29 March 2024

TOPICS COVERED

Core sector output growth spurts to 6.7% in Feb. (GS Paper III: Industry)

- India's eight core sectors experienced a growth spurt in output, reaching a three-month high of 6.7% in February.

- This growth was primarily driven by **double-digit increases in coal, natural gas, and cement production**.
- However, fertilizers' production witnessed a significant decline of 9.5%, marking the sharpest contraction since May 2021.
- The Index of Core Industries (ICI) for January was revised to reflect a 4.1% rise, up from the previous estimate of 3.6%, but it remained the slowest growth in 15 months.

Index of Eight Core Industries (ICI)
- **It is** a monthly production volume index that measures the performance of eight core industrial sectors in India.
- **Importance:** The ICI is a crucial economic indicator, offering insights into the overall health and direction of India's industrial sector.

The Eight Core Industries:
1. **Coal:** Raw coal production
2. **Crude Oil:** Production of crude petroleum
3. **Natural Gas:** Production of natural gas
4. **Refinery Products:** Production of petroleum refinery products (ex. petrol, diesel)
5. **Fertilizers:** Production of fertilizers
6. **Steel:** Production of saleable steel
7. **Cement:** Production of cement
8. **Electricity:** Electricity generation

The breakdown of weights as per the latest revision:

Core Industry	Weight in ICI (%)
Refinery Products	28.04
Electricity	19.85
Steel	17.92
Coal	10.33
Crude Oil	8.98
Natural Gas	6.88
Cement	5.37
Fertilizers	2.63

Compilation and Release
- **Agency:** The Index of Eight Core Industries is compiled and released by the Office of the Economic Adviser (OEA), Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India.

- Fertilizers' output experienced a year-on-year dip for the second consecutive month, marking the first such streak in two years.
- Overall, despite the growth in certain sectors, the absolute output levels were at a three-month low and 4.9% below January's levels, which had reached a ten-month high.
- In terms of sequential growth, only the cement sector recorded an uptick over January's production level, increasing by 1.74%.

Child accused of POCSO offence to be tried as per the JJ Act' (GS Paper II: Vulnerable Section)

- The Kerala High Court ruled that a child accused under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012, should be prosecuted according to the provisions of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act (JJ Act).
- The decision came in response to a petition filed by a 13-year-old boy seeking to dismiss the case registered against him under the POCSO Act and various sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC).
- The prosecution alleged that the petitioner had sexually assaulted another boy.
- The petitioner's counsel argued that **prosecuting a child for offenses under the POCSO Act or IPC sexual offenses was not feasible as the child could not be attributed with criminal intent due to their age**.
- The court noted that while the **POCSO Act did not define a "child," the JJ Act, 2015, defined a child as someone who has not yet turned 18 years old**.
- Consequently, the court directed that the investigation against the petitioner should be completed within two months.

Skyroot Aerospace successfully test fires stage-2 of Vikram-1 launch vehicle in A.P. (GS Paper III: S&T)

- Skyroot Aerospace conducted a successful test firing of the stage-2 of its **Vikram-1 launch vehicle**.
- The test took place at the propulsion testbed of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) at Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC) in Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh.

- **Stage-2, known as Kalam-250**, is crucial during the ascent phase of the launch vehicle, propelling it through the Earth's atmosphere and into space.
- The **Vikram-1** launch will mark a significant milestone for the Indian space sector as **it will be the country's first private orbital rocket launch**.
- This follows **Skyroot's suborbital launch of India's first private rocket, the Vikram-S, in November 2022**.
- The test lasted 85 seconds and recorded a peak sea-level thrust of 186 kilonewtons (kN).
- This thrust is expected to translate to a fully expanded vacuum thrust of around 235kN during flight.
- The **Kalam-250 is a high-strength carbon composite rocket motor.**
- It utilizes **solid fuel and a high-performance Ethylene-Propylene-Diene terpolymers (EPDM) Thermal Protection System (TPS).**
- Stage-2 includes a carbon ablative flex nozzle and high-precision electro-mechanical actuators for thrust vector control.
- These components help the rocket achieve the desired trajectory.
- The solid propellant used in the Kalam-250 was processed by Solar Industries at their Nagpur facility.

Lit for Ramzan

The bazaar around Charminar stands illuminated against the dark night as shops with discounted fare and a slew of food stalls draw lakhs of people from Hyderabad city and beyond for Ramzan shopping and seasonal delicacies. NAGARA GOPAL

- **Location:** Hyderabad, Telangana, India
- **Meaning:** "Four Minarets" in Urdu
- **Construction:** Completed in 1591 AD
- **Purpose:** Primarily as a mosque; also a commemorative structure

History

- **Founder:** **Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah**, the fifth ruler of the Qutb Shahi dynasty.
- **Reasons for Building**

- o **Commemoration:** Marking the end of a deadly plague that ravaged the city of Hyderabad. Quli Qutb Shah is believed to have prayed at this spot and vowed to build a mosque if the plague ended.
- o **Establishment of Hyderabad:** Marking the foundation of the new capital city, Hyderabad, as the Qutb Shahis shifted their base from Golconda.
- **Architecture:** Indo-Islamic architectural style featuring Persian influences.

  - o **Structure:** A square base with four grand arches facing the main streets.
  - o **Minarets:** Four intricately carved minarets, each with a double balcony and a dome.
  - o **Mosque:** A small mosque on the upper floor.

Govt. extends AFSPA in parts of Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh (GS Paper III: Internal Security)   (GS Paper III: Internal Security)

- The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) extended the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA) in **parts of Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh**.
- The extension is for another six months.
- In Nagaland, AFSPA has been extended in the **entirety of eight districts and 21 police stations in five other districts**.

AFSPA
- **It is an** Act of Parliament passed in 1958, granting special powers to the armed forces in designated "disturbed areas".
- **Disturbed Areas:** An area can be declared "disturbed" **by the state or central government** if considered seriously threatened by violent militant, separatist, or insurgency activity.
- **Aim:** To enable the armed forces to effectively maintain public order in areas facing internal disturbances.

Key Powers Granted Under AFSPA
- **Arrest without warrant:** Arrest an individual without a warrant based on reasonable suspicion.
- **Search and seizure:** Enter and search premises without a warrant.
- **Use of force:** Use force, even to the point of causing death, if deemed necessary for maintaining public order (with some conditions).
- **Protection from prosecution:** Provides a certain degree of legal immunity to armed forces personnel for actions taken under AFSPA.

