of Pakistan claimed gold in the javelin throw, defeating India's Neeraj Chopra, the reigning Olympic and world champion.
- Nadeem's outstanding performance included two record-breaking throws, 92.97m and 91.79m, setting a new Olympic record.
- Neeraj Chopra, despite delivering his season's best and second-best career throw of 89.45m, had to settle for silver, which marked India's best result in Paris.

International Olympic Committee

- The IOC is a non-governmental international organisation based in Lausanne, Switzerland that came into existence in 1894. The IOC aims to ensure the regular holding of the Olympic Games and foster Olympism and the Olympic movement.
- Olympism is a philosophy that blends sport, culture, education, and international cooperation, emphasizing the joy of effort, the educational value of good examples, social responsibility, and respect for universal ethical principles.
- The goal of the Olympic Movement is to contribute to building a peaceful and better world by educating youth through sports practised in accordance with Olympism and its values.
- The three main constituents of the Olympic Movement are the IOC, the International Sports Federations ("IFs") and the National Olympic Committees ("NOCs").
- The IOC decides the rules and regulations of the Olympic Games and when and where the next Olympics event will be held.
- The IOC is a permanent organisation that elects its own members, with each member speaking French or English and being a citizen of or residing in a country with a National Olympic Committee.
- The IOC is the final authority on all questions concerning the Olympic games and the Olympic movement.

UPSC Prelims PYQ : 2021

Ques : Consider the following statements in respect of the Laureus World Sports Award which was instituted in the year 2000:

1. American golfer Tiger Woods was the first winner of this award.
2. The award was received mostly by 'Formula One' players so far.
3. Roger Federer received this award maximum number of times compared to others.

Which of the above statements are correct?

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

Ans: (c)

Personality In News : Buddhadeb Bhattacharya (1944-2024)

Former CM of West Bengal and leader Buddhadeb Bhattacharya passed away at 80.

About Buddhadeb Bhattacharya

- Bhattacharya was a politician who served as CM of West Bengal from 2000 to 2011.
- He was known for his attempts to modernize and industrialize West Bengal while navigating the challenges of maintaining communist ideology.
- In 2022, Bhattacharya was awarded Padma Bhushan by the Indian government, which he declined, citing his political principles.

Key Contributions:

Category	Details
Political Reforms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Attempted to reduce the influence of powerful trade unions in the state, particularly in the industrial sector, to attract investments and improve work culture.
Social-Cultural Reforms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Played a key role in establishing the Kolkata International Film Festival and promoted Bengali literature. ➤ Authored several books and translated works of Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Vladimir Mayakovsky into Bengali, enriching the state's cultural heritage. ➤ Introduced measures to eliminate corruption in school recruitments by ensuring all hiring was conducted through transparent exams. ➤ Initiated reforms to integrate mainstream subjects into madrasa education.
Economic Reforms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Led efforts to industrialize West Bengal by attracting investments in IT, steel, and special economic zones (SEZs), including the Tata Nano project in Singur. ➤ Faced significant opposition and protests in Singur and Nandigram over land acquisition, which ultimately contributed to the political decline of the Left Front.

UPSC Prelims PYQ : 2011

Ques : Karl Marx explained the process of class struggle with the help of which one of the following theories?

- (a) Empirical liberalism
- (b) Existentialism
- (c) Darwin's theory of evolution
- (d) Dialectical materialism

Ans: d)

Change in Bangladesh, the challenges for India

With events in Bangladesh unfolding at a rapid pace, this writer recalls the events of February 2009 when (now former) Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina faced a major crisis within two months of her taking over. The mutiny of the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR), a paramilitary force, where the rebels took over the BDR's headquarters in Dhaka, left 74 dead, out of whom 57 were army officers.

The unrest spread to 12 other towns and cities and posed a direct threat to the fledgling democratically elected government of Sheikh Hasina.

Indian Foreign Secretary Shivshankar Menon was called back from Colombo by the then External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee, where this writer was also present, being the Head of Division for Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Myanmar and the Maldives. We took the only available flight, late at night, to Mumbai and then to Delhi to reach early the next morning. Within two hours, the Foreign Secretary began meeting Ambassadors of important countries to convey India's concern about the unfolding crisis and seeking their understanding in case the situation got worse.

The mutiny failed. It was bound to fail since Ms. Hasina had just come to power riding on "clean" elections with huge backing from women and youth, and without the army's interference. But in the 15 years of her tenure, all this seems to have been squandered.

