

The Hindu Important News Articles & Editorial For UPSC CSE

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The Cyclone Asna, the first August Arabian Sea storm since 1976, formed over Gujarat's Kutch coast, bringing heavy rainfall and causing 32 fatalities in Gujarat.

- ➔ Over 18,000 people were evacuated due to floods.

Cyclone Asna:

- ➔ **Formation:** Cyclone Asna formed over the Kutch coast in Gujarat and adjoining areas of Pakistan.
- ➔ **Impact:** Caused light to moderate rainfall in Gujarat, with heavy to very heavy rainfall in Kutch and Saurashtra.
- ➔ **Movement:** Expected to move away from the western coast in the next 48 hours, heading towards the Arabian Sea.
- ➔ **Historical Context:** This is the first cyclonic storm in the Arabian Sea in August since 1976. Previous August cyclones occurred in 1976, 1964, and 1944.
- ➔ **Name Origin:** "Asna" means "the one to be acknowledged or praised" in Pakistan.

Cyclone Asna forms over Kutch; heavy rain batters Gujarat

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Cyclone Asna has formed over the Kutch coast in Gujarat and adjoining areas of Pakistan, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said on Friday. The cyclonic storm – a rare land-originating one in August and headed to the Arabian Sea – is expected to move further away from the western coast in the next 48 hours.

On the back of the cyclone, light to moderate rainfall occurred at most places in Gujarat and heavy to very heavy rainfall was reported at isolated places in Kutch and adjoining districts of Saurashtra on Friday, the IMD noted.

This is the first cyclonic storm in the Arabian Sea in August since 1976. The name Asna, meaning "the one to be acknowledged or praised", has been given by Pakistan. Between 1891 and 2023, only three cyclonic storms formed in the Arabian Sea in August (in 1976, 1964, and 1944), according to IMD.

Low pressure off A.P. Simultaneously, a well-marked low pressure area – a very early precursor to a cyclone – has formed in the Bay of Bengal off north Andhra Pradesh and south Odisha. It is likely to move further west-northwest-

wards towards north A.P. and adjoining south Odisha coasts and intensify into a depression during the next 36 hours. The IMD has forecast light rain over both States.

The build-up from cyclone Asna resulted in torrential rainfall in Gujarat this week. Rain-related incidents in Gujarat claimed 32 lives since Sunday. More than 18,000 people have been relocated, and around 1,200 rescued from flood-affected areas.

In some cases, security forces used helicopters to evacuate people to safer locations, according to the State Emergency Operation Centre (SEOC). It reported that the State has witnessed almost 111% rainfall so far, and more rain has been forecast till September 5. Regionwise, Kutch has witnessed 177% rainfall, Saurashtra 124%, north Gujarat 88%, east central region 105% and south Gujarat 111%.

Vadodara, the worst-hit city from the recent downpour, experienced some relief as water level in the Vishwamitri river dropped from 37 feet to 23.16 feet on Friday. However, several low-lying areas remain flooded.

Rainfall in August has been excessive in the country and much more than what the IMD forecast on August 1.

UPSC Prelims PYQ : 2020

Ques : Consider the following statements:

1. Jet streams occur in the Northern Hemisphere only.
2. Only some cyclones develop an eye.
3. The temperature inside the eye of a cyclone is nearly 10°C lesser than that of the surroundings.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Ans: c)



Emergency services personnel work on removing water from a flooded underpass on the outskirts of Ahmedabad. AFP

India's real GDP growth slowed to 6.7% in Q1 2024-25, the slowest in five quarters, missing the RBI's 7.1% forecast.

➔ However, real Gross Value Added (GVA) outpaced GDP, growing 6.8%, driven by the secondary sector.

At 6.7%, growth slid to five-quarter low in Q1

GDP well below RBI's prediction of a 7.1% uptick as well as 7.8% uptick registered in preceding quarter

For the first time in a year, growth in the real Gross Value Added (GVA) outperformed the GDP growth

GVA growth driven by significant growth in the Secondary Sector: National Statistical Office

Vikas Dhoot
NEW DELHI

Signalling a moderation in the economy's growth momentum, India's real GDP rose 6.7% in the April to June 2024 quarter, the slowest in five quarters, and well below the Reserve Bank of India's expectation of a 7.1% uptick as well as the 7.8% uptick registered in the preceding quarter.