Areas Where AFSPA is in Force
- **AFSPA is in force in parts of:**
  - o **Jammu and Kashmir**
  - o **Assam**
  - o **Nagaland**
  - o **Parts of Arunachal Pradesh**
  - o **Parts of Manipur**
- **Partial Withdrawal:** AFSPA has been partially withdrawn or completely removed from several areas in recent years, including Tripura and Meghalaya.

Controversy and Debate
- **Human Rights Concerns:** AFSPA has been heavily criticized by human rights organizations for alleged human rights abuses and excesses committed by armed forces under its protection.
- **Calls for Revocation:** There have been widespread demands for repeal or modification of AFSPA, especially in the Northeastern states.
- **Government Perspective:** The government argues AFSPA is necessary in areas facing severe internal disturbances to maintain law and order.

- In Arunachal Pradesh, AFSPA has been extended in three districts and areas under the jurisdiction of three police stations in Namsai district.
- The notification issued under Section 3 of the AFSPA for a duration of six months, starting from April 1, unless withdrawn earlier.
- In Nagaland, AFSPA will be effective in Dimapur, Niuland, Chumoukedima, Mon, Kiphire, Noklak, Phek, and Peren districts.
- It will also be applicable in specific police stations including Khuzama, Kohima North, Kohima South, Zubza, and Kezocha in Kohima district, among others.
- In Mokokchung district, it applies to Mangkolemba, Mokokchung-I, Longtho, Tuli, Longchem, and Anaki 'C' police stations.
- Yanglok police station in Longleng district and Bhandari, Champang, and Ralan police stations in Wokha district are also covered.
- In Zunheboto district, AFSPA extends to Ghatashi, Pughoboto, Satakha, Suruhuto, Zunheboto, and Aghunato police stations.
- In Arunachal Pradesh, AFSPA has been extended to Tirap, Changlang, and Longding districts.
- Additionally, it applies to areas under the jurisdiction of Namsai, Mahadevpur, and Chowkham police stations in Namsai district along the Assam border.

India should lead the way on peace process: Ukraine FM   (GS Paper II: IR)

- Ukraine hopes India will participate in a peace summit hosted by Switzerland this summer and help bring Russia to the negotiation table.
- Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba expressed this hope ahead of his meeting with External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar on Friday.
- This visit marks the first high-level visit from Ukraine since the Russian attacks began in February 2022.
- The purpose of the visit is to seek diplomatic and mediatory support from the Narendra Modi government and request technical assistance for reconstructing destroyed facilities in Ukraine.
- The **visit indicates a shift in both New Delhi and Kyiv's positions, as Mr. Kuleba had criticized India's purchases of Russian oil earlier.**
- The **Modi government has not sent any minister to Kyiv since the war began and did not invite Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to address the G-20 in 2023, despite Kyiv's request**.
- Mr. Kuleba emphasized that India's participation in the Swiss summit would enhance the credibility of the peace efforts.
- He urged India to leverage its influence with Russia to encourage its participation in the summit, expressing confidence that discussions with Russia would eventually take place.
- The spokesperson reiterated India's commitment to peaceful conflict resolution through dialogue and diplomacy but did not confirm India's response to the invitation.

Advisory boards have to consider if detention is needed in eyes of law: SC   (GS Paper II: Fundamental Rights)

- The Supreme Court emphasized the crucial role of advisory boards in preventive detention laws.

- **Advisory boards should not merely approve detention orders but should act as safeguards against arbitrary state power, protecting personal liberty.**
- **Article 22** of the Constitution mandates the formation of advisory boards consisting of individuals eligible to be High Court judges.
- Justice Pardiwala highlighted that the requirement for board members to be qualified for High Court judgeships is significant, ensuring thorough scrutiny of government detention orders.
- These boards are tasked with reviewing detention orders every three months to assess their justification.
- Boards must carefully consider all relevant materials, request additional information if necessary, provide the detainee with an opportunity to be heard, and submit a report determining the justification of the detention.
- The Supreme Court's ruling was in response to an appeal filed by an individual detained under the **Telangana Prevention of Dangerous Activities Act, 1986**, on orders from the Telangana police.
- The police detained the appellant, accusing him of being a threat to public order due to his alleged involvement in criminal activities.
- Specifically, he was accused of causing panic and fear among women by snatching their mangalsutras (a sacred necklace) in broad daylight.
- Justice Pardiwala emphasized that depriving someone of their personal liberty based on the assumption of potential future crimes, without concrete evidence, is unjust.
- The Supreme Court noted that the state failed to provide sufficient evidence to demonstrate that the appellant posed a threat to public order.
- **Justice Pardiwala clarified the distinction between "public order" and "law and order."**
- **Issues of "law and order" typically affect a limited number of individuals, whereas matters of "public order" impact the broader community or even the entire country.**
- **Public order refers to the smooth functioning of society as a whole.**
- The court highlighted that the failure of the police to handle law and order issues should not justify resorting to preventive detention measures.
- Ultimately, the detention order was overturned because none of the FIRs against the appellant directly implicated him.

Households across the world waste 1 billion meals a day, says UN report   (GS Paper II: Poverty and Hunger)

- The **Food Waste Index Report 2024, co-authored by UNEP and WRAP**, revealed concerning statistics regarding global food waste in 2022.
- Despite **783 million people facing hunger and a third of humanity experiencing food insecurity**, households worldwide wasted over one billion meals daily.
- In 2022, food waste amounted to 1.05 billion tonnes, equivalent to 132 kilograms per capita, and nearly one-fifth of all available food for consumers.
- Household waste accounted for 60% of total food waste, while food services were responsible for 28%, and retail accounted for 12%.
- The **report emphasized the need to enhance data infrastructure for tracking and monitoring food waste, especially in low- and middle-income countries lacking adequate systems**.
- Meeting **Sustainable Development Goal 12.3**, which aims to halve food waste by 2030, requires better tracking mechanisms, particularly in retail and food services sectors.

- Currently, **only four G-20 countries (Australia, Japan, U.K., U.S.) and the European Union have food waste estimates suitable for monitoring progress toward the 2030 goal**.
- The **report challenges the notion that food waste is only a problem in wealthy nations, revealing that average household food waste levels vary by just 7 kg per capita across high-income, upper-middle, and lower-middle-income countries**.
- **Warmer climates** tend to generate more food waste per capita in households, possibly due to increased consumption of fresh foods with significant inedible parts and a lack of effective cold chains.
- **Food waste has significant implications for climate change, contributing 8%-10% of annual global greenhouse gas emissions**, which is nearly five times the emissions from the aviation sector. Additionally, it leads to significant biodiversity loss by utilizing a third of the world's agricultural land.
- The **economic impact of food loss and waste is estimated at $1 trillion globally**.
- **Rural areas tend to waste less food compared to urban areas, primarily due to greater diversion of food scraps to pets, livestock, and home composting.**
- Governments are urged to integrate efforts to reduce food loss and waste into their climate strategies to enhance climate ambition and meet targets outlined in their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).
- **A flagship report by UNEP (United Nations Environment Programme) and WRAP (Waste & Resources Action Programme):** The first **Food Waste Index report** was released in 2021; the 2024 edition provides updated data and insights.
- **Purpose:** Measures and tracks trends in food waste at the retail, food service, and household levels across the globe.
- **Key Goal:** Help countries achieve the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Target 12.3: Halving global food waste per capita at retail and consumer levels, and reducing food losses along the food production and supply chains by 2030.

