

Topics - MINDS MAPS included (Daily current affairs 10th January 2025

- Target UPSC CSE Prelims 2025
- The Z-Morh tunnel
- Understanding Tax Terrorism:
- Genome India:
- Supreme Court Ruling: A Paradigm Shift in Disability Rights Accessibility
- The Implications of Section 152 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita:
- India's GDP Growth Forecast for 2024-25: What You Need to Know
- Mains



By saurabh Pandey



THE HINDU

Target Mains -2025/26 -

Q “ Infrastructure development will bring economic growth in himalayan region but not without cost” Discuss

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Q. With reference to the impact of weakening of Atlantic Meridional Oceanic Circulation consider the following statements. (The Hindu)

- 1) Increase strength of water surface cycle.**
- 2) Increased frequency of extreme weather events.**
- 3) Warming at Temperate regions.**
- 4) Weaken the northward Gulf Stream**
- 5) Coriolis of Earth affected**

How many of the given statements are impacts of weak AMOC.

- A) Only two**
- B) Only three**
- C) Only four**
- D) All five**

Schedule CRASH COURSE ON UPSC CSE Prelims 2025
(Upcoming week, 6th to 11th January)

Monday	6 th January 2025	Indian Geography through Mapping of INDIA (Mountain)
Wednesday	8 th January 2025	Indian GEOGRAPHY through mapping (Passes, Rivers)
Friday	10 th January 2025	Agriculture for GS
Saturday	11 th January 2025	Agriculture for GS

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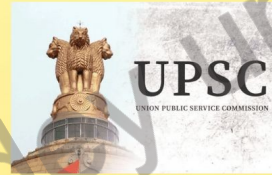
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PM to open Z-Morh tunnel, a key part of Kashmir-Ladakh corridor

To be inaugurated on January 13, the tunnel, in Ganderbal district, is key to keeping the tourist destination of Sonamarg open for visitors around the year; it is touted as a milestone in building the strategic corridor between Kashmir and Ladakh

Peerzada Ashiq
SRINAGAR

The Z-Morh tunnel is set to become the first major milestone in the effort to build a strategic corridor between Kashmir and Ladakh which is open all through the year, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi slated to inaugurate it on January 13.

The tunnel, in Ganderbal district, is key to keeping the tourist destination of Sonamarg open for visitors around the year. Earlier, snowfall and avalanches would cut off the tourist spot every winter.

This will be Mr. Modi's first visit to Kashmir since an elected government took over the reins in the Union Territory. A security assessment of the project was done on Thursday to set up foolproof security arrangements ahead of the PM's visit. Security across the Valley, especially in Srinagar, has been stepped up and additional checkpoints set up on the main roads.

Hoteliers are enthusiastic about the tunnel. "It was much needed to have Sonamarg on the winter tourism map of Kashmir.



A view of the Z-Morh tunnel that connects Gagangir and Sonamarg. FILE PHOTO

There is a need to open up new winter destinations in Kashmir given the growing footfall. It would be safe to drive to Sonamarg in winter now," said Sajid Majeed, a hotelier.

At present, most hotels remain closed because of unreliable road access and infrastructure problems.

Built under the mountain glacier of Thajiwas Glacier between Gagangir and Sonamarg, the tunnel bypasses the landslide- and avalanche-prone pockets of the road, officials

said. An intelligent traffic management system will make it easier to control the flow of vehicles and will also open up the Thajiwas Glacier and Sindh River for adventure tourism, an official added.

J&K Chief Minister Omar Abdullah also welcomed the tunnel. "J&K, especially central Kashmir, looks forward to the inauguration of a vital piece of infrastructure in the coming days. This asset will be a game changer for the expansion of winter tourism

in the valley," Mr. Abdullah said in a post on X.

Strategic route

Built at a cost of ₹2,680 crore, the 6.5-km long two-lane tunnel is a key feature of the strategic access route to Ladakh. The main tunnel is 10.8 metres long, with a modified horseshoe-shaped escape tunnel of 7.5 metres, D-shaped ventilation tunnel of 8.3 metres, two major culverts of 110 metres and 270 metres, and one small culvert which is 30 metres long.

The project faced a major militant attack on October 21 last year, which left seven APCO Infratech workers, including a doctor, dead at the construction site.

The Z-Morh will lead towards the Zojila tunnel, which is being constructed nearby. The Zojila, Asia's longest tunnel will cut through the Himalayan range at Zojila Pass to reach the Kargil district in Ladakh. The 13.14-km long tunnel is coming up at a cost of ₹6,800 crore. Officials said a 7.57-metre long horseshoe-shaped single-tube, two-lane tunnel will pass under the Zojila Pass between Ganderbal in Kashmir and Drass town in Kargil.

"It will bring the travel time from three hours to 20 minutes between Ganderbal and Kargil," officials said. Ladakh is currently cut off during winter, as the Zojila Pass, the only road that connects Kashmir with Ladakh, is closed in December, with its reopening dependent on the melting of snow at mountain passes along its route. At times, the road would stay closed till April.

Topic → The Z-Morh tunnel



The Z-Morh tunnel is a significant infrastructure project in India.



It is located in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir.



The tunnel aims to improve connectivity between Srinagar and Sonamarg.



It is designed to facilitate year-round travel, overcoming challenges posed by heavy snowfall.



The project is part of a broader initiative to enhance road infrastructure in the region.

Construction of the tunnel began in 2018 and is expected to be completed in the near future.



The Z-Morh tunnel is expected to boost tourism and economic development in the area.

Summary: The Z-Morh tunnel is an important infrastructure project in Jammu and Kashmir aimed at improving year-round connectivity between Srinagar and Sonamarg



Congress says Union Budget must end 'tax terrorism' and 'looting' of the public

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

Ahead of the Union Budget, the Congress on Thursday alleged that the Goods and Services Tax (GST) had become a means to "loot" people. The party demanded that the Centre put an end to "tax terrorism".

In a post on X, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said the GST could stand for the "Gabbar Singh Tax" or "*Grahasthi Satyanash* Tax (Household Destruction Tax)" or "Give Sitharaman Tax", a reference to Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman.