For the first time in a year, growth in the real Gross Value Added (GVA) in the economy outperformed GDP growth, with a 6.8% uptick in the first quarter (Q1) of 2024-25. This is a significant shift from the preceding two quarters, Q3 and Q4 of 2023-24, when real GVA growth lagged behind GDP

growth by 1.8 and 1.5 percentage points, respectively.

The central bank has penned in a GDP growth of 7.2% for this year, and the softer-than-expected Q1 growth amid easing headline inflation may shift the dynamics for its hawkish monetary policy stance, especially with the U.S. Federal Reserve indicating an interest rate cut next month.

Chief Economic Advisor V. Anantha Nageswaran sought to play down the Q1 blip as "a slight slowdown that was anticipated by most commentators" as the conduct of the general elections had brought down government expenditure, including capital spends. "So in that sense, the 6.7% [growth] was well

Slow incline

India's real gross domestic product (GDP) rose by 6.7% in the April to June 2024 quarter, the slowest in five quarters. The graph shows the Y-on-Y % change of the real GDP.



The rise in the latest quarter is below Reserve Bank of India's expectation of a 7.1% uptick, as well as the previous quarter's growth of 7.8%.

within the consensus anticipation," he said.

'Better alignment'

"At the same time, there is a better alignment between the demand and supply side of the economy, and many components of the demand side, such as

final private final consumption expenditure, gross fixed capital formation and net exports have held up quite well," he said. The 2% rise in farm sector GVA in Q1 indicates a turnaround from recent quarters' lows, such as the 0.6% rise in January-March

Core sectors grew 6.1% in July, up from June's 5.1%

NEW DELHI

Output at India's eight core sectors grew 6.1% in July, rebounding from June's five-month low pace of 5.1%. Electricity generation growth slid to a 6-month low of 7%; natural gas production slowed for the first time in over a year, shrinking 1.3%. » PAGE 11

2024, he noted.

Government final consumption expenditure tanked 0.2% in Q1, while public capital expenditure spends that include projects financed by the Centre, States and central public sector firms, were 33.3% lower than a year

ago. Still, gross fixed capital formation grew 7.5%, recovering from a four-quarter low of 6.5% in the previous quarter, and private consumption outgoes seemed to rebound from last year's weak trends to hit a six-quarter high of 7.4%.

'Major components'

"The major components apart from public sector for capex are households and the private sector. A stagnation in the public sector capex along with a steady capex by the household sector indicates a modest pickup in the private sector capex," said Paras Jasrai, senior economic analyst at India Ratings and Research.

"This GVA growth in Q1 has been driven by signifi-

cant growth in the Secondary Sector (8.4%), comprising Construction (10.5%), Electricity, Gas, Water Supply & Other Utility Services (10.4%) and Manufacturing (7%) sectors," the National Statistical Office said.

On the services side, however, growth in the job-intensive 'Trade, Hotels, Transport, Communication & Services related to Broadcasting' segment dropped to 5.7% from 9.7% in the same quarter last year, while 'Financial, Real Estate and Professional Services' eased to 7.1% from 12.6% a year ago. Economists attributed some of this to statistical base effects.

GROWTH MATRIX
» PAGE 6

Reasons For This Slowdown :

- ➔ **Election-related expenditure drop:** Government spending, including capital expenditure, slowed due to the conduct of general elections, reducing public investments.
- ➔ **Public capital expenditure decline:** Public capital expenditure, including projects funded by the Centre, States, and public sector firms, fell by 33.3% compared to the previous year.
- ➔ **Statistical base effects:** High growth in certain sectors during the previous quarters created a base effect, leading to slower growth in the current quarter.
- ➔ **Global uncertainties:** External factors like global economic uncertainties, inflationary pressures, and fluctuating commodity prices affected private investment and consumption.
- ➔ **Monetary policy tightening:** Hawkish policies by the RBI, aimed at controlling inflation, may have dampened growth in some sectors.
- ➔ **Slower services sector growth:** Key services, such as trade, hotels, and transport, registered slower growth due to a high base from last year and weaker demand recovery in these areas.