A growing disconnect

The recent elections in 2024 were least inclusive with the Opposition's boycott, dwindling democratic space, an erosion of human rights, a severe economic downturn and, even more significantly, high levels of unemployment among the youth – a segment of support which had earlier benefited from the sustained economic growth under Ms. Hasina. And when the students' protests broke out, led by the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement, the fact that it was handled in a ham-handed manner – almost as if they were the enemies of the state,



T.S. Tirumurti

was India's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, New York and, earlier, Head of Division for Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Myanmar and the Maldives

New Delhi can capitalise on its strong development partnership with Dhaka and work closely with the interim government, the army, and the people

and which saw the use of violence – sealed Ms. Hasina's fate.

Factoring in public opinion, challenges

However, Bangladesh Army chief, General Waker-uz-Zaman, has stepped into a situation that is quite different from what existed when Gen. Moeen U. Ahmed took over in 2007 in a coup. In 2007, one needed the army to bring the anarchy and the violence that was unleashed by both the major political parties under control, restore governance and facilitate elections. The situation demanded a strong man at the top. In 2024, the army is seen more as facilitating the will of the people by driving out a beleaguered Prime Minister and restoring the democratic process. This has also made the army more vulnerable and, therefore, more responsive to public opinion.

A sign of this vulnerability is the acceptance of the students' choice of Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus as the head of the interim government. Normally, coup leaders nominate lacklustre technocrats to run the country under their tight supervision, and not accept a popular leader who commands widespread respect, internally and externally. But then, the army's vulnerability may well be the silver lining which Bangladesh is looking for. Mr. Yunus is seen as a passionate supporter of democratic values and the rule of law. He is a known Hasina-baiter, on account of how she treated him. While he did nurse political ambitions and wanted to start his own political party, he is not seen to be close to the two main parties, the Awami League and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party. Could this be the springboard he needs to launch a third force in Bangladesh?

However, selecting the interim government is not the only task right now. There is an equally serious issue – of the students' agitation being hijacked by those suppressed under the earlier regime or who had boycotted the elections or supported from outside the country. They include not only the Bangladesh Nationalist Party and the opposition but also the banned

Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami which had unleashed Islamic jihadist violence in 2006-07. Violence against Awami League sympathisers and their properties continue, symbols of Bangladesh liberation including the statues of Sheikh Mujibur Rehman are being demolished, and the Hindu minority community is under attack. Accommodating such polarised forces in the interim government will weaken both Mr. Yunus and the army and, inevitably, give a fillip to anti-India forces. Will a weak army leadership be able to control these forces?

While India was the first country to flag "contemporary forms of religiophobia against non-Abrahamic religions" in the United Nations Security Council in 2021 and in the UN General Assembly in 2022, it has demurred, raising this more forcefully with its neighbours and the West, apart from the usual expression of concern. Recent events in Bangladesh have shown, yet again, that if India does not, nobody will.

Mirroring Myanmar and the Maldives

The situation in Bangladesh is akin to events unfolding in Myanmar rather than Sri Lanka. After three consecutive elections in Myanmar, the coup leaders are finding it difficult to retain control over the people and ethnic groups and may well collapse sooner rather than later. After four consecutive elections in Bangladesh, where peoples' democratic aspirations have been raised, the military will find its role considerably circumscribed.

For India, the situation seems similar to what happened in the Maldives where it, *inter alia*, propped up President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih without building bridges to the other side and facing a backlash when the opposition came to power.

What is in its favour though, whether in the Maldives or Afghanistan or Sri Lanka, or now in Bangladesh, is the strong development partnership and projects it has built for the benefit of their peoples. India's best bet is to work closely with Mr. Yunus and the army, and with the people.

GS Paper 02 : International Relations

(UPSC CSE (M) GS-2 2013) The protests in Shahbag Square in Dhaka in Bangladesh reveal a fundamental split in society between the nationalists and Islamic forces. What is its significance for India? (200 words/10m)

Practice Question : Examine the recent political upheaval in Bangladesh. Discuss the potential implications of this instability for regional security and India's strategic interests. How should India navigate its diplomatic and economic relations with Bangladesh in this context? (250 w/15m)

Context :

- The recent political upheaval in Bangladesh, following contentious elections and social unrest, led to military intervention and the appointment of Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus as the head of an interim government.
- The situation reflects broader regional challenges, impacting India's diplomatic, economic, and security interests, and requires strategic engagement to support democratic processes and regional stability.