"Whatever name we call BJP's GST, one thing is certain: the Modi government has made GST a means of looting the hard-earned money of the poor and the middle class," Mr. Kharge



Mallikarjun Kharge

said. "The Congress party demands that in the upcoming general Budget, Modi government should put an end to tax terrorism and looting of the public."

Multiple slabs

His comments came on a day when the Congress held press conferences in a dozen cities to highlight the problem of multiple GST slabs and demand that the government provide relief to the middle class

and lower income groups.

He alleged that nine different GST rates made the tax "complex and absurd" instead of a "Good & Simple Tax". He noted that the GST regime is a tax on public consumption, arguing that by celebrating record tax collections, the Modi government is "rubbing salt into the wounds of the people". He said income tax collections had increased by 240% in the past five years while GST collections rose 177%.

"Two-thirds of the total GST i.e. 64% comes from the pockets of the poor and the middle class, but only 3% GST is collected from the billionaires, while the corporate tax rate has been reduced from 30% to 22%. For the first time, GST has been imposed on 36 agricultural products of the farmer," he noted.

Topic → Understanding Tax Terrorism:



Tax terrorism refers to the oppressive and excessive taxation practices that governments impose on their citizens, leading to widespread discontent.

Political Context: Recent allegations by the Congress party in India highlight concerns over the Goods and Services Tax (GST) as a form of tax terrorism.

Public Sentiment: Citizens often feel overwhelmed by the tax burden, prompting calls for reform.

Global Perspective: This concept is not limited to India; various countries face similar accusations regarding their tax systems

The Global Perspective on Tax Terrorism:



Tax terrorism is a recurring theme in various countries, particularly in emerging economies where tax systems can be convoluted and punitive.

Comparative Analysis: Other nations have also faced backlash for their tax regimes, with citizens often feeling exploited.

International Reactions: Global organizations have begun to address these concerns, advocating for fairer taxation practices.

India releases compilation of 10,000 human genomes from 83 population groups

The 'Genome India' database will be available to researchers across the world; it will serve as a template for investigations into disease, drug therapy; PM says it will strengthen biotech economy

Jacob Koshy
NEW DELHI

India has completed and made available a year-long compilation of 10,000 human genomes representing 83 population groups, making up about 2% of the country's 4,600 population groups, as a database. This collection will serve as a template of future investigations into disease and drug therapy.

The 'Genome India' database, as it is known, will now be available to researchers across the world for investigation and is housed at the Indian Biological Data Centre (IBDC), in Faridabad, Haryana.

A first analysis of the genomes estimates around 27 million low-frequency (or relatively rare) variants, with 7 million of them not found in similar reference databases around the world. Certain population groups show higher frequencies of alleles, or different versions of the same gene. Over the last two de-



A major focus of the Indian reference genomes is to have researchers study diseases. GETTY IMAGES

cades, many countries have created databases of the genomes of their population – for a variety of purposes including estimating disease risks, adverse drug reactions, establishing genealogy and DNA-profiling databases.

However, a major focus of the Indian reference genomes is to have researchers study diseases. "The discoveries from Genome India are not just scientific

– they hold the potential for targeted clinical interventions, advancing precision medicine for better healthcare," said Union Minister of State (independent charge) for Science and Technology Jitendra Singh, at an event here to announce the project.

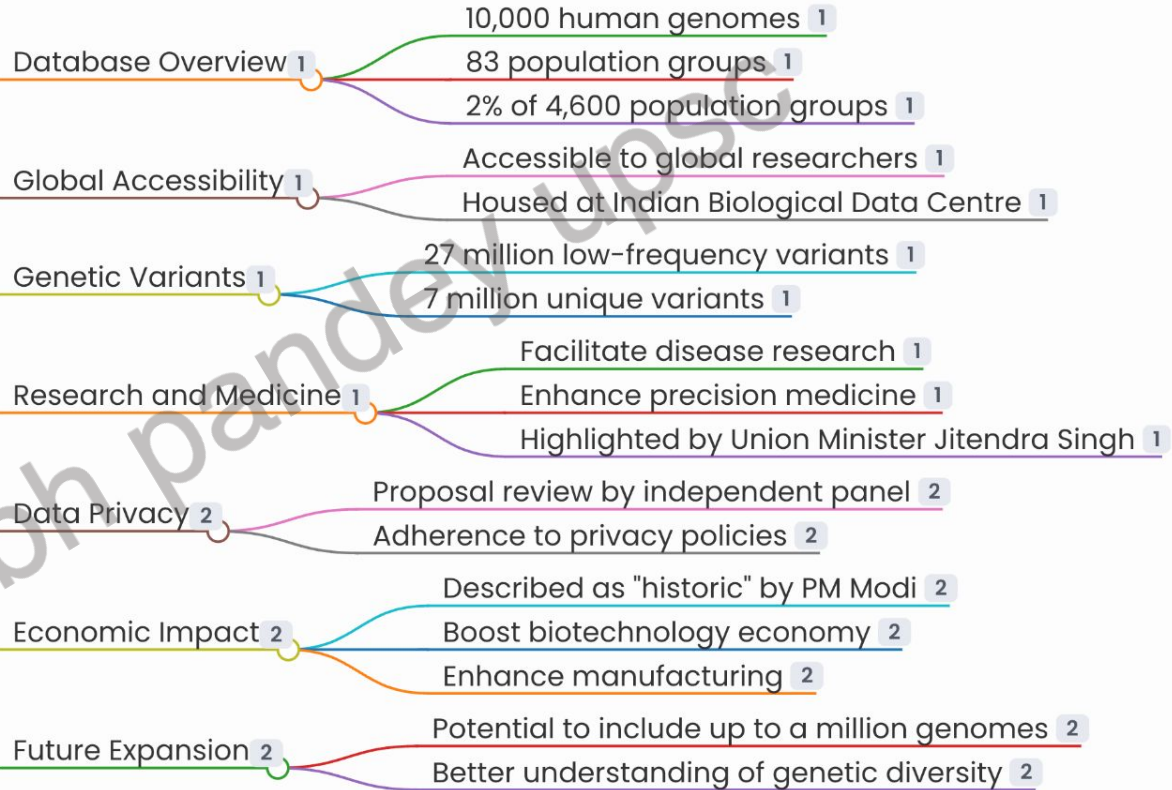
Researchers wishing to access the genomes must send in a proposal that will be perused by an independent panel with a commit-

ment that will adhere to data sharing and privacy policies. Though the database stores information on population groups, this data will not be classified by the names of castes or tribes but will be numerically coded, Rajesh Gokhale, Secretary, Department of Biotechnology, told *The Hindu*.