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

The rate of growth of Real Gross Domestic Product has steadily increased in the last decade.
The Gross Domestic Product at market prices (in rupees) has steadily increased in the last decade.

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

Ans: b)

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar declared the end of the era of “uninterrupted dialogue” with Pakistan, reflecting strained relations since 2016 due to cross-border terrorism.

- He emphasised that neighbouring relationships are complex and dynamic, and India will respond actively to future developments with Pakistan.

India yet to take a decision on Pak. invite to SCO meet

New Delhi has not attended any meetings of SAARC in Pakistan since 2016; MEA spokesperson lists PM's travel plans for Sept. and Oct.; does not rule out India's participation in SCO summit

Suhasini Haidar
NEW DELHI

The government confirmed on Friday that it received an invitation from Pakistan for the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Heads of Government (HoG) meeting in Islamabad on October 15 and 16.

However, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said it did not have a decision yet on whether India would participate and at what level that would be, even as it outlined other travel scheduled by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in September and October this year.

“We have received the invitation for attending the Heads of Government Summit of the SCO from Pakistan, which will be hosted by Pakistan, and on that, as and when we have an update, we'll share [it] with you,” said MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal.

While Mr. Modi is technically the Head of Government, India and Pakistan decided when they joined the regional grouping that their elected leaders would participate in the Heads of State summit, alongside



Prime Minister Narendra Modi has so far deputed the Vice-President or External Affairs Minister to attend SCO HoG conferences. PTI

Presidents of the other countries, and not the HoG. As a result, Mr. Modi has thus far deputed the Vice-President or External Affairs Minister to attend SCO HoG conferences.

In addition, India has refused to attend any meetings of the SAARC grouping in Pakistan since 2016, and it would be a major departure from this policy if the government were to send a Minister or high-level dignitary to Islamabad for the SCO meeting. Significantly, however, the MEA spokesperson did not explicitly rule out India's participation at the conference in Pakistan, when questioned at the weekly briefing.

Mr. Jaiswal said Mr. Mo-

di would visit Brunei Darussalam on September 3-4 and then Singapore on September 4-5.

Mr. Modi will travel next to the United Nations for the “Summit of the Future” special meeting on September 22-23 and is expected to stay on for a meeting of the Indian diaspora in New York, followed by the UN General Assembly. However, the MEA spokesperson declined to comment on whether the government has been able to tie up for the Quad Summit at the same time in New York. India was due to host the summit in 2024, but owing to Indian and U.S. election schedules, the dropping out of U.S.

President Joe Biden and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida from leadership races in their respective countries as well as Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese's availability, MEA officials have been unable to announce a decision thus far.

Russia visit

Given his recent visit to Ukraine and India's stated commitment to assist a peaceful resolution to the Russia-Ukraine conflict, Mr. Modi's possible next meeting with Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on the sidelines of the UNGA will be closely watched. He is then expected to travel to Russia for the BRICS summit on October 22-24, the Kremlin announced this week.

On October 25, Mr. Modi is expected to host German Chancellor Olaf Scholz in Delhi for the biannual summit, where the conflict in Ukraine will again be at the top of the agenda. Asked whether India would play a mediator role, Mr. Jaiswal said Mr. Modi had indicated his willingness to play a “constructive role” in further peace.

End of “Uninterrupted Dialogue”

- External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar stated that the age of “uninterrupted dialogue” with Pakistan has ended.
- India’s relationship with Pakistan has been frozen since at least 2016, following a surge in cross-border terrorist attacks, such as those in Pathankot and Uri.

Neighbouring Relationships

- The foreign minister emphasised that relations with neighbouring countries are ongoing and dynamic.
- He noted that every country faces issues with its neighbours, highlighting that such relationships inherently involve complications.
- Jaishankar cited political developments in Bangladesh and the Maldives to illustrate the nature of neighbouring relationships.

Current Status and Future Prospects

- Jaishankar declared that Article 370, related to Jammu and Kashmir, is no longer an issue.
- The focus now is on determining what kind of relationship can be envisioned with Pakistan moving forward.
- He assured that India is not passive and will respond to developments in the relationship with Pakistan, whether they are positive or negative.