Eradication of TB remains a distant goal as systemic challenges persist   (GS Paper II: Health Sector)

- Survivors Against TB, a group of TB survivors, wrote a letter to the Prime Minister ahead of **World TB Day on March 24**, emphasizing the urgent need to address India's Tuberculosis (TB) crisis.
- Despite the government's commitment to eliminate high-burden infectious TB by 2025, significant challenges persist, as stated in the letter.
- **Six key challenges are identified:** TB diagnosis and access; lack of access to free, quality treatment and drugs; adequate nutrition and mental health support; stigma-free and gender-responsive care; economic support; and high-quality care.
- Tuberculosis is described as a **"biosocial problem" requiring "biosocial solutions**," according to a commentary in The Lancet.

India could lead in TB elimination

- India's efforts in TB elimination are highlighted, but challenges remain, as per the World TB Report 2023.
- In 2022, India recorded **an average of 199 new TB infections per 100,000 people, with a significant portion being multi-drug resistant**.
- Approximately **400,000 people die from TB in India each year.**
- Current biomedical strategies include the **BCG vaccine, tuberculosis preventive treatment (TPT), and newer, shorter rifamycin-based treatment regimes**.

- Challenges such **as insufficient diagnosis and treatment access, stigma, and socioeconomic barriers** continue to impede India's progress in combating TB.
- **Undernutrition** is identified as a major risk factor for both new TB cases and severe TB outcomes, **impacting treatment efficacy and mortality rates**.
- Nutritional support is crucial for TB patients, and the government has recognized this by launching schemes like a direct benefit transfer of ₹500 and a food-basket scheme under the PM TB Mukt Bharat Abhiyan since 2018.

Nutritional support

- A study in **The Lancet Global Health in 2023 showed that nutritional support resulted in weight gain and reduced the risk of death by 40–50%** among TB patients in Jharkhand.
- TB management in India should address social factors like undernutrition related to poverty alongside focusing on the bacterium, drugs, and vaccines.
- Delayed diagnosis and lack of access to quality care are significant challenges in TB management.
- SATB emphasizes the need to expand access to free, accurate, and affordable TB diagnosis, especially in remote and marginalized communities.
- Early diagnosis is crucial, and **India should increase the coverage of rapid molecular diagnostic tests for TB among presumptive patients**.
- Multi-drug resistance exacerbates the problem, with 63,801 patients diagnosed with drug-resistant TB in 2022.
- **Barriers to care for MDR-TB patients include diagnosis, lack of counseling, late referral to the national TB elimination program, and financial constraints.**
- Late referrals, often due to delayed reporting to health centers, are a major issue, with about two-thirds of individuals with TB symptoms not seeking healthcare services.
- **TB in children is a significant concern in India, contributing to approximately 31% of the global burden, with children constituting 6–7% of all patients treated under the national TB elimination program annually**.

Comprehensive care

- Dr. Shewade suggests focusing on nutrition through sustainable and cost-effective strategies to address TB.
- Implementing existing guidance from India's national TB program involves **doubling the monthly ration for households of TB patients with severe undernutrition (BMI less than 16) and measuring BMI for all adult TB patients at diagnosis**.
- Alternatively, budgets permitting, this strategy could be applied to all households affected by TB for at least one year to supplement nutrition and reduce TB incidence among household contacts.
- Patients with very severe undernutrition require therapeutic nutrition, such as formula liquid oral feeds, during inpatient care.
- These patients often have poor appetite and may need earmarked beds for isolation or admission in medical college or district headquarters hospitals, along with facilities for therapeutic nutrition.
- A State-wide differentiated TB care model in Tamil Nadu (TN-KET) showed that triaging patients to identify those in need of comprehensive assessment and inpatient care can reduce TB deaths in resource-limited settings.
- Since 70% of TB deaths occur within the first two months, triaging patients at TB diagnosis and inferring indicators even without laboratory and clinical capacity is crucial according to Dr. Shewade.

The countdown to a Pandemic Treaty (GS Paper II: Health Sector)

The World Health Organization Pandemic Agreement represents a critical step towards rebuilding trust and coordination between nations, but there are indications that it runs the risk of collapse

- **In March 2021, 25 heads of government and international agencies issued a call for a pandemic treaty**, marking a significant moment in global health governance.
- The ninth meeting of the **Intergovernmental Negotiating Body (INB)** for the **World Health Organization (WHO) Pandemic Agreement** began on March 18, 2021.
- This agreement, spanning **30 pages**, is considered the most significant development in global health since 1948.
- The fate of the Pandemic Agreement hinges on approval at the **World Health Assembly** in late May, amid debates that could lead to its collapse.
- The **WHO Pandemic Agreement aims to address the failures exposed by the COVID-19 crisis and strengthen global defenses against future pandemics**.
- It **focuses on enhancing pandemic prevention, preparedness, and response with equity as the primary goal**.
- The treaty aims to **rectify issues like insufficient preparedness in countries and lack of coordination at international levels**, which were highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic.

What is global pandemic treaty?

- The draft negotiating text of the Pandemic Agreement covers various crucial issues, including:

  - **Pathogen surveillance**: Monitoring pathogens with pandemic potential.
  - **Health-care workforce capacity**: Strengthening the capacity of healthcare workers.
  - **Supply chain and logistics**: Ensuring efficient supply chains and logistics.
  - **Technology transfer**: Supporting the production of vaccines, diagnostic tests, and treatments through technology transfer.
  - **Waivers of intellectual property (IP) rights**: Allowing waivers of IP rights **to facilitate access to medical products**.

- **Countries are required to commit to managing antimicrobial resistance better, strengthening health systems and sanitation, and moving towards universal health coverage**.
- Separate discussions at WHO focus on **amending the International Health Regulations**, which mandate countries to report health emergencies within their borders.
- There's a significant emphasis on equitable access to medical products throughout the text, visible in provisions related to principles, preparedness, production, technology transfer, access and benefit sharing, as well as supply and procurement.