Describing the project as "historic", Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in a video address, said this paved the way for India strengthening the biotechnology economy as well as biotechnology-based manufacturing.


Experts said that while only a small fraction of India's population groups were studied, the door was open to expanding the database to a million genomes. "Though costs are a limiting factor, a million would dramatically scale insight into India's genetic diversity," said Kumaraswamy Thangaraj of the Centre for Cellular Microbiology, Hyderabad and one of the project leaders.


Genome India: A Landmark Initiative





Topic→ Genome India: A Landmark Initiative



 Database Overview: India has compiled a database of 10,000 human genomes from 83 population groups, representing about 2% of its 4,600 population groups.

 Global Accessibility: The 'Genome India' database is accessible to global researchers and is housed at the Indian Biological Data Centre (IBDC) in Faridabad, Haryana.

 Genetic Variants: Initial analysis reveals approximately 27 million low-frequency variants, with 7 million unique to this database compared to global references.

 Research and Medicine: The primary aim is to facilitate research on diseases and enhance precision medicine, as highlighted by Union Minister Jitendra Singh.



Data Privacy: Access to the genomes requires a proposal reviewed by an independent panel, ensuring adherence to data sharing and privacy policies.



Economic Impact: Prime Minister Narendra Modi described the project as "historic," emphasizing its potential to boost India's biotechnology economy and manufacturing.



Future Expansion: Experts suggest the possibility of expanding the database to include up to a million genomes to better understand India's genetic diversity

saurabh pandey upsc

The Significance of Human Genome Data



Human genome data is not merely a collection of genetic information; it represents a monumental leap in our understanding of biology and medicine. Here are key points to consider:

Personalized Medicine: The ability to tailor medical treatments to individual genetic profiles enhances therapeutic efficacy and minimizes adverse effects. This is a game-changer in conditions like cancer, where genomic data can guide targeted therapies.

Disease Prevention: By understanding genetic predispositions, we can identify at-risk populations and implement preventive measures, thus improving public health outcomes.

Research Advancements: Genomic data fuels research in various fields, including medicine, anthropology, and evolutionary biology, leading to groundbreaking discoveries and innovations.

Ethical Considerations: The collection and use of genomic data raise ethical questions regarding privacy, consent, and data security, necessitating robust frameworks to protect individuals' rights

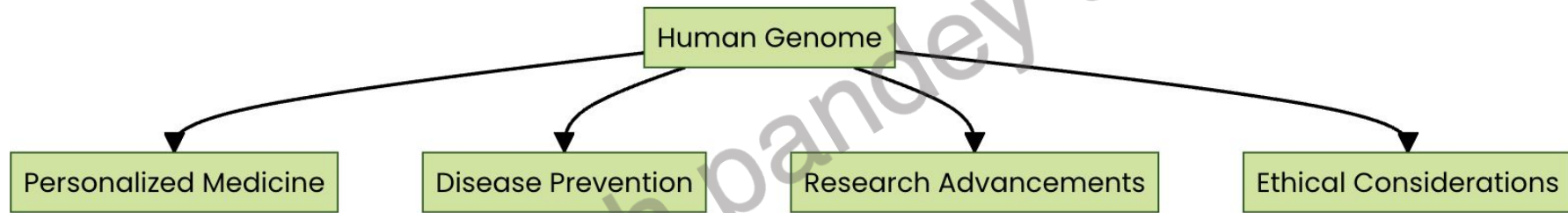


Figure 1.2: Flow of Genomic Data Usage

Ethical Principles in Genomic Data



The World Health Organization has established new principles for the ethical collection and sharing of human genomic data, emphasizing the need for transparency and respect for individuals' privacy.

Informed Consent: Individuals should be fully informed about how their data will be used.

Data Security: Robust measures must be in place to protect sensitive information.

Equity in Access: Ensuring that genomic innovations benefit all populations, not just a select few

We need accessibility rules that are based on principles



The Supreme Court, in *Rajive Raturi v. Union of India* (2024), held Rule 15 of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Rules, 2017, violative of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016.

The Court reasoned that the Rule was drafted in a discretionary tone whereas the corresponding provisions (Sections 40, 44, 45, 46, 89) in the Act imposed a mandatory obligation for the government. This was significant as Rule 15 was a statutory provision under which the accessibility guidelines of respective departments and ministries were notified. Key examples include the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs' guidelines for creating barrier-free environments, the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways' bus body code, and other accessibility standards established by the Ministries of Sports, Culture, and Information and Broadcasting.

The Court observed that these guidelines allowed discretion to the ministries and departments, which is antithetical to the mandatory language of the Act. Moreover, striking down Rule 15 also meant that the accessibility guidelines notified under the Rule lost their statutory authority. As a result, the Court gave the government three months to develop minimum mandatory accessibility requirements to govern all the sectors.

The judgment is a stark reminder of how accessibility guidelines have been created in silos without the identification of normative principles that will ensure universality and intersectionality to those guidelines. Thus, while formulating new guidelines, there needs to be a shift towards a principle-based framework on accessibility rules.

The idea of accessibility

The Court deliberated in detail on the difference between accessibility and reasonable accommodation. Accessibility and reasonable accommodation both originate within the principles of substantive equality of the Constitution. Accessibility is now accepted as a right woven throughout the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Conversely, reasonable accommodation is a facilitator of substantive equality where specific challenges are dealt with in a specific context. Therefore, both concepts should be understood as interdependent and complementary to each other, where accessibility builds the edifice through standardised accessibility standards from the outset, while reasonable accommodation ensures tailored solutions for those individuals who might still face inaccessibility in a specific context.