UPSC Mains PYQ : 2015

Ques: Terrorist activities and mutual distrust have clouded India-Pakistan relations. To what extent the use of some power like sports and cultural exchanges could help generate goodwill between the two countries? Discuss with suitable examples.

- The Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR) under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry has recommended the imposition of an anti-dumping duty on aluminium foils imported from China.
- This recommendation follows concerns that Chinese imports have captured 30% of the Indian market, despite sufficient domestic production capacity.

China reasserts its claims in regional disputes, pushes rivals' limits

Agence France-Presse
BEIJING

China's campaign of confrontation, from remote reefs in Southeast Asia to Taiwan and far-flung Japanese islands, is designed to wear down regional rivals competing with it for contested territories, analysts say.

Beijing in recent years has asserted its claims in the long-running disputes far more boldly as its military strength has grown.

The escalating actions – over islands in the East China Sea claimed by Japan, the self-ruled territory of Taiwan and the South China Sea – have also come, as Beijing's rivals have drawn

closer to the United States.

"[China] believes its strong-arm tactics are paying dividends," Duan Dang, a maritime security analyst, said.

China has in recent months deployed military and coast guard vessels in a bid to eject the Philippines from a trio of strategically important reefs and islands in the South China Sea.

The latest flashpoint is Sabina Shoal, just 140 km west of the Philippine island of Palawan and roughly 1,200 km from China's island of Hainan.

On Monday, Beijing said it took "control measures" against two Philippine Coast Guard ships that "il-



Pressure point: A vessel identified by the Philippine Coast Guard as a Chinese navy ship during a supply mission to Sabina Shoal. AFP

legally" entered the waters near Sabina Shoal.

Manila countered that Chinese vessels had stopped Philippine ships from resupplying their own coast guard vessels in the area – slamming Beij-

ing as the "biggest disruptor" to regional peace.

China has for years sought to expand its power in the South China Sea, brushing aside an international ruling that its claim to most of the waterway

has no legal basis.

In June, Chinese coast guard personnel brandishing weapons boarded Philippine vessels near the disputed Second Thomas Shoal.

The recent incidents have come as the Philippines has strengthened ties with its ally the U.S.

Mr. Duan said the pact might "deter outright war", but Beijing still saw a chance to tighten the screws on Manila while Washington was distracted by the ongoing West Asia conflict and the uncertainties around its own presidential election.

However the Philippines on Thursday flagged the possibility of U.S. es-

corts for its resupply missions.

'Push the envelope'

Chong Ja Ian, an associate professor of political science at the National University of Singapore, said China was trying to "wear down" Filipino resolve. Beijing is posing a "direct challenge to the Philippines' ability to administer and make use of its exclusive economic zone", he said. They are "trying to push the envelope [but stay] below the threshold of aggression", he explained.

China's recent assertiveness has extended far beyond South China Sea.

Around Taiwan, it has

sent increasing numbers of fighter jets, drones and naval vessels as part of a strategy that analysts say is designed to keep the democratic island exhaustingly vigilant against a possible invasion.

China has also in recent years ratcheted up pressure over a disputed island group controlled by Japan in the East China Sea.

"People sometimes look at the South China Sea and the Taiwan Strait and the East China Sea... as isolated," said Mr. Chong.

"They are not. These are all areas where [China] hopes to be able to establish more control," he said. "They're trying to see how far they can push."

About the News:

What is Anti-Dumping Duty?

- Anti-dumping duty is a tariff imposed on imports manufactured in foreign countries that are priced below the fair market value of similar goods in the domestic market.
- The government imposes anti-dumping duty on foreign imports when it believes that the goods are being "dumped" – through the low pricing – in the domestic market.
- Anti-dumping duty is imposed to protect local businesses and markets from unfair competition by foreign imports.
- Thus, the purpose of anti-dumping duty is to rectify the trade distortive effect of dumping and re-establish fair trade.
- The use of anti-dumping measure as an instrument of fair competition is permitted by the World Trade Organization (WTO).
- The WTO allows the government of the affected country to take legal action against the dumping country as long as there is evidence of genuine material injury to industries in the domestic market.