Political Crisis in Bangladesh:

- The mutiny by the Bangladesh Rifles in February 2009 was a significant early crisis for Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's government, leading to 74 deaths and widespread unrest.
- **2024 Election Crisis:** The 2024 elections in Bangladesh were marred by an opposition boycott, diminishing democratic space, and human rights issues, leading to widespread discontent.
 - Economic and Social Challenges: Bangladesh faced a severe economic downturn, with high youth unemployment, eroding the support base for the government.
- **Student Protests:** The Anti-Discrimination Student Movement led to protests that were met with heavy-handed responses, further fueling unrest.
- **Army Intervention:** The Bangladesh Army, under General Waker-uz-Zaman, intervened to restore order, reflecting a shift towards supporting public sentiment over political allegiance.
- **Interim Government:** Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus was chosen to head the interim government, signifying a departure from typical coup-installed technocrats and indicating a focus on democratic values and rule of law.

Potential Implications for India:

➔ Political and Security Concerns

- **Regional Stability:** The political instability in Bangladesh poses a threat to regional security, with potential spill-over effects across borders, including an increase in cross-border migration and potential security threats.
- **Radical Elements:** The resurgence of the Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami and other radical elements could foster anti-India sentiments, leading to increased militancy and terrorism risks along the India-Bangladesh border.

➔ Economic and Developmental Aspects

- **Economic Partnerships:** Bangladesh's economic downturn could impact bilateral trade and economic partnerships, affecting Indian businesses and investments in Bangladesh.
- **Development Projects:** Ongoing development projects in Bangladesh, supported by India, could face disruptions due to political instability, impacting India's strategic interests in the region.

➔ Diplomatic Relations

- **Diplomatic Balancing:** India must navigate its relationship with Bangladesh's interim government carefully, balancing support for democratic processes with its strategic interests.
- **Public Opinion:** India's stance on Bangladesh's internal matters could influence public opinion, affecting bilateral relations and India's influence in Bangladesh.

➔ Social and Cultural Links

- **Cultural and People-to-People Ties:** The unrest could affect cultural exchanges and people-to-people connections, which are vital for maintaining strong bilateral ties between India and Bangladesh.
- **Impact on Minorities:** Violence against minorities, particularly the Hindu community in Bangladesh, poses a concern for India, potentially affecting its domestic and foreign policy considerations.

Way Forward for India

➔ Strategic Engagement

- **Support Democratic Processes:** India should support democratic processes in Bangladesh, working with international partners to encourage a peaceful transition and inclusive governance.
- **Engage with Interim Leadership:** Building a constructive relationship with Muhammad Yunus and the interim government can help stabilise the situation and ensure India's interests are safeguarded.

➔ Strengthening Economic Ties

- **Enhance Economic Cooperation:** India should explore opportunities to strengthen economic cooperation with Bangladesh, supporting economic recovery and development initiatives.
- **Continue Development Projects:** Ongoing development projects should be maintained and expanded to foster goodwill and mutual benefits.

➔ Security and Stability

- **Enhance Security Cooperation:** Strengthening security cooperation with Bangladesh is crucial to address shared security challenges, including counter-terrorism and border management.
- **Monitor Radical Elements:** India should remain vigilant about the activities of radical elements in Bangladesh and collaborate with the interim government to counter potential threats.
- ➔ **Cultural and Social Engagement**
 - **Promote People-to-People Ties:** Continued efforts to promote cultural and people-to-people ties can help maintain strong bilateral relations and mutual understanding.
 - **Advocate for Minority Rights:** India should advocate for the protection of minority rights in Bangladesh, engaging diplomatically to ensure their safety and well-being.

How Have the Ties Between India-Bangladesh Flourished?

- ➔ **Historical Ties:**
 - The foundation of India's relationship with Bangladesh was laid in the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War. India provided critical military and material support to assist Bangladesh in its fight for independence from Pakistan.
 - Despite this, relations soured within a few years as military regimes took control. There was a rise in anti-India sentiment in the mid-1970s over issues ranging from boundary disputes and insurgency to the sharing of water.
 - The instability continued for a few decades until Sheikh Hasina came to power in 1996 and scripted a new chapter in bilateral ties with a treaty on the sharing of Ganga waters.
 - Since then, India and Bangladesh have built cooperation in Trade, Energy, Infrastructure, Connectivity and Defence.
- ➔ **Economic Cooperation:**
 - Bilateral trade between India and Bangladesh has grown steadily over the last decade.
 - Bangladesh has emerged as India's largest trade partner in South Asia, with bilateral trade reaching USD 18 billion in 2021-2022 from USD 10.8 billion in 2020-21, though there was a dip in 2022-23 due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine War.
 - India is also the second biggest trade partner of Bangladesh, with exports amounting to USD 2 billion in Indian markets.
 - In 2022, both nations concluded a joint feasibility study on a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA). The CEPA gains additional significance as Bangladesh is set to lose its Least Developed Country (LDC) status after 2026, thereby losing its duty-free and quota-free market access in India.
 - Bangladesh will be eager to finalize a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with India, and also pursue the China-backed Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). This dual approach raises concerns for India.
- ➔ **Infrastructure:**
 - Since 2010, India has extended Lines of Credit to Bangladesh worth over USD 7 billion.
 - India and Bangladesh have successfully resolved long-pending issues, like the Land Boundary Agreement (LBA) in 2015 and a maritime dispute over territorial waters.