The idea of accessibility is not static, and the conceptual contours and corresponding tools



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The new accessibility rules must be direct, understandable, and practical to ensure effective implementation

have evolved regularly. For instance, with the advent of Artificial Intelligence and the Internet of Things and their incorporation into social interactions, the understanding of digital accessibility has evolved simultaneously. This makes it necessary to modify the nature, extent, and type of digitally accessible tools that can ensure broader inclusivity.

The shifting threshold also needs to be understood in the context of phased realisation of accessibility. The Court in *Rajive Raturi* observed that the existing guidelines are framed in a way that establishes long-term goals of accessibility without setting the minimum standards requiring immediate implementation. Hence, the minimum accessibility threshold shall be envisaged on a sliding scale wherein the baseline moves forward at periodical intervals. Canada has developed a comprehensive road map to achieve full accessibility by 2040, focusing on harmonising standards across the country through two work streams, with periodic reviews every five years to adapt to changing needs.

The RPwD Act defines barriers in the broadest form possible, wherein intangible barriers such as attitudinal barriers are recognised in addition to tangible barriers such as infrastructure. This has modified how accessibility is viewed and understood within physical and digital ecosystems. Thus, it is necessary to evolve accessibility parameters in theory and practice to overcome tangible and intangible barriers. For instance, the evolving understanding of disability is an aspect that informs the attitude of society and, hence, directly relates to the attitudinal barrier. Thus, accessibility must also align with this evolution of disability understanding to be truly inclusive.

The understanding of universal design has also evolved over time. It is not just limited to persons with disabilities but also includes every vulnerable community, such as women, children, and the elderly. This reflects a tacit recognition of the universality of disability, which is not identified as an individual's incapacity to perform but rather the composition of the environment in which one operates. Disability may arise from a high cognitive workload causing an inability to focus and control emotions, temporarily broken limbs, unavailability of ramps to a pregnant mother, age-related complications, etc. Thus, the rules should be applicable across groups, providing accessibility in the general sense and not exclusive to persons with disabilities.

Compliance with social audit

Section 48 of the RPwD Act mandates the Central and State governments to regularly undertake social audits of all general schemes and programmes to ensure they do not have an

adverse impact on the needs and concerns of persons with disabilities. Social audits play a vital role in developing and strengthening the accountability of the government and service providers. For instance, regular social audits of schemes providing assistance technologies to persons with disabilities can assess the bottlenecks in the delivery of services, identify the changing needs of individuals, and provide better devices.

However, due to the lack of standardised guidelines under the RPwD Rules, there is no clarity on the scope and methodology of social audits. This might lead to inconsistencies among the Centre and the States, lack of awareness, and insufficient training for auditors. Therefore, clear guidelines and operationalisation of social audits at a larger scale will help identify the changing nature of disability-related challenges and make targeted interventions to enhance service delivery through concerned schemes and programmes.

Rules have to be understandable

The earlier accessibility rules across departments and ministries suffered from bureaucratic complexity regarding their mandate. There were too many technicalities and often contradictory accessibility mandates from multiple ministries that confused the complying entities. For instance, a sporting complex has multiple guidelines for accessibility from the Ministry of Urban Affairs and Housing, Sports, Transport, and others. This led to not just a failure to provide objective parameters but also increased the compliance cost for such establishments. During the proceeding under the redressal mechanism, the complex and overlapping guidelines also delayed the relief sought by persons with disabilities.

The new accessibility rules must be direct, understandable, and practical to ensure effective implementation. The ambiguity in department/ministry jurisdiction that plagued the earlier rules should also be addressed by having a nodal authority, ideally, the sector regulators, and in the absence of it, the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment should adjudicate on rules.

The deadline for releasing the new accessibility guidelines is February, subject to extension. Thus, there is a necessity for diverse sectors, both private and public, beyond social services such as financial, technological, transport, to deliberate upon the minimum rules of accessibility. This isn't just warranted by the legislative mandate of the RPwD Act but also a market incentive to tap into the large population base by providing accessible products and services.

Topic → Supreme Court Ruling: A Paradigm Shift in Disability Rights Accessibility



The Court's Decision in Rajive Raturi v. Union of India

The Supreme Court's ruling in Rajive Raturi v. Union of India (2024) has sent ripples across the landscape of disability rights.

The Court deemed Rule 15 of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Rules, 2017, unconstitutional.

The ruling highlighted that the discretionary tone of the Rule contradicted the mandatory obligations outlined in the RPwD Act, 2016.

Key Points of the Ruling:

Rule 15's discretionary nature undermines mandatory provisions in Sections 40, 44, 45, 46, and 89 of the Act.

Accessibility guidelines issued by various ministries risk becoming mere suggestions rather than enforceable standards.

The Court has mandated the government to formulate minimum accessibility requirements within three months.

This landmark decision underscores the urgent necessity for a unified approach to accessibility, moving away from siloed guidelines that fail to genuinely serve the needs of individuals with disabilities

Understanding Accessibility vs. Reasonable Accommodation

Accessibility and reasonable accommodation are two pivotal concepts rooted in the principle of substantive equality. Recognizing the distinction and interdependence of these terms is essential for enhancing the lives of individuals with disabilities.

Accessibility:

Refers to the built environment's design, ensuring that all spaces are usable by everyone.

Encompasses proactive measures, creating standardized accessibility protocols from the outset.

Reasonable Accommodation:

Involves adjustments or modifications tailored to meet individual needs in specific contexts.

Acts as a facilitator, ensuring that those who encounter barriers can still engage fully within their environment.

The Supreme Court's ruling emphasizes that both concepts are complementary; while accessibility establishes a strong foundation, reasonable accommodation addresses specific challenges

The Need for Mandatory Accessibility Standards



The Supreme Court's ruling has illuminated the critical necessity for mandatory accessibility standards. Discretionary guidelines have historically led to inconsistencies and inadequate implementation.

Implications of the Ruling:

Accessibility requirements must be clearly defined and non-negotiable. The government is expected to articulate minimum standards that apply universally to all sectors, ensuring that no individual is left behind.