- The government must show that dumping took place, the extent of the dumping in terms of costs, and the injury or threat to cause injury to the domestic market.
- While the intention of anti-dumping duties is to protect local businesses and markets, these tariffs can also lead to higher prices for domestic consumers.

Directorate General of Trade Remedies

- It is the apex national authority under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry for administering all trade remedial measures including anti-dumping, countervailing duties and safeguard measures.
- It provides trade defence support to the domestic industry and exporters in dealing with increasing instances of trade remedy investigations instituted against them by other countries.

Inquiry Initiated by Domestic Producers

- The investigation was initiated following a request from Hindalco, one of India's largest aluminium manufacturers, along with other companies like Shyam Sel & Power Ltd, Venkateshwara Electrocast Pvt. Ltd, and Ravi Raj Foils Ltd.
- They argued that the surge in cheap imports from China was harming domestic industries.

Impact on Domestic Industry

- The DGTR found that the prices of Chinese aluminium foil imports, particularly those up to 80 microns, were undercutting the prices of the domestic industry, forcing Indian producers to sell below the cost of production.
- The recommended anti-dumping duty ranges from \$619 to \$873 per tonne.

Domestic Production Capacity

- During the period of investigation (POI), the combined capacity and production of the domestic producers were 1,32,140 MT and 69,572 MT, respectively, representing 45% of capacity and 54% of production in the Indian market.

Concerns Over Market Monopoly

- Some industry stakeholders have expressed concerns that imposing duties could create a monopoly in the market.

➤ They warned that it could adversely affect downstream producers by limiting their ability to source aluminium foils with good product quality and lead times, potentially impacting their ability to meet customer demands.

What is Countervailing duty (CVD)?

- It is a specific form of duty that the government imposes to protect domestic producers by countering the negative impact of import subsidies. CVD is thus an import tax by the importing country on imported products.

Why is CVD imposed?

- Foreign governments sometimes provide subsidies to their producers to make their products cheaper and boost their demand in other countries.
- To avoid flooding the market in the importing country with these goods, the government of the importing country imposes CVD, charging a specific amount on the import of such goods.
- The duty nullifies and eliminates the price advantage enjoyed by an imported product.
- WTO permits the imposition of CVD by its member countries. Countervailing duty v/s Anti-dumping duty Anti-dumping duty is imposed to prevent low-priced foreign goods from damaging the local market.
- On the other hand, CVD will apply to foreign products that have enjoyed government subsidies, which eventually leads to very low prices.
- While the Anti-dumping duty amount depends on the margin of dumping, the CVD amount will completely depend on the subsidy value of the foreign goods.

UPSC Prelims PYQ : 2020

Ques : With reference to the international trade of India at present, which of the following statements is/are correct?

1. India's merchandise exports are less than its merchandise imports.
2. India's imports of iron and steel, chemicals, fertilizers and machinery have decreased in recent years.
3. India's exports of services are more than its imports of services.
4. India suffers from an overall trade/current account deficit.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 4 only

(c) 3 only

(d) 1, 3 and 4 only

Ans: d)



Term In News : D-Voter

- The Assam Chief Minister recently announced that nearly 1.2 lakh people in the state have been identified as 'D' (Dubious or Doubtful) voters, with 41,583 declared as foreigners.



About D-Voter:

- The concept of D-Voter is unique to Assam, where migration and citizenship are among the biggest political fault lines.
- It was introduced in Assam in 1997 by the Election Commission, targeting those who could not prove their Indian nationality.
- Those persons whose citizenship was doubtful or was under dispute were categorized as 'D- Voters' during the preparation of the National Register of Citizens in Assam.
- 'Doubtful voter' or 'doubtful citizenship' have not been defined in the Citizenship Act, 1955, or the Citizenship Rules of 2003.
- The Citizenship Rules, 2003, was framed under the provisions of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2003.
- The rules framed in 2003 list out the steps to be followed for the preparation of the National Population Register (NPR) and the National Register of Indian Citizens (NRIC).