- The negotiating texts propose establishing a **Conference of Parties (COP) to oversee the implementation of the Pandemic Agreement**.
- This suggests that the Agreement could be a traditional international treaty adopted under Article 19 of the WHO Constitution, rather than under the Article 21 opt-out regulations.
- **Developing countries have largely accepted the revised negotiating text at the ongoing negotiations, while developed countries have criticized it**.

- Developed countries, including Australia, Canada, the European Union, the United Kingdom, and the United States, have referred to elements in the text as **'redlines' for them**, particularly **regarding financing and intellectual property (IP) matters**.
- Some developed countries labeled the text as a 'step backwards.'
- Apart from major substantive disagreements, there's also a general **disagreement on the modalities for conducting these negotiations in the final stretch**.
- India, representing the South-East Asia region, has **stressed the importance of clarity regarding obligations and responsibilities**, especially between developed and developing countries, to effectively operationalize equity within the Agreement.

The concerns

- The most contentious aspect of the Agreement involves **establishing a global system for sharing pathogens and their genetic codes**.
- **Developing countries are hesitant to share this information without assurances of equitable access to the benefits derived from research, especially vaccines**.
- The **Agreement proposes a quid pro quo mechanism called the WHO Pathogen Access and Benefit-Sharing (PABS) System to address this issue**.
- Under this system, countries must share genome sequence information and samples with WHO-coordinated networks and databases.
- In return, **manufacturers of diagnostics, therapeutics, and vaccines must provide 10% of their products for free and 10% at not-for-profit prices**.
- The **provision aims to establish legal obligations on benefit-sharing for all users of biological materials and genetic sequence data under PABS**.
- The main challenge lies in global governance, enforcement, and accountability within the Agreement.
- Without adequate accountability and enforcement mechanisms, the Agreement would be merely symbolic.
- Insufficient enforcement capabilities also hinder coordination efforts for pandemic countermeasure stockpiles, deployment of international medical response teams, and monitoring and data sharing.
- **The current International Health Regulations are legally binding but failed to prevent unjust travel or trade restrictions and vaccine hoarding during the COVID-19 pandemic**.
- Proposals for a decision-making body, comprising the Conference of Parties (COP) along with a secretariat, have been included in the negotiating text.
- It remains uncertain whether negotiators will reach consensus on this structure, which **resembles the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) summits where all nations have equal voting rights**.
- A contentious issue in the negotiating text is the proposed requirement **for firms that received public financing to waive or reduce their intellectual property royalties**.

What next?

- The current round of negotiations in Geneva ends this week.
- The aim is to reach a consensus decision by the World Health Assembly at the end of May.
- There is **a risk of a watered-down Agreement** due to the pressure to secure consensus.
- The draft Agreement addresses most concerns from the recent pandemic but some language, especially regarding IP waivers, may be diluted.
- Failing to reach an agreement would be a serious setback.

- The Pandemic Agreement is crucial for rebuilding trust and coordination between nations to combat future pandemics.

Easily provoked: On India's internal affairs and foreign comments (GS Paper II: India-US Relations)

India is not showing confidence about its own democratic record

- New Delhi and Washington are seemingly heading towards a confrontation regarding the U.S.'s expression of concerns about the actions of the Modi government before the general election.
- The U.S. State Department spokesperson commented on the arrest of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, leading to the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) summoning the acting Deputy Chief of the U.S. mission in Delhi and strongly advising the U.S. against interfering in India's internal affairs.
- A German diplomat also received a reprimand for a similar statement, though Germany later softened its remarks.
- The **U.S. administration, however, persisted with its statements regarding the need for fair legal processes, including criticism of actions such as freezing the Congress Party's accounts during the election campaign, drawing another rebuke**.
- The **Modi government faces growing U.S. concerns over various issues including the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, farmers' protests, actions against NGOs, and legal actions against opposition politicians**.
- There's a need for the Modi government to reflect on whether these interventions are legitimate concerns.
- The **situation may signal a larger problem in the India-U.S. relationship**.
- Recent events, such as the **U.S. indictment of an alleged assassination plot against a Khalistani separatist with a purported link to a top Indian security official**, **have strained public engagement despite continued cooperation in trade, technology sharing, and military and strategic areas**.
- **U.S. President Joe Biden's decision to decline India's Republic Day invitation, opting instead to attend the Quad summit, and the cancellation of U.S. NSA Jake Sullivan's visit, along with the vacancy in the post of Indian Ambassador to Washington**, require careful examination.
- New Delhi faces several choices regarding the uproar surrounding Mr. Kejriwal's arrest.
- It can opt to **continue the public confrontation with the U.S.,** engaging in a noisy and unsightly dispute.
- Alternatively, it could **respond to the U.S. by commenting on its own internal affairs in a tit-for-tat manner**.
- The third option involves **refusing to be provoked by the situation**.
- While the third option might not seem appealing to the current government, which often engages in aggressive public diplomacy, it could demonstrate strength and security.
- **Effective global leadership, which India aims for, demands resilience and a willingness to withstand criticism, supported by a quiet confidence in its democratic credentials to speak for themselves.**

Jobs outlook bleak: On the 'The India Employment Report 2024' (GS Paper III: Inclusive Growth and Unemployment)

Training for a technologically evolving economy must be accorded primacy

- A recent report on youth employment in India highlights a concerning situation.
- Titled **'The India Employment Report 2024'**, the report is by the **Institute for Human Development/International Labour Organisation**.
- It paints a grim picture of India's 'demographic dividend', suggesting it may go to waste without immediate policy interventions.
- Around **7-8 million young people are added to India's labour force annually**.
- Youth constitute about **83% of India's unemployed workforce**.
- **Among the unemployed, the proportion of educated youth has nearly doubled from 35.2% in 2000 to 65.7% in 2022**.
- **Graduates face a significantly higher unemployment rate (29.1%) compared to those with lower education levels (3.4%)**.
- **Lack of suitable jobs for educated youth and deficiencies in the quality of education contribute to this situation**.
- **Wages, adjusted for inflation, have either stagnated or declined, adding to the challenges faced by youth seeking employment**.