Daily News Analysis

- India and Bangladesh in 2023 inaugurated the Akhaura-Agartala Rail Link that connects Bangladesh and the northeast through Tripura.
 - The link has given India access to Chattogram and Mongla ports in Bangladesh for the movement of cargo.
 - It is likely to boost small-scale industries and development in Assam and Tripura.
 - The BIMSTEC Master Plan for Transport Connectivity focuses on connecting major transport projects in India, Bangladesh, Myanmar and Thailand, thereby establishing a shipping network.
 - India will focus on the Matarbari Port, 100 km from Tripura, being built by Bangladesh. This port will create a vital industrial corridor connecting Dhaka and Northeast India.
- ➔ **Energy:**
- In the energy sector, Bangladesh imports nearly 2,000 megawatts (MW) of electricity from India.
 - In 2018, Russia, Bangladesh and India signed a memorandum on cooperation in the implementation of the Rooppur Nuclear power plant project, Bangladesh's first nuclear power reactor.
- ➔ **Defence Cooperation:**
- India and Bangladesh share 4096.7 km of border; the longest land boundary that India shares with any of its neighbors.
 - Assam, West Bengal, Mizoram, Meghalaya, and Tripura share borders with Bangladesh.
 - The two also conduct Joint Exercises - Army (Exercise Sampriti) and Navy (Exercise Bongo Sagar).
- ➔ **Multilateral Cooperation:**
- India and Bangladesh are also engaged in regional cooperation through multilateral forums such as SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation), BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) and Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA).

United Nations (UN)

The United Nations (UN) is an international organization founded in 1945. It is currently made up of 193 Member States.



UNDP:

- The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is the UN's global development network.
- UNDP was established in 1965 by the General Assembly of the United Nations.
- It provides expert advice, training and grants support to developing countries, with increasing emphasis on assistance to the least developed countries.

- The UNDP Executive Board is made up of representatives from 36 countries around the world who serve on a rotating basis.
- It is funded entirely by voluntary contributions from member nations.
- UNDP is central to the United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG), a network that spans 165 countries and unites the 40 UN funds, programmes, specialized agencies and other bodies working to advance the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

UNEP:

- The United Nations Environment Programme (UN Environment) is a global environmental authority that sets the global environmental agenda, promotes the coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development within the United Nations system.
- It was founded by the UN General Assembly as a result of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (Stockholm Conference) in June 1972.
- UNEP and World Meteorological Organization (WMO) established the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in 1988 to assess climate change based on the latest science.
- Since its founding, the UNEP has played a key role for the development of multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs). The secretariats for the following nine MEAs are currently hosted by UNEP:
 - Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)
 - Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)
 - Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS)
 - Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer
 - Minamata Convention on Mercury
 - Basel Convention on the Control of Trans-boundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal
 - Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants
 - Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade

UN-HABITAT:

- United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) is the United Nations programme working towards a better urban future.
- Its mission is to promote socially and environmentally sustainable human settlements development and the achievement of adequate shelter for all.

- It was established in 1978 as an outcome of the First UN Conference on Human Settlements and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat I) in Vancouver, Canada, in 1976.
- 2nd United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) in Istanbul, Turkey, in 1996, set the twin goals of the Habitat Agenda:
 - Adequate shelter for all
 - Development of sustainable human settlements in an urbanizing world.
- 3rd United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) was held in 2016 in Quito, Ecuador. It elaborated on Goal-11 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG): "Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable."

WFP:

- World Food Programme (WFP) is the leading humanitarian organization saving lives and changing lives, delivering food assistance in emergencies and working with communities to improve nutrition and build resilience.
- The WFP was established in 1963 by the FAO (The Food and Agriculture Organization) and the United Nations General Assembly.

Will be continue...