- ▶ Under subsection 4 of section 4 that deals with the preparation of NRIC, it has been only mentioned that details of individuals whose citizenship is doubtful will be entered by the Local Registrar with 'appropriate remark in the population register for further enquiry'.
- ▶ A family or individual is notified in a specific pro forma as soon as the verification process concludes whether they have been classified as a dubious citizen (D-Category).
- ▶ Before deciding whether or not to add their name to the register, they are also given the opportunity to be heard by the Taluk, or Sub-district Registrar of Citizenship. The Registrar has ninety days to complete and justify his findings.
- ▶ Because their Indian citizenship has not been verified, doubtful voters are not allowed to vote in elections.
- ▶ They are also not permitted to run for office in the nation's elections.
- ▶ The marking as doubtful voter is a temporary measure and cannot be prolonged. A decision in a definite period of time must be taken.
- ▶ According to the documentation provided, if it is determined that the individual is a foreign national or an illegal immigrant, they may be deported or placed in a detention centre.
- ▶ D- Voters also have the option to apply and get their names included in NRC.
- ▶ They will be included only after they get clearance from the Foreigners Tribunals and their names are removed from electoral rolls under the 'D' category.

The collapse of categories and post-individualism

Categorisation, the counting and the labelling of people, places, time, events, and human activities form the basis of all governance and politics. The 2024 Paris Olympics demonstrated, on the one hand, the rigidity and the brutality of categories, and on the other, the fluidity, biases and even the impossibility of it. Indian woman wrestler Vinesh Phogat was disqualified for being overweight by 100 grams for her category – the objectivity of which has not been questioned by anyone including the wrestler herself. Imane Khelif, the Algerian boxer who won the gold in her weight category, had her sex questioned.

In 2023, the International Boxing Association (IBA) had disqualified her for failing a “separate and recognized test, whereby the specifics remain confidential”. The Paris Olympics organisers said they also went by the passport which identifies Ms. Khelif to be a woman, her sex assigned at birth. Some media reports linked Ms. Khelif’s disqualification in a gender eligibility test and, thus, not participating in the IBA world championship in New Delhi in 2023 to Russian President Vladimir Putin. All told, a person’s sex is no longer an incontrovertible objective fact, as his or her weight is. The methods to identify a person’s sex – chromosomes, hormone levels, genitalia, have been contested. To the extent that sex is a biological fact, it is an increasingly alterable one. When combined with gender, it is a question of personal choice, according to the increasingly popular view in the United States. The sex and gender debate is a major trigger for the social and political dysphoria in the West.

The fluctuation of categories

The fluidity of categories has been a serious governance challenge throughout history. Who is a citizen and who is alien? What kind of violence is crime and what kind is honourable? What is legitimate politics and what is not? Where does homeland end and foreign land begin? Such questions have pushed societies to conflicts and countries to wars, as agreements are difficult to come by, and harder to hold. Currently, live political contestations over categories include the fluidity of Kamala Harris’s ethnicity: is she more Asian- American than African-American? Should Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes communities be categorised into subgroups for better achievement of social justice goals in India?

Modernity celebrated individualism as a higher level of social evolution, and communities that bind individuals to social norms, faith and traditions came to be viewed as regressive through its lens. The building blocks of modern, secular communities, and nations, are supposed to be atomised individuals who share their belief in atomised individualism with other atomised individuals. The individual participated in politics and market as the fundamental autonomous unit



Varghese K. George

of humanity. The individual was indivisible, indestructible.

Sex categories, male and female, are (at least used to be) a rare point of agreement across religious faiths, political ideologies, and science. In fact, western creationists in recent years began citing British evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins in support of their position that humans are divided into male and female. Prof. Dawkins has argued that categories in general do not hold because the natural world is a fluid continuum, but sexes are a remarkable and undeniable exception. It is the union of clearly differentiated male and female reproductive cells that makes procreation possible. He notes intersex individuals exist, but that only proves the rule of sexual binaries. What has muddled this rare point of universal agreement of faiths and science is the relatively new idea of sex as choice, guided by gender perception.

The new idea as ‘choice’

According to the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, “sex refers to a set of biological attributes” and “gender refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviors, expressions and identities.” “...sex is usually categorized as female or male”, while “gender exists along a continuum and can change over time”. Sex is what one is, and gender is what one feels. The question becomes contentious over translating the feeling into being – gender affirming sex transition. Should that be allowed? If yes, what is the age of consent in this regard? Should public schools and public health systems facilitate this? These questions are pulverising the U.S. in this election season.