Implementing mandatory standards will streamline accessibility across various domains, including housing, transportation, and public infrastructure, thereby fostering an inclusive environment for all.

Barriers to Accessibility: Tangible and Intangible



Barriers to accessibility manifest in both tangible and intangible forms, affecting individuals in various ways. The RPwD Act defines barriers broadly, recognizing both physical and attitudinal obstacles.

Tangible Barriers:

- Physical infrastructure issues, such as lack of ramps or elevators.
- Inaccessible public transportation systems.

Intangible Barriers:

- Societal attitudes that perpetuate discrimination.
- Lack of awareness and understanding about disabilities.

Addressing both types of barriers is paramount for achieving true inclusivity and ensuring that everyone can navigate their environment with ease

The Evolution of Universal Design



Universal design transcends the traditional focus on disability, advocating for inclusivity across all vulnerable communities.

Key Aspects:

Universal design considers the diverse needs of individuals, including women, children, and the elderly.

It promotes an environment where accessibility is inherent rather than an afterthought.

Understanding universal design as a holistic approach fosters a culture of inclusivity, ensuring that everyone can benefit from accessible environments and products.

Section 152 of BNS should not become a proxy for sedition



The Rajasthan High Court, in *Tejender Pal Singh v. State of Rajasthan* (2024), cautioned against using Section 152 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) as a tool to stifle legitimate dissent. In 2022, before the BNS was enacted, the Supreme Court had suspended pending criminal trials and court proceedings under Section 124A (sedition) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) until the government reconsidered the law. This was followed by a verbal proclamation by the Union Home Minister that 'sedition' would be repealed as an offence. Section 152 of the BNS criminalises any act exciting secession, armed rebellion, and subversive activities. It also criminalises acts encouraging feelings of separatism or endangering the sovereignty, unity, and integrity of India. While the BNS does not formally use the term 'sedition', the Rajasthan High Court's recent decision hints that the spectre of sedition still looms large in the BNS.

Problems with Section 152

First, Section 152 BNS criminalises 'acts endangering the sovereignty, unity, and integrity of India.' However, what constitutes such endangerment under Section 152 has not been defined in the statute. This renders the provision vague, and amenable to expansive interpretation by enforcement authorities. Accordingly, a speech criticising a prominent historical or political figure, or sympathising with a controversial public figure, may be construed as 'endangering' the 'unity and integrity of India' for initiating legal action against a person. In the current sociopolitical environment that appears increasingly fragmented, a stringent penal provision without inbuilt checks for abuse may be used to stifle dissent and criticism.



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The lack of a statutory requirement to establish a causal linkage between the speech and its actual consequence before depriving the accused of personal liberty renders Section 152 amenable to abuse

Second, the term 'knowingly' in Section 152 substantially lowers the threshold for commission of the offence, especially in the context of social media. Even if a person does not have the malicious intent to incite activities or feelings prohibited under Section 152, they can still be considered liable for the offence if they share a post knowing it will reach a larger audience and may provoke such activities or feelings. This would be sufficient to arrest a person and prosecute them for commission of the offence under Section 152, which is cognisable and non-bailable. The lack of a statutory requirement to prima facie establish a causal linkage between the speech and its actual consequence before depriving the accused of personal liberty renders Section 152 amenable to abuse much like its predecessor, and has the potential to instill a chilling effect on free speech. The potential for abuse of the sedition-like provision is clearly borne out by data of the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) regarding Section 124A of the IPC. Out of 548 persons arrested between 2015 and 2020 for sedition, only 12 people were convicted in seven cases. More importantly, this was the situation when Section 124A IPC was relatively narrower and more specific in comparison to Section 152 of the BNS. Unfortunately, the NCRB data, and the benefit of hindsight regarding abuse of Section 124A, seem to have had no bearing in designing the contours of Section 152 of the BNS.

The way forward

In the past, the judiciary has consistently adopted a consequentialist interpretation to strike a careful balance between national interest and the freedom of expression. The Supreme Court has given weight to the actual consequence or impact

of free speech in determining the offence rather than considering the 'speech' on its own. For instance, in *Balwant Singh and Anr v. State of Punjab* (1995), the Court drew a line of demarcation between casual sloganeering and its repercussions or consequences, requiring a direct causal nexus between the act and its impact for it to amount to an offence of sedition. Further, in *Javed Ahmad Hazam v. State of Maharashtra and Ors* (2024), the Court said the "effect of the words must be judged from the standards of reasonable, strong-minded, firm and courageous men, and not those of weak and vacillating minds..." Moreover, in *Kedar Nath Singh v. State of Bihar* (1962), the Court had differentiated 'disloyalty towards the government' from 'strongly worded criticism of the government and its policies'.

Given the lack of inbuilt safeguards in Section 152 to prevent its abuse, these interpretations should guide the enforcement authorities in applying this provision. Moreover, the Supreme Court should, when it gets the earliest opportunity, craft a set of guidelines for the enforcement authorities, demarcating the boundaries for the terms used under Section 152 BNS, as it did with respect to 'arrest' in *D.K. Basu v. State of West Bengal*. This will ensure that the provision does not become a proxy for the offence of sedition.

It is important to provide liberal space to thoughts, beliefs and expressions, and to subject them all to unimpeded criticisms, especially in the age of social media. We need to fall back on the concept of 'marketplace of ideas', as envisioned by Justice Holmes in *Abrams v. United States*, because the best test of truth will always be the potential of an idea to get itself accepted in a democratic and diverse society.

Topic → The Implications of Section 152 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita:



Understanding Section 152 of the BNS

Section 152 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita criminalizes acts that threaten the sovereignty, unity, and integrity of India. While it aims to curb secessionist and subversive activities, its vagueness raises significant concerns.

Definition and Scope:

Criminalizes acts that incite secession or armed rebellion.

Targets activities that might encourage separatism.

Comparison with Previous Sedition Laws:

Unlike IPC Section 124A, which explicitly defined sedition, Section 152 lacks precise parameters.

