

**DAILY
CURRENT
AFFAIRS
ANALYSIS**



LAKSHYA ACADEMY®

22 FEBRUARY 2024

1 - US winter storms:

GS I

Geography related issues:

- **Context:**
- The United States has experienced a variety of difficulties as a result of winter storms, including subfreezing temperatures, snow, and ice in several states.
- In January 2024, the circumstances led to at least 72 deaths countrywide, mostly from road accidents or hypothermia.
- **What Causes Severe Winter Storms in the United States?**
- **Polar Vortex:**
- The vast region of cold air and low pressure that envelops both of the Earth's poles is known as the Polar Vortex.
- The anticlockwise air flow that keeps the colder air close to the Poles is referred to as a "vortex". Near the poles, it remains constant but gets weaker in the summer and stronger in the winter.
- Periodically, disturbances in the polar vortex may cause pockets of cold air to break out and move southward into the United States, resulting in extremely cold temperatures.
- Arctic amplification is a result of climate change in the region. This is the Arctic warming more quickly than the rest of the world. The polar vortex becomes weaker due to the increased warming in the Arctic, making disruptions more likely.
- Cold Arctic air may leak southward as a result of the polar vortex expanding or splitting due to the weakening.
- **Arctic Air Masses:**
- Temperatures can decrease quickly in the US when Arctic air masses invade the country. These air masses have their origins in the Arctic region and have the ability to move southward, delivering extremely frigid temperatures to regions that are not used to them.
- **Patterns of the Jet Stream:**
- A ribbon of air that moves quickly through the atmosphere, known as the jet stream, helps to direct weather systems.

- Large swaths of the nation may be affected by cold air from the Arctic that descends south due to changes in the jet stream pattern.
- **Winter Storms: What Are They?**
- Extremely low temperatures, precipitation in the form of snow, sleet, or freezing rain, and frequently high winds are the characteristics of winter storms.
- These storms can cause transportation issues, interrupt regular daily routines, and endanger communities in a number of ways.
- **Formation of a Winter Storm:**
- **Moist Air Rising:** The atmospheric ascent of moist air precedes winter storms. This can happen as air goes up a sizable slope or mountain, or during a cold front when warm air is elevated above cold air.
- **Source of Moisture:** Precipitation and cloud formation require a source of moisture. This can be produced by air carrying water vapour across vast amounts of water, like lakes or seas.
- **Cold Air:** The main characteristic that sets winter storms apart is the existence of cold air. Precipitation takes the form of snow or ice when temperatures below freezing are experienced both close to the ground and throughout the atmospheric layers.
- **Winter Storm Types:**
- Storms that primarily produce snowfall are known as snowstorms. When water vapour condenses into water droplets and freezes, snowflakes are created. Whether the precipitation falls as rain, snow, or freezing rain depends on the air temperature.
- **Blizzards:** Blizzards are characterised by severe winds that reach or surpass 35 miles per hour (mph), rather than the quantity of snowfall. Blowing snow conditions brought on by blizzards impair vision and lead to the buildup of snowdrifts.
- **Storms with a lake effect:** The Great Lakes' (USA) copious amounts of precipitation cause these storms to arise. Water vapour is picked up by cold, dry air travelling over the lakes, causing strong snowstorms in the areas east and south of the lakes.
- **Ice storms** are winter storms that cause at least 0.25 inches of ice to build up on external surfaces. Ice storms produce slick layers on the ground that make it dangerous to walk and travel. Moreover, they may cause powerlines and branches to break.
- **What Is Thermolysis?**
- When the body loses heat more quickly than it can produce it, the condition known as hypothermia arises, which is a dangerously low body temperature.

- Hypothermia usually occurs when the body temperature falls below 95 degrees Fahrenheit (35 degrees Celsius). The normal body temperature is approximately 98.6 degrees Fahrenheit (37 degrees Celsius).
- Hypothermia can result from exposure to cold due to a number of causes that impair the body's capacity to regulate its core temperature.
- The body's natural reaction to cold is to produce heat and store heat, a process mostly controlled by the brain's hypothalamus.
- **Signs:**
 - Shivering may cease as the hypothermia gets worse. (In actuality, shivering indicates that your heat regulation systems are still functioning.)
 - Breathing shallowly and slowly
 - Loss of memory and confusion
 - tiredness or drowsiness.