That an individual is their thought is not a new thought. The individuality of a person has been about their thoughts and feelings, and not their bodies. The mind changes over time. People move from one faith to another, or from one line of political thinking to another, without altering their bodies, generally speaking. The mind determines an individual’s relationship with others. Individualism is about the inviolability of the individual – body and mind. The mind seeks to preserve the physical body – its liberty, safety, and nourishment. The integrity of the physical body was taken for granted and considered sacrosanct; surgeries and interventions that modernity made possible were to restore the normative features and functions of the body; not to alter them.

Gender affirming sex transition changes that relationship between an individual’s mind and body. It does not undermine the sexual binary, as it is often misrepresented. In fact, it reinforces the binary – a person who wants to transition is in fact seeking medical intervention to achieve the normative anatomical features of one of the sexes. In the previously familiar universe, when

there was conflict between the body and the mind – being and feeling – feeling had to yield to being. Feeling could have been fleeting, after all. That the body, not the mind, should change is the new idea. Individual autonomy elevated to this level, paradoxically, disaggregates the individual into components, and reconstitutes them into a new biological entity. The mind is fluid, and assuming that the body should keep pace with the fluidity of the mind, is a radically mind-bending idea. This throws out of the window one of the longest held, and universally shared truths – that there is man and woman. That there is nothing permanent about an individual being a man or woman is a bewildering post-truth. It is post-individualism; individualism devouring itself.

This paradox mirrors the bigger dilemma of liberalism itself. Liberalism, by virtue of self-identification, has to tolerate all types of illiberal ideas. For instance, liberalism has to accommodate religious and cultural practices, which in turn are oppressive towards its own followers. Liberalism thus undermines itself. Individualism and conflicting group claims have already caused disorienting social fragmentation. Sex transition makes fragmentation inside the individual self, which was considered composite.

Science and evidence

Proponents and opponents of gender affirming care try to bolster their argument using data and science. Technology has given humanity the immense capacity to enforce categories by digitally profiling and labelling each individual. But, simultaneously, by choice and under duress, individuals increasingly defy categories by crossing geographical and social borders. Sex categories are the new frontier for human mobility. That the body should fall in line with the mind’s feeling is an idea. Ideas usually precede the technological know how that translate it into reality – for instance, flight. Science will more likely enable that idea, rather than prove or disprove anything about it. Science and technology do not just discover existing reality but also create new ones. As new technologies shift medical interventions from restorative to transformatory, the body is set lose its normative form anyway. Sex could follow gender, and as all other matters of the mind, it will be about a choice that one makes. One’s mind is accessible to another only to the extent that it is articulated, which means, a person can only be what they claim. Gender ideology has set the U.S., and the West in general, on a course of collective cognitive dissonance. One part of these societies seek to hold on to their last truth, while the other is dismantling the notion of the inviolable individual that built them.

Gender debates appear to be deepening social fragmentation in the West

GS Paper 02 : Governance & Social Justice

(UPSC CSE (M) GS-2 : 2021) Can the vicious cycle of gender inequality, poverty and malnutrition be broken through microfinancing of women SHGs? Explain with examples. (250 w/15m)

UPSC Mains Practice Question Discuss the challenges posed by the fluidity of categories like sex and gender in governance and politics, with reference to recent global events. (150 w /10 m)

Context :

- This article explores the complexities of categorization in governance, politics, and identity, focusing on the fluidity of sex and gender.
- It highlights the evolving debate on gender identity, individualism, and societal fragmentation, particularly in the West, where traditional views of sex are challenged by the growing acceptance of gender as a personal choice.

Introduction:

- Categorisation is fundamental to governance and politics, affecting people, places, events, and human activities.
- The 2024 Paris Olympics showcased both the rigidity and fluidity of categories.
- Indian wrestler Vinesh Phogat was disqualified for being overweight by 100 grams, a decision widely accepted.
- Algerian boxer Imane Khelif faced challenges over her sex, which led to controversies and disqualification in 2023.