- India's demographic dividend is diminishing rapidly, with **the share of young people projected to decline from 27% in 2021 to 23% by 2036**.
- **Despite high economic growth, unemployment rates among youth remain high, and working conditions for many employed youth are poor**.
- The report emphasizes the need for a comprehensive policy vision to harness the demographic dividend effectively.
- Significant gender imbalances exist in the **Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR)**, with women's LFPR much lower than men's.
- The **majority of workers in India are engaged in informal jobs, highlighting the lack of a coherent policy framework for better employment opportunities**.
- The Chief Economic Adviser has expressed concerns about the government's limitations in effecting change, contrasting with the proactive approach of entities like the **U.S. Federal Open Market Committee's primary policy mandate 'of promoting maximum employment along with stable prices' to realise intent ultimately holds the key.**.
- With general elections approaching, politicians need to **prioritize job creation and improving the quality of education and training to address the evolving needs of the economy**.

MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION: GS PAPER III: INCLUSIVE GROWTH and UNEMPLOYMENT

Question: Comment on the challenges for inclusive growth which include careless and useless manpower in the Indian context. Suggest measures to be taken for facing these challenges. (200 Words/12 ½ Marks) (UPSC 2016)

ANSWER APPROACH

- Introduce your answer with brief explanation of **Inclusive Growth and careless and useless manpower.**
- Then Bring challenges posed by careless and useless manpower.
- Then discuss the measures to address these challenges.
- Further bring Additional Considerations.
- Conclude with a suggestive note.

ANSWER

Inclusive growth, an approach to economic development aiming to benefit all segments of society, faces a significant obstacle in the Indian context: the prevalence of careless and useless manpower. This refers to a workforce segment lacking the necessary skills, motivation, or awareness to contribute meaningfully to economic output. This issue significantly hinders India's ability to translate its demographic dividend into sustained and equitable progress.

Challenges Posed by Careless and Useless Manpower

- **Skill Mismatch:** India faces a severe mismatch between the skills possessed by its workforce and those in demand by the economy. Rapid technological change and a shift towards service-oriented sectors further compound this problem. This leads to underemployment and a significant portion of the workforce trapped in low-productivity occupations.
- **Low Productivity:** Carelessness and lack of motivation directly translate to low productivity. India's labor productivity lags behind many emerging economies. This makes Indian products and services less competitive and undermines economic growth.
- **Lack of Awareness:** Many workers, especially in rural and informal sectors, lack awareness of their rights, available opportunities, and market demands. This limits their ability to engage in more productive activities.
- **Social and Economic Exclusion:** Careless and useless manpower fuels social and economic disparities. Individuals trapped in low-productivity jobs face poverty, limited access to basic services, and a lack of upward mobility. This perpetuates cycles of marginalization and inequality.
- **Informalization of the Economy:** A vast portion of India's workforce is employed in the informal sector, characterized by low wages, precarious working conditions, and a lack of social security. The presence of a careless and unskilled workforce reinforces this informalization.

Measures to Address these Challenges
- **Reorienting the Education System:** Urgent reforms are needed to bridge the gap between education and employability. Greater emphasis on vocational training, apprenticeship programs, and curricula aligned with market needs is essential. Soft skills like problem-solving and communication should be integrated into education.
- **Targeted Skill Development Initiatives:** Government schemes like the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) need to be broadened and made more effective. Focus should be on the needs of specific industries and regions, fostering partnerships with the private sector to ensure relevance.
- **Promotion of Entrepreneurship:** Self-employment and small businesses have the potential to absorb a significant proportion of the workforce. Enabling access to finance, facilitating ease of doing business, and providing mentoring support are crucial.
- **Labor Market Reforms:** Labor laws need to be carefully balanced to protect workers' rights and promote flexibility, encouraging formalization of the workforce.

- **Improving Rural Infrastructure and Livelihoods:** Investments in rural infrastructure, technology-driven agriculture, and non-farm livelihoods are essential to raise productivity and incomes in rural areas.

Additional Considerations

- **Tackling Social Discrimination:** Discrimination based on caste, gender, or region limits the opportunities available to certain groups. Social and legal measures to ensure equal access to education and employment are essential.
- **Focus on Quality and Accessibility of Healthcare:** A healthy workforce is more productive. Access to affordable and quality healthcare is central to building long-term human capital.
- **Encouraging Technological Adoption:** While automation poses some risks, the careful adoption of new technologies can create jobs and increase productivity. The focus should be on re-skilling workers for the digital economy.

Thus, overcoming the challenge of careless and useless manpower is not easy and requires a multi-pronged approach. It necessitates substantial investment in human capital, structural reforms to the economy, and a commitment to social equity. By addressing these challenges, India can unlock its true potential, transforming its vast population into a powerful engine for inclusive and sustainable growth.

An avoidable trend at political rallies (GS Paper II: Elections)

Leaders would do well to announce policies and promises at rallies instead of launching a diatribe against the media

- **Journalists face numerous dangers in their line of work, including legal reprisals, political pressures, and now, hostility from crowds incited by their leaders**.
- Political gatherings and rallies are particularly risky for reporters, as some politicians manipulate the crowd to view journalists as adversaries.
- Politicians often create an **'us versus them' narrative**, turning the crowd against the media and fostering an environment of hostility.
- **Reporters risk verbal abuse and physical violence** from crowds conditioned to see journalists as opponents rather than essential conveyors of information.
- An example of this hostility occurred during Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra in Maharashtra, where he accused the media of not showing the truth, prompting the crowd to shout anti-media slogans.
- The journalist initially chose to stand among the people instead of in the designated press area to interact with them during the rally.
- However, upon hearing Rahul Gandhi's remarks and sensing the crowd's anger, the journalist discreetly hid their media card and chose to remain anonymous to avoid confrontation.
- The journalist realized that in aggressive crowds, distinctions between journalists or their media affiliations are irrelevant; all media are perceived as biased.
- Later, the journalist met Rahul Gandhi along with two other journalists to express their concerns about his remarks.
- Gandhi understood their concerns and refrained from criticizing the media during a subsequent rally in Mumbai.
- Opposition leaders like Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy in Andhra Pradesh and K. Chandrasekhar Rao in Telangana often target media houses to undermine their credibility among the public.

- **Some leaders go to the extent of barring journalists from certain media outlets from attending press conferences or asking questions**.
- **Such tactics undermine the principles of democracy and freedom of the press**.
- **The primary role of journalists is to inform the public about events affecting their daily lives**.
- As India approaches the Lok Sabha elections, it's hoped that **political leaders will focus on announcing policies and promises instead of attacking journalists**.

Understanding India's coal imports (GS Paper III: Industries)

The discourse around coal shortages in India needs course correction

- Electricity shortages are becoming more common in India due to unpredictable weather patterns and a rapidly growing economy.