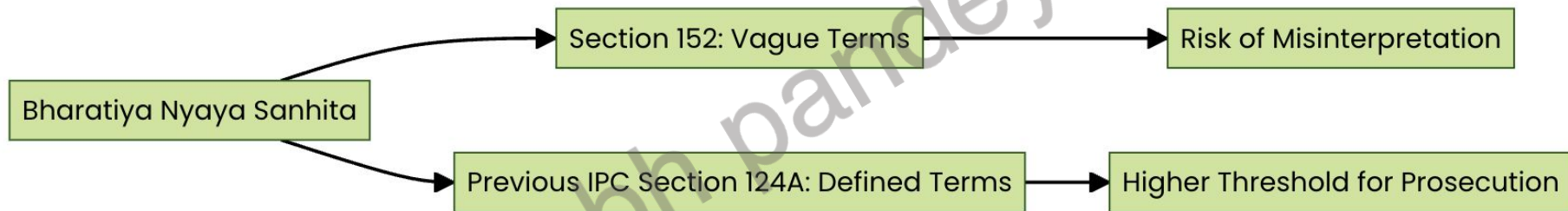
This ambiguity poses risks of arbitrary enforcement.

As the Rajasthan High Court highlighted, the specter of sedition remains prevalent, casting a shadow over dissenting opinion

Overview of Tejender Pal Singh v. State of Rajasthan

The case of Tejender Pal Singh v. State of Rajasthan (2024) has raised critical questions about the balance between national security and individual freedoms. The Rajasthan High Court's decision serves as a reminder of the delicate line that must be walked when it comes to laws that can potentially stifle free speech

Figure 1.1: Legal Framework Comparison:



Understanding Section 152 of the BNS

What Does Section 152 Criminalize?

Section 152 of the BNS criminalizes acts that excite secession, armed rebellion, and subversive activities. It also targets actions that encourage feelings of separatism or threaten the sovereignty and integrity of India. While it does not explicitly mention sedition, the implications are clear: dissent could be criminalized under this new framework.

The Shadow of Sedition

Despite the absence of the term 'sedition' in the BNS, the specter of sedition looms large. The Rajasthan High Court's recent decision suggests that the potential for misuse of Section 152 is akin to the previous sedition laws, which have historically been used to silence dissent.

Legal Ambiguities and Potential for Misuse



The vagueness of Section 152 presents a fertile ground for interpretive abuses, particularly in a politically charged environment.

Vague Terminology:

Terms like "endangering sovereignty" lack clear definitions.

This can lead to arbitrary legal actions against critics.

Case Studies:

Historical misuse of IPC Section 124A serves as a cautionary tale.

Data from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) illustrates the disproportionate application of sedition laws

Judicial Precedents and Interpretations



The judiciary has historically navigated the delicate balance between national security and free expression.

Key Supreme Court Cases:

Balwant Singh v. State of Punjab (1995): Established a direct causal nexus for sedition.

Kedar Nath Singh v. State of Bihar (1962): Differentiated between disloyalty and criticism.

Implications for Section 152:

The absence of safeguards in Section 152 necessitates guidance from past judicial interpretations.

The Supreme Court must step in to delineate the contours of Section 152, preventing it from becoming a tool for silencing dissent

The Chilling Effect on Free Speech and Dissent



With the rise of social media, the potential for misuse of Section 152 escalates.

Impact on Criticism:

Public figures and activists may face legal repercussions for legitimate criticism.

The fear of prosecution can stifle open discourse.

Role of Social Media:

Amplifies dissenting voices but also increases vulnerability to legal actions.

A single post can lead to severe consequences under Section 152.

Protecting free speech is paramount in a vibrant democracy. We must safeguard our right to dissent and debate.

Recommendations for Safeguards



To prevent the misuse of Section 152, several recommendations can be made:

Judicial Guidelines:

Establish clear definitions for vague terms in Section 152.

Create a framework for assessing the impact of speech before prosecution.

Protecting Dissent:

Foster an environment where criticism is welcomed rather than punished.

Encourage public discourse and debate on contentious issues.

The future of democracy hinges on our ability to engage in critical discussions without fear of reprisal.

Conclusion



The Rajasthan High Court's scrutiny of Section 152 serves as a critical reminder of the delicate balance between national security and the fundamental right to free speech.

As we navigate this complex legal landscape, it is imperative to uphold the principles of dissent and open dialogue in our society.

saurabh pandey upsc

Decoding India's growth slowdown

The official diminution of India's projected GDP growth rate may still be an underestimation of the extent of economic slowdown. The revenue mobilisation strategy needs to be reworked to enhance taxation on wealth and profits in order to enhance capex and welfare spending

ECONOMIC NOTES

Prasenjit Bose
Soumyadeep Biswas

The first advance estimates of India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2024-25, released by the National Statistics Office (NSO) this week, shows a decline in the real GDP growth rate to 6.4% from 8.2% registered in 2023-24. This is lower than the 6.5 to 7% range projected by the Economic Survey in July 2024. The growth rate of nominal GDP, which is the sum of the real GDP growth rate and the overall inflation rate, is estimated at 9.7% in 2024-25 – significantly lower than the 10.5% growth rate projected in the last Union Budget.

Data discrepancies

The official diminution of India's projected GDP growth rate may still be an understatement of the extent of economic slowdown. Academics and institutional experts have been consistently underestimating the extent of the critical GDP estimates, with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) recommending an upgrade of the real sector statistics. An "Informational Annex" to the 2023 IMF report on India's economic growth and inter alia noted that, "...the compilation of constant price GDP deviate from the conceptual requirements of the national accounts, in part due to the use of the Wholesale Price Index (WPI) as a deflator for GDP. The use of WPI as a deflator appropriate price to deflate GDP by type of activity is the Producer Price Index (PPI), which is under development. Large revisions to historical series, the relatively small number of series, and the resulting major discrepancies between GDP by activity and GDP by expenditure, and the lack of official seasonally-adjusted quarterly GDP series complicate analysis.