Source → The Hindu



2 - Israel's Need for Skilled Labourers:

GS I

Indian Culture:

- **Context:**
 - The National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) and the governments of Uttar Pradesh and Haryana have launched a massive recruitment campaign to transfer some 10,000 workers to Israel, primarily for construction jobs.
 - Although the NSDC has praised this initiative as a "passport to dreams abroad," trade unions have been a major opponent, raising worries over potential emigration regulations violations.
- **What Jobs Are Available in Israel and Other Related Issues?**
 - Profitable Prospects in Israel: Plasterers, ceramic tile installers, iron benders, and framers are in demand in Israel.
 - Indian candidates who are chosen will receive monthly salary of approximately ₹1.37 lakh, or 6,100 Israeli shekels.

- There were over 18,000 Indian citizens working in IT, education, diamond dealing, and caregiving in Israel as of February 2023.
- Trade Unions' Concerns: Citing violations of the Emigration Act, trade unions are contesting the job drive.
- Workers travelling to war areas are required by the Emigration Rules to register on the "e-migrate" portal run by the Ministry of External Affairs. Israel is not included on this list, nevertheless.
- The current state of affairs in Israel has sparked worries regarding migrant workers' safety, especially in light of Hamas hostilities.
- They contend that the action is incompatible with the philosophy of repatriating residents from areas of turmoil and charge the administration of exploiting unemployment as a political tool.
- Employees travelling to areas of war or locations lacking adequate labour laws must register on the "e-migrate" portal run by the Ministry of External Affairs.
- Workers travelling to 18 countries—Afghanistan, Bahrain, Indonesia, Iraq, Jordan, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Malaysia, Oman, Qatar, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Thailand, the UAE, and Yemen—are covered by passports issued under the ECR (Emigration Check Required) programme. Not on this list is Israel.
- **Global Guidelines for Migrant Workers' Protection:**
- The 1949 Migration for Employment Convention (Revised) and the 1975 Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) Convention are the two ILO treaties that govern international practices for protecting migrant workers.
- Israel ratified the 1949 convention in 1953, while India has not ratified either of the two treaties.
- The 1949 treaty placed a strong emphasis on taking action against deceptive immigration and emigration promotion.
- Extra Points to Take Into Account: The ILO projects a rise in unemployment worldwide in 2024. As concerns about unemployment rise, the research calls on nations to create smart immigration policies and skill-building programmes.
- A parliamentary committee suggested in 2019 that a migration strategy be drafted, highlighting the importance of improved institutional provisions for the welfare of Indian migrants.
- The Donkey Flight is an unofficial means of finding employment abroad that has recently made headlines. It is a method of illegal immigration used to enter nations such as the UK, Canada, and the US.
- It frequently makes use of agents and human traffickers and entails making numerous stops and crossing borders through different nations.

- **Way Ahead:**

- **Address Trade Union Concerns:** To allay trade union worries and guarantee recruitment process transparency, have a positive conversation with them.
- **Boost Safety Measures:** Taking into account Israel's geopolitical difficulties, give top priority to the security and welfare of hired labourers by putting strong safety procedures and backup plans in place.
- **Create a Comprehensive Migration Policy:** To secure the long-term protection and well-being of Indian emigrants, endeavour to create and execute a comprehensive migration policy that takes into consideration the parliamentary committee's recommendations.

Source → The Hindu

3 - National Monetization Pipeline:

GS II

Government Policies and Interventions:

- **Context:**

- The Centre recently made the decision to run an Asset Recycling Drive via the National Monetization Pipeline (NMP) in order to raise funds for additional infrastructure developments.
- It is anticipated that the Center's asset recycling initiative will bring in about Rs 1.5 trillion during the 2024–2025 budget year.
- In 2021–2022 and 2022–2023 respectively, transactions of approximately Rs 0.97 trillion and Rs 1.32 trillion in monetisation values were concluded.