More about logistics

- A major factor contributing to these shortages is the shortage of domestic thermal coal used in electricity generation.
- In August 2023, there was a shortage of about 840 million units of electricity, attributed to a poor monsoon leading to increased demand and reduced supply from some sources.
- However, this shortage was only 0.55% of the total demand for electricity that month.
- Despite the availability of over 30 million tonnes of coal in coal mines during August and September, the challenge lies in the **insufficient logistics to transport coal to power plants**.
- A Ministry of Power advisory highlights logistical issues associated with the **railway network as a major constraint** in ensuring an adequate supply of domestic coal to power plants.
- Addressing the logistics challenge of transporting coal to power plants will take time, so alternative solutions are needed to deal with electricity shortages in the meantime.
- Coal remains India's primary solution for meeting shortages, with the assumption that alternative sources mainly involve imports.
- Coal India Ltd. auctions about 10% of its production annually, offering a potential alternative source of coal for power plants.
- While auctioned coal prices may be higher than coal obtained from other sources, they are still lower than the price of imported coal.
- Despite the availability of auctioned coal, many power plants do not consider it a viable alternative.

The issue of imports

- Some thermal coal imports may still be necessary, even with the use of auctioned coal, to blend with domestic coal.
- The Ministry of Power issued an advisory to power generators to monitor their coal stocks and import coal as needed, up to 6% by weight, until June 2024.
- While this **advisory was reported as a mandate for importing 6% coal,** electricity regulators should ensure prudence in electricity costs and not interpret such advisories as mandates.
- Despite being labeled as an advisory, some have misconstrued the Ministry of Power's guidance on coal imports as a mandate.
- The advisory emphasizes blending coal "as per the requirements," indicating flexibility rather than compulsion.

- **Analysis suggests that a small increase in blending could have resolved shortages without necessitating the full 6% import limit**.
- **Treating the 6% import limit as mandatory can lead to significant cost impacts**, particularly since coal still accounts for over 70% of India's electricity generation.
- **Mandatory blending at the 6% level could raise variable costs of coal-based electricity by 4.5%-7.5%.**
- Regulatory mechanisms enabling automatic blending without consultation risk authorizing higher costs for an extended period without adequate justification.

Generation and location

- Not all power plants in India face the same challenges regarding coal shortages.
- Plants located closer to mines (pit-head plants) typically generate more power and are less prone to coal shortages.
- Shortages are more common in plants situated far from mines, which may not generate as much electricity.
- Interpreting the advisory as a mandate for all plants to import 6% coal is unwarranted and unjustified.
- The **primary challenge lies in addressing logistics bottlenecks preventing coal from reaching plants where it's needed**.
- Regulatory bodies and distribution utilities should ensure that coal-based plants remain vigilant about potential shortages.
- Identifying the cheapest alternative sources to bridge the gap, which may not always involve imports, is essential.
- Failure to address these challenges efficiently could result in consumers bearing the burden of inefficient coal procurement practices.

Did the electoral bonds scheme enable extortion   (GS Paper II: Election)

- Many companies that faced regulatory action from the Enforcement Directorate (ED) or Income Tax (IT) Department donated electoral bonds worth crores of rupees to ruling parties, show data submitted by the State Bank of India (SBI) to the Election Commission of India (ECI).
- Some companies which got huge government contracts purchased bonds for large amounts. Some new companies, which were incorporated during the COVID-19 pandemic, purchased bonds worth crores of rupees just months after starting out.
- Was the electoral bonds scheme used as an extortion tool?**Subhash Chandra Garg** and **Anjali Bhardwaj** discuss this question in a conversation moderated by **Vignesh Radhakrishnan**. Edited excerpts:

Many companies purchased bonds worth crores of rupees after ED/IT action. Most of these funds went to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP); some went to the ruling parties in various States. Some have called this scheme an extortion tool? Do you agree?

- Anjali Bhardwaj raises concerns about companies under scrutiny by investigative agencies like the ED, CBI, and IT Department purchasing electoral bonds, with a significant portion going to the ruling party.
- She questions whether these agencies were used to target companies for funds and if companies hoped to influence investigations by donating to the ruling party.

- Bhardwaj suggests that **deeper investigation is needed into these matters.**
- Subhash Chandra Garg acknowledges the investigative analysis done by civil society after the data became public.
- Garg mentions the **possibility of correlating actions by investigative agencies with the dates of electoral bond purchases.**
- He suggests that the anonymity provided by the scheme may have led companies to trust it, and without this transparency, donations could have remained untraceable.

Strong correlations can also be seen between companies making large donations and receiving high-value government contracts. Is it right to treat these cases as quid pro quo?

- Subhash Chandra Garg acknowledges the common practice of quid pro quo in political donations, where **companies donate to serve their business interests.**
- He views the **electoral bonds scheme as a transparent way of facilitating quid pro quo by allowing legitimate funds for donations while maintaining confidentiality.**
- Anjali Bhardwaj agrees that quid pro quo has been a longstanding issue in political funding, where companies donate to influence policies and secure contracts.
- She highlights that while such transactions occurred before the electoral bonds scheme, the scheme made it even harder to trace the flow of funds.
- Bhardwaj criticizes the lack of transparency in the electoral bonds scheme, noting that while cash donations were reduced, there were loopholes allowing for money laundering through trading of bonds.
- She argues that the **scheme prioritized anonymity over transparency, which undermined public rights to know about political donations.**
- Garg defends the electoral bonds scheme, stating that it reduced cash donations and protected companies from potential retribution by maintaining anonymity between donors and political parties.
- He suggests that the focus should not solely be on blaming companies but also on improving the business environment to reduce the need for companies to please the government for success.

Some companies donated crores of rupees months after getting incorporated. Some that started during the COVID-19 pandemic donated more than ₹30 crore within a year. Many of them do not even have a website. Some companies donated more than ₹50 crore despite facing losses in a financial year. What could these findings indicate?

- **Subhash Chandra Garg argues that allowing loss-making companies to donate levels the playing field and avoids disadvantaging them in competing for contracts.**
- He acknowledges instances of companies incorporating or changing names before donating but suggests this doesn't necessarily indicate criminality.
- Anjali Bhardwaj criticizes the electoral bonds scheme for allowing even loss-making companies to donate, potentially for quid pro quo purposes.
- She highlights concerns about the **scheme facilitating the creation of shell companies to funnel anonymous donations, leading to black money generation and obscured political funding.**
- Bhardwaj notes that **reducing the cash donation cap did little to prevent undisclosed cash donations, as parties could still split large amounts into untraceable contributions.**

- She argues that the scheme's goal of reducing cash in politics and increasing funding transparency was not achieved, as evidenced by substantial income from electoral bonds and the use of shell companies for donations.
- Garg responds by stating that concerns about shell companies were addressed in consultations with the RBI, and adjustments were made to minimize risks, such as setting a finite life for bonds.
- He contends that direct donations from companies' accounts are logical and transparent, reducing the need for shell companies, and defends the scheme's intentional focus on anonymity.
- Garg suggests that releasing detailed data offers insights into donation patterns without undermining the scheme's purpose.