Together these weaknesses make it challenging to monitor high frequency trends in India's economy through official statistics, particularly from the demand side.¹ The estimation of real or constant price GDP requires the use of a price deflator to estimate values of GDP components in constant prices. The GDP deflator being used in India's official estimates is a weighted average of wholesale and retail price indices. The Wholesale Price Index (WPI), 2011-12 series has shown high volatility over the past decade, leading to inexpressibly large divergences between the WPI and CPI inflation rates (Chart 1). This, in turn, seriously casts doubt on the accuracy of the GDP deflator and real GDP estimates.

For instance, the nominal GDP growth rate was estimated at 14.2% in 2022-23 and 9.6% in 2023-24, which indicated a sharp decline in growth. However, the real GDP growth rate was estimated to have grown from 7.0% to 8.2%, indicating growth acceleration. This implied that the GDP deflator was only 1.4% in 2023-24, even as retail inflation was at 5.4%, because the WPI inflation rate was estimated to have fallen from a high of 9.4% in 2022-23 to a negative of -0.7% in 2023-24. In short, because of high volatility in the WPI, the nominal GDP estimate showed a growth deceleration in 2023-24 but the real GDP estimate reflected growth acceleration.

Elusive private investment

Tabled a day ahead of the Union Budget last July, the Economic Survey 2023-24 had taken comfort in the 8.2% growth in

Economic blues

From 2022-23 to 2024-25, real GDP and investment have grown at an annual average rate of 7.2% each and private consumption at 6%. Post-pandemic, there has been one percentage point increase in the annual average growth rate of real investment. Therefore, there is absolutely no indication of any structural break in the investment behaviour of the private corporate sector so far under the 11 years of NDA rule

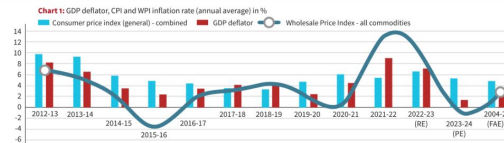


Chart 2: Annual growth rates of GDP, GFCF and PFCE at constant prices in %

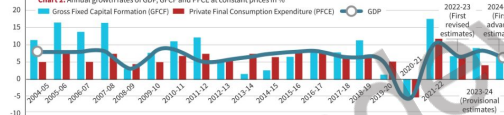


Chart 3: Quarterly (Y-o-Y) growth rates of sectoral gross value added at constant prices in %

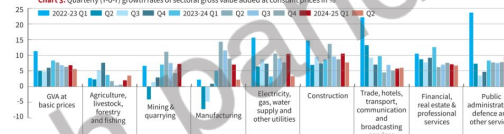


Table 1: Union Government's accounts: revenue and expenditure heads at the end of November 2023 and 2022

	Coca-Cola's net tax revenue		Coca-Cola's net tax revenue		Capital expenditure		Revenue expenditure	
	2013-24	2014-25	2013-24	2014-25	2013-24	2014-25	2013-24	2014-25
Budget estimates (Bt) (Terror)	23,30,631	25,83,499	3,01,650	5,45,701	10,00,961	11,11,111	35,02,136	37,09,401
April to November (Terror)	14,35,755	14,43,435	2,84,365	4,27,020	5,85,645	5,13,500	20,66,522	22,27,502
% of Budget estimate (April to November)	61.6	55.9	94.3	78.3	58.5	46.2	59.0	60.1
% of Budget estimate (April to November)	99.8	n.a.	133.2	n.a.	94.8	n.a.	99.76	n.a.

Source: Source: Controller General of Accounts (CGA), Department of Expenditure, Ministry of Finance, Government of India; NSO, MoS&PI, GoI, DPIIT, MoC&I, National Accounts Statistics 2022; First Advance Estimates of GDP for 2024-25.

real GDP and indicated a vigorous expansion of investment by the private sector. Yet, the Chief Economic Advisor had asked whether the corporate sector responded positively to the tax cuts of September 2019, and complained about sluggish corporate investments in machinery and equipment and intellectual property products. He criticised the disproportionate allocation of gross fixed capital formation (investment) in the private sector to “dwellings, other buildings and structures” as an unhealthy mix.

Throwing such caution to the wind, the Union Budget relied entirely on a revival of the private corporate capex cycle to announce the 'Prime Minister's Package for Employment and Skillings' with an outlay of ₹2 trillion, aimed at benefiting 41 million youth over a five-year period. The employment linked incentive/subsidy scheme and the internship programme for one crore youth in five years, were premised on the expectation of massive job creation, consequent to an acceleration of private corporate

investment. The fiscal consolidation roadmap, whereby the fiscal deficit was projected to decline from 5.6% of GDP in 2023-24, to 4.9% in 2024-25 and 4.5% in 2025-26, was also announced with the budgetary expectation of the private sector taking a lead in the capital formation process. However, the latest GDP estimates have shown a significant decline in the growth of real gross fixed capital formation from 9% in 2023-24 to 6.4% in 2024-25. A longer view of India's growth trajectory over the past decade, even on the basis of exaggerated official national account estimates, shows the irrationality of official expectations.

During the 10 years of the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) rule, between 2004-05 and 2013-14, the average annual growth of real GDP was at 6.8%, investment 10% and private consumption 6% (Chart 1). Between the onset of the present regime till the outbreak of the pandemic, that is, between 2014-15 and 2019-20, real GDP grew at an annual average rate of 6.8% (exactly similar to UPA), but real investment growth fell to

6.3% while private consumption growth increased to 6.8%. Thus, economic growth under NDA was not investment-led, as was the case under UPA.

Moreover, during the UPA period, real growth in private investment was over 10%, above the growth of public sector investment at around 9% (Chart 2). Under NDA rule, till the pandemic, public investment in real terms grew faster at an average of 6.6% per year, than private investment which grew by 6.3%.

Investment, consumption and output had collapsed in 2020-21 owing to the lockdown induced recession. The recovery in 2021-22 was indeed led by private investment, but the spikes in the growth rates of investment, consumption and output were on account of base effect – it was simply a return to normalcy after the collapse in the preceding year. From 2022-23 to 2024-25, real GDP and investment have grown at an annual average rate of 7.2% each and private consumption at 6%. Post-pandemic the has been one percentage point increase in the annual average growth rate of real

investment, and 0.8 percentage point decline in the annual average growth rate of private consumption.