- **The National Monetization Pipeline (NMP): What is it?**

- Through the leasing of Central government key assets in areas like roads, railroads, power, oil and gas pipelines, communications, civil aviation, etc., over a four-year period (FY 2022–25), the NMP envisions an overall monetisation potential of Rs 6-lakh crore.
- The NMP monetization process solely comprises of core assets; disinvestment of non-core assets is not included in this process. As of right now, only the infrastructure sector assets of CPSEs and line ministries of the central government are included.
- To broaden the NMP's reach and eventually include assets at both the federal and state levels, the government is presently organising and compiling asset pipelines from the states.

- The Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) is moving the monetization of non-core assets, such as land, real estate, and infrastructure, to the Department of Public Enterprises (DPE) inside the Ministry of Finance in order to expedite the process.
- The National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP) is designed to finance initiatives totaling Rs 111 trillion over the course of six years, up until FY25.
- The National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP) remaining period and the NMP timeframe have been intentionally planned to coincide.

- **NMP Requirement:**

- **Cost Overruns:** Occasionally, a project's completion timeline is surpassed, which raises project costs to the point where the project is no longer financially feasible when it first starts.
- **Overcapitalization:** Most government infrastructure projects are overcapitalized since the ideal input-output ratio is rarely reached.
- **Resource Optimisation:** Project delays and cost overruns are caused by inefficient resource allocation and use.
- By bringing efficiency from the private sector and market-driven methods, the NMP seeks to maximise resources and improve input-output alignment.
- **Coordination Challenges:** Ineffective communication across departments and ministries can cause delays and inefficiencies in the completion of projects.
- By promoting cooperation between the public and commercial sectors, the NMP promotes an approach to infrastructure development that is more organised and efficient.
- **Labour Reforms and Decision-Making:** The failure of public infrastructure assets is a result of a combination of bad decision-making, inefficient governance, and a reluctance to enact labour reforms.

- **Relevance of NMP:**

- **Boost Economy:** This ground-breaking programme will increase employment prospects, stimulate economic growth, and make the Indian economy more competitive.
- The PM Gati Shakti, an all-encompassing and comprehensive strategy for India's infrastructure development, is associated with NMP. In contrast to the NMP, which seeks to monetize current infrastructure assets in order to finance new projects, Gati Shakti concentrates on creating an extensive and interconnected infrastructure network.
- The accomplishment of one initiative's objectives can strengthen and support the aims of the other, promoting India's general economic development and progress.
- **Using Underutilised Public Assets:** The NMP supports freeing up cash from underperforming, non-strategic government-owned assets.
- Additionally, it calls for reinvesting the money that was obtained in order to create new infrastructure projects and enhance existing assets, including greenfield infrastructure.

- **Achievements and Anticipations:**

- Mining Sector: Specifically, coal blocks and other mines have been the main focus of the mining sector's asset monetization in 2023–2024.
- It is anticipated that this industry will attain approximately Rs 55,000–60,000 crore in FY 2024–25, exceeding the initial objective of Rs 8,726 crore.
- The segment objective for FY23 was raised from Rs 6,060 crore to Rs 37,500 crore, and it was attained at almost Rs 68,000 crore.
- The mining industry generated Rs 68,000 crore in FY22 compared to Rs 3,394 crore, exceeding the target.
- The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) is expected to attain approximately Rs 45,000 crore in the fiscal year 2024-25, making it the second largest contributor to the recycling of brownfield assets.
- Infrastructure Investment Trust (InvIT), securitization, and Toll Operate Transfer (ToT) strategies are combined to achieve this goal.

- **Forecasts for Other Sectors in Fiscal Year 24:**

- The power generating and transmission sectors are expected to perform well in FY24, achieving about Rs 20,000 crore as opposed to the initial objective of Rs 26,700 crore, having met their combined target of Rs 15,300 crore in FY23.
- Railways is expected to achieve between Rs 8,000 and Rs 10,000 crore in FY24 as opposed to Rs 8,000 crore in FY23, after its target was lowered from Rs 44,907 crore to Rs 20