The SBI had asked for four months to match unique numbers but delivered them under a week after a rap **from the Court. The Finance Ministry had claimed that the unique numbers were not recorded anywhere, but the latest disclosure shows that they were recorded. What do these contradicting statements show?**

- Subhash Chandra Garg asserts that the **alphanumeric code in electoral bonds was a security feature**, not intended for identification purposes, similar to security features on currency notes.
- He suggests that using a non-digitisable security method might have been more appropriate in hindsight, but defends the confidentiality of the alphanumeric codes, which aligned with the scheme's intentions.
- Anjali Bhardwaj questions the **SBI's claim of needing four months to collate data, suggesting it aimed to misinform the Court and delay disclosure until after the election date.**
- **She highlights concerns about the alphanumeric code being recorded on both the purchaser and depositor sides, potentially compromising the scheme's integrity and making sensitive information accessible to the ruling party.**
- Bhardwaj argues that these issues warrant thorough investigation, and citizens have a right to understand the SBI's role in this context.

Tech giants facing EU scrutiny (GS Paper III: Competitive Markets)

- The European Commission initiated "non-compliance investigations" against major tech companies such as Apple, Meta (formerly Facebook), Google's parent company Alphabet, and Amazon.
- These investigations are part of efforts to ensure fair and competitive markets in the digital sector, aligning with the provisions of the **Digital Markets Act (DMA).**
- The investigations will focus on assessing whether these companies are complying with the regulations outlined in the DMA.
- Specifically, **Amazon's ranking practices within its marketplace will be scrutinized, along with various practices of Apple, Meta, and Alphabet**.
- The aim is to **promote fairness and competition in the digital market space** by addressing any potential non-compliance issues among these tech giants.

Where is the context of these non-compliance investigations?

- The European Commission's non-compliance investigations target Alphabet (Google's parent company), Apple, and Meta (formerly Facebook), focusing on their practices related to **steering customers towards their own services over competitors**'.
- Alphabet is being scrutinized for alleged rules **directing customers to its own services over competitors, while Apple faces investigation for similar practices within its App Store and the positioning of its Safari browser.** Meta is under investigation for its "**pay or consent model**."
- These investigations align with the primary goal of the Digital Markets Act (DMA), which aims to regulate 'gatekeepers' and ensure fair competition in the digital market.
- Designated 'gatekeepers,' including Alphabet, Amazon, Apple, TikTok's parent company ByteDance, and Microsoft, were expected to comply fully with DMA obligations by March 7.
- Before initiating the investigations, the Commission assessed mandatory compliance reports from these companies and gathered feedback from stakeholders.
- Margrethe Vestager, Executive Vice-President overseeing competition policy at the Commission, highlighted ongoing discussions with gatekeepers to facilitate adaptation, but expressed concerns about the adequacy of solutions provided by Alphabet, Apple, and Meta in ensuring fairness and openness in the digital space for European citizens and businesses.

How are the steering rules non-compliant?

- DMA (Digital Markets Act) provisions state that app developers should have the freedom to direct consumers to offers and services outside the app store operated by 'gatekeepers' like Alphabet (Google) and Apple, without any additional charges.
- The European Commission expressed concerns about Alphabet and Apple not fully complying with these provisions, citing various restrictions and limitations imposed by them.
- Apple defended its stance by emphasizing the importance of tight integration in its App Store for providing a secure and seamless user experience.
- Apple criticized DMA provisions for treating size as equivalent to harm and imposing regulatory obligations without considering potential benefits to consumers or businesses.
- Spotify highlighted past issues with Apple's rules restricting the disclosure of offers, prices, and purchasing options within its app.
- Spotify anticipates that DMA regulations will enable it to share details about promotions, deals, and payment options more freely with consumers in the EU.
- Additionally, the Competition Commission of India (CCI) initiated a detailed investigation against Google for alleged discriminatory practices in pricing policies on its Play Store, following suspicions of a violation of competition law.

What about Alphabet engaging in self-preferencing?

- The European Commission is investigating Google to determine if its search results show favoritism towards its own services over those of competitors, potentially violating fair competition standards outlined in the DMA (Digital Markets Act).
- This investigation aims to assess whether third-party services featured on Google's search results page are treated fairly and non-discriminatively compared to Google's own services.
- In 2020, the U.S. Department of Justice accused Google of unlawfully maintaining monopolies through anti-competitive practices in search and search advertising markets, affecting consumers by reducing search quality, choices, and innovation.
- Amazon is also under scrutiny for tailoring marketplace listings, raising concerns about fair competition practices.

What about Apple enabling choice?

- The European Commission is examining **Apple's practices to ensure users can easily uninstall pre-installed applications, change default settings, and select alternatives to default services via choice screens.**
- There are concerns that Apple's measures may limit users from freely choosing services within the Apple ecosystem, potentially leading to ecosystem captivity issues.

What are the concerns about Meta's model?

- Meta introduced a subscription model in the EU, EEA, and Switzerland, allowing users to use Facebook and Instagram without ads or continue for free with personalized ads.
- However, the European Commission was not convinced by this model, stating that it might not provide a genuine alternative for users who do not consent to personalized advertising, failing to prevent data accumulation by gatekeepers.

How will non-compliant companies be penalised?

- Non-compliant companies could face fines of up to 10% of their global turnover or 20% for repeated infringements.
- In cases of systematic infringement, companies may be required to divest parts of their business or face bans on acquiring related services.
- The investigation announcement has raised concerns among stakeholders about addressing overlapping regulatory responsibilities.

Measuring internet freedom in India in the last 10 years

- India has consistently ranked first globally for internet shutdowns for five consecutive years.
- Between 2016 and 2022, approximately 60% of all internet blackouts worldwide occurred in India.
- These shutdowns, imposed by the state, have been justified on grounds of national security and threats to public order.
- However, rights groups contend that these shutdowns violate court directives.

Internet shutdowns

- Between January 1, 2014, and December 31, 2023, the Indian government imposed a total of 780 internet shutdowns.
- These shutdowns were enforced during various events such as protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act in 2019, the abrogation of Article 370 in 2019, and the introduction of Farm Bills in 2020.
- Internet disruptions in India contributed to over 70% of the global economic loss in 2020.
- In 2023 alone, India experienced internet shutdowns for over 7,000 hours.
- According to the **Indian Telegraph Act**, **states and union territories can implement internet shutdowns only during a "public emergency" or for "public safety" reasons**.
- However, the law lacks clarity in defining what constitutes an emergency or safety issue.