Contested Categories: Weight vs. Sex

- Phogat's disqualification due to overweight was accepted as objective.
- Khelif's sex was questioned despite her passport and birth assignment stating she was female.
- While weight is an objective fact, sex has become a subject of debate.
- Methods used to determine sex, such as chromosomes and hormone levels, have been challenged.
- Sex, though biological, is increasingly seen as alterable, especially in light of gender identity discussions.

Fluidity in Governance:

- Throughout history, fluid categories like citizenship, crime, and politics have been sources of conflict.
- Today's political issues include questions about ethnicity (e.g., Kamala Harris) and caste classifications in India.
- Modernity embraced individualism, separating individuals from community-based norms, and prioritising atomised individualism.
- The individual, once viewed as indivisible, is now challenged by the fluidity of sex and gender.

Sex as a Point of Agreement:

- Historically, sex categories (male and female) were universally agreed upon across faiths, political ideologies, and science.
- British biologist Richard Dawkins argued that sex categories are a rare exception to the fluidity of the natural world.
- He stated that procreation relies on the union of male and female, with intersex individuals being exceptions.

New Idea of Sex as Choice:

- The concept of sex as choice, guided by gender perception, challenges traditional views.
- According to the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, sex refers to biological attributes, while gender relates to socially constructed roles and identities.
- Sex is biological; gender is how one feels, leading to contentious questions about gender-affirming care and the age of consent.
- This debate is central to current U.S. political discourse.

Individualism and Body-Mind Relationship:

- Historically, individualism emphasised the inviolability of both the body and the mind.
- The body was considered sacrosanct, with medical interventions aimed at restoring, not altering it.
- Gender-affirming care changes this body-mind relationship, suggesting that the body should align with the fluidity of the mind.
- This idea challenges the longest-held belief that male and female identities are permanent.

Science and Evidence in Gender Debate:

- Both proponents and opponents of gender-affirming care use science and data to support their arguments.
- Modern technology enforces categories but also allows individuals to defy them.
- Science is not only about discovering reality but also creating new realities.
- Technological advances shift medical interventions from being restorative to transformative, possibly leading to sex following gender as a matter of personal choice.

Conclusion:

- ▶ Gender ideology has created a divide in the U.S. and the West, with one side holding onto traditional views and the other dismantling the notion of the inviolable individual.
- ▶ The debate on gender and sex reflects deeper societal questions about identity, governance, and the role of technology in shaping the future..



South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation

- ▶ The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) was established with the signing of the SAARC Charter in Dhaka on 8 December 1985.



- ▶ The idea of regional cooperation in South Asia was first raised in November 1980. After consultations, the foreign secretaries of the seven founding countries—Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka—met for the first time in Colombo in April 1981.
- ▶ Afghanistan became the newest member of SAARC at the 13th annual summit in 2005.
- ▶ The Headquarters and Secretariat of the Association are at Kathmandu, Nepal.

Principles

- ▶ Cooperation within the framework of the SAARC shall be based on:
 - Respect for the principles of sovereign equality, territorial integrity, political independence, non-interference in the internal affairs of other States and mutual benefit.
 - Such cooperation shall not be a substitute for bilateral and multilateral cooperation but shall complement them.
 - Such cooperation shall not be inconsistent with bilateral and multilateral obligations.

Members of SAARC

- ▶ SAARC comprises of eight member States:
 - Afghanistan
 - Bangladesh
 - Bhutan
 - India
 - Maldives
 - Nepal
 - Pakistan
 - Sri Lanka
- ▶ There are currently nine Observers to SAARC, namely:
 - Australia,
 - China,
 - The European Union,
 - Iran,
 - Japan,
 - The Republic of Korea,
 - Mauritius,

- The United States of America.
- Myanmar,

Objectives of the SAARC

- To promote the welfare of the people of South Asia and to improve their quality of life.
- To accelerate economic growth, social progress and cultural development in the region and to provide all individuals the opportunity to live in dignity and to realize their full potentials.
- To promote and strengthen collective self-reliance among the countries of South Asia.
- To contribute to mutual trust, understanding and appreciation of one another's problems..
- To promote active collaboration and mutual assistance in the economic, social, cultural, technical and scientific fields.
- To strengthen cooperation with other developing countries.
- To strengthen cooperation among themselves in international forums on matters of common interests, and
- To cooperate with international and regional organizations with similar aims and purposes.