Therefore, there is absolutely no indication of any structural break in the investment behaviour of the private corporate sector so far under the 11 years of NDA rule. The deep corporate tax cuts in September 2019 have failed to spur capital formation and real economic activity; rather it has only helped a short lived spurt in corporate earnings and fuelled a post-pandemic bubble in the equity market. In contrast, the advent of the UPA regime had led to a real investment and exports boom between 2004-05 till the financial crisis and global recession of 2008-09, which was facilitated both by a massive increase in industrial bank credit and significant foreign capital inflows. A similar private investment led boom has remained elusive under the NDA regime.

This testifies to the forgotten truth of political economy, that supposedly business friendly governments can deliver much wealth and profits for their cronies but are incapable of bringing about economy-wide structural changes and common prosperity.

Fiscal strains

The more reliable supply side data on the Indian economy reflects a more sober picture of economic recovery since the pandemic and the nature of the slowdown that has set in. Quarterly Gross Value Added (GVA) growth on a year-on-year basis has been on a downward slide since 2023-24 (Chart 3). The agriculture sector continues to show cyclical fluctuations. After showing double-digit growth in the two quarters of 2023-24, the growth rate of manufacturing GVA has been on a downside. Slowdown is visible not only in the mining, power and construction sectors but also in services like retail trade, transport, communications, finance and real estate.

The only sector where GVA is projected to grow at a higher pace in 2024-25 than the previous year is public administration, defence and other services. This shows the crucial role of public spending in sustaining economic growth. In this context, the monthly accounts of the Union Government further indicate that crucial revenue and expenditure targets set in the last Union Budget are likely to remain unachieved. While the windfall of a ₹2.11 trillion surplus transfer from the Reserve Bank of India has enabled the Government to achieve 78% of its non-tax revenue target for 2024-25 by November 2024, mobilisation of the Centre's net tax revenues between April to November 2024 was only 56% of the budgetary target of ₹25.83 trillion (Table I). This has led to spending less than half of the ₹11.11 trillion, budgeted as capex for

SC

Topic → India's GDP Growth Forecast for 2024-25: What You Need to Know



Introduction

The latest advance estimates from India's National Statistics Office (NSO) have stirred significant conversations in economic circles, revealing a distinct decline in the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rate.

For the fiscal year 2024-25, the anticipated growth rate is pegged at 6.4%, a stark drop from the 8.2% recorded in the previous year.

This adjustment not only deviates from the 6.5% to 7% forecast made in the Economic Survey of July 2024 but also raises critical concerns about the trajectory of India's economic landscape

Data Discrepancies and Challenges



One of the most pressing issues highlighted by experts is the discrepancies in official GDP calculations. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has raised alarms about the methodologies employed in estimating real GDP, specifically criticizing the reliance on the Wholesale Price Index (WPI) as a deflator. This reliance has led to inconsistencies, complicating the analysis of economic trends.

Recommendations:

Transitioning to the Producer Price Index (PPI) for better accuracy.

Addressing seasonal adjustments and historical data revisions to enhance reliability.

Observations:

Corporate tax cuts have not translated into significant investment boosts.

There remains a disproportionate allocation of capital towards non-productive sectors.

Sector-specific Insights:

Agriculture: After a brief period of double-digit growth, it has returned to cyclical fluctuations.

Manufacturing: Witnessing a decline in GVA growth, reflecting broader economic malaise.

Services: Sectors like retail, transport, and finance are also feeling the pinch.

Critical Factors:

Tax Revenue Shortfalls: Only 56% of the net tax revenue target was achieved by November 2024.

Capital Expenditure: Less than half of the planned ₹11.11 trillion capex was utilized.

Policy Recommendations:

Enhance Taxation: A shift towards a more progressive tax regime could alleviate some fiscal pressures.

Focus on Productive Investment: Directing funds into sectors that spur growth rather than speculative markets.

Transparency in Data Reporting: Improving the credibility of economic indicators is essential for restoring investor confidence.

Investment Trends:

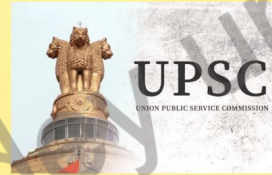
Private Sector Investment: Reportedly sluggish, with a disproportionate focus on residential and non-productive assets.

Public Sector vs. Private Sector: Historically, public investment has outpaced private investments, raising concerns about the sustainability of growth.

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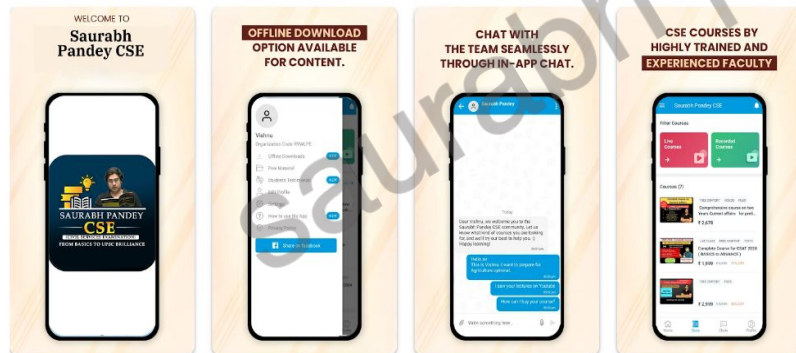
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Q. With reference to the impact of weakening of Atlantic Meridional Oceanic Circulation consider the following statements. (The Hindu)

- 1) Increase strength of water surface cycle.**
- 2) Increased frequency of extreme weather events.**
- 3) Warming at Temperate regions.**
- 4) Weaken the northward Gulf Stream**
- 5) Coriolis of Earth affected**

How many of the given statements are impacts of weak AMOC.

- A) Only two**
- B) Only three**
- C) Only four**
- D) All five**

>>>>Q. Ans: D

>>>>>>

Target Mains -2025/26 -

Q “ Infrastructure development will bring economic growth in himalayan region but not without cost” Discuss

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