- The Supreme Court, in the **Anuradha Bhasin v. Union of India case**, **ruled that internet shutdowns violate fundamental rights to freedom of expression, and indefinite shutdowns are unconstitutional.**

- Courts have mandated governments to make shutdown orders public, but compliance with this provision has been poor, as noted by experts.

British-era law

- Jammu and Kashmir experienced the highest number of internet shutdowns in the last 12 years, totaling 433.
- The longest blackout in 2023 occurred in Manipur, lasting from May to December, during ethnic clashes.
- As of February 15 this year, internet shutdowns were ongoing in Haryana due to farmers' protests.
- The Union government suspended mobile internet in Punjab under a British-era law amid protests by farmers in Delhi.
- Activists argue that India failed to meet the **'three-part test'** for imposing shutdowns in J&K and Manipur, as per international law.
- Globally, protests are the most common reason for internet shutdowns, followed by information control and political instability.
- Between 2015 and 2022, over 55,000 websites were blocked in India, primarily under section 69A of the IT Act.
- The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology and the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting were responsible for most content censorship.
- Social media URLs, including accounts and posts, totaling almost 30,000, were blocked between 2018 and 2022.
- Cybercrime threats have been cited as a reason for blocking websites, with India recording over 65,000 cases last year, a significant increase from previous years.

India and global trends

- Global Internet freedom has worsened for the 13th year in a row, with human rights online deteriorating in 29 countries, as per the latest Freedom House report.
- India's ranking in Internet freedom has remained relatively stable over the past three years.
- However, there has been a decline in India's score, dropping from 59 points in 2016 and 2017 to 50 points in 2023.
- This indicates a decrease in the overall environment for online human rights protection in India compared to previous years.

Question 1: Which of the following has the highest weight in the Index of Eight Core Industries (ICI)?

(a) Coal
(b) Steel
(c) Refinery Products
(d) Natural Gas

Question 2: Consider the following statements regarding the Index of Eight Core Industries (ICI):

1. It is a part of the broader Wholesale Price Index (WPI).
2. It is used to track the performance of the Indian manufacturing sector.
Which of the above statements is/are correct?

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

Question 3: The Index of Eight Core Industries (ICI) is released by the:

(a) Reserve Bank of India (RBI)
(b) National Statistical Office (NSO)
(c) Planning Commission (NITI Aayog)
(d) Office of the Economic Adviser, DPIIT

Question 4: With reference to the Index of Eight Core Industries (ICI), consider the following pairs:

Industry	Weight (%)
1. Fertilizers	10.33
2. Crude Oil	2.63
3. Natural Gas	6.88

How many of the pairs given above is/are correctly matched?

(a) Only one
(b) Only two
(c) All the three
(d) None

Question 5: Consider the following statements about the Charminar:

1. It was built by the Qutb Shahi dynasty.
2. It incorporates architectural elements of the Bahmani Sultanate.
3. It is primarily a commemorative monument built to mark the end of a famine.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

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

Question 6: The Charminar in Hyderabad is an example of which architectural style?

(a) Mughal architecture
(b) Deccan Sultanate architecture
(c) Dravidian architecture
(d) Indo-Islamic architecture

Question 7: Which of the following statements is true about the Charminar?

(a) It was built primarily as a fort.
(b) It sits on the banks of the Godavari River.
(c) It has a mosque on its upper floor.
(d) It was constructed during the Mauryan Empire.

Question	Answer and Explanation
Question 1: Which of the following has the highest weight in the Index of Eight Core Industries (ICI)? (a) Coal (b) Steel (c) Refinery Products (d) Natural Gas	Answer: (c) Refinery Products Explanation: As per the latest weighting, Refinery Products has the highest contribution to the ICI, followed by Electricity and Steel.
Question 2: Consider the following statements regarding the Index of Eight Core Industries (ICI): 1. It is a part of the broader Wholesale Price Index (WPI). 2. It is used to track the performance of the Indian manufacturing sector. Which of the above statements is/are correct? (a) 1 only (b) 2 only (c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2	Answer (d) Neither 1 nor 2 Explanation: Statement 1 is incorrect: The ICI is a subset of the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) and not the Wholesale Price Index (WPI). Statement 2 is partially correct: While the ICI does give a good indication of the performance of key industrial sectors, it doesn't cover the entirety of the manufacturing sector.
Question 3: The Index of Eight Core Industries (ICI) is released by the: (a) Reserve Bank of India (RBI) (b) National Statistical Office (NSO) (c) Planning Commission (NITI Aayog) (d) Office of the Economic Adviser, DPIIT	Answer: (d) Office of the Economic Adviser, DPIIT Explanation: The Office of the Economic Adviser within the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade compiles and publishes the ICI.
Question 4: With reference to the Index of Eight Core Industries (ICI), consider the following pairs: Industry Weight (%) 1. Fertilizers 10.33 2. Crude Oil 2.63 3. Natural Gas 6.88 How many of the pairs given above is/are correctly matched? (a) Only one (b) Only two (c) All the three (d) None	Answer: (a) 3 only
Question 5: Consider the following statements about the Charminar: 1. It was built by the Qutb Shahi dynasty. 2. It incorporates architectural elements of the Bahmani Sultanate.	Answer: (a) 1 only Explanation: Statement 1 is correct.

3. It is primarily a commemorative monument built to mark the end of a famine. Which of the above statements is/are correct? (a) 1 only (b) 1 and 2 only (c) 2 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3	Statement 2 is incorrect. The Charminar exhibits Indo-Islamic architecture with Persian influences, a style distinct from the Bahmani Sultanate. Statement 3 is incorrect. While there are theories about it being linked to the end of a plague, the reasons behind its construction are somewhat debated.
Question 6: The Charminar in Hyderabad is an example of which architectural style? (a) Mughal architecture (b) Deccan Sultanate architecture (c) Dravidian architecture (d) Indo-Islamic architecture	Answer: (d) Indo-Islamic architecture Explanation: The Charminar's arches, minarets, and Persian influences are characteristic of Indo-Islamic architectural styles.
Question 7: Which of the following statements is true about the Charminar? (a) It was built primarily as a fort. (b) It sits on the banks of the Godavari River. (c) It has a mosque on its upper floor. (d) It was constructed during the Mauryan Empire.	Answer: (c) It has a mosque on its upper floor. Explanation: The Charminar served both as a mosque and a commemorative structure and has a mosque on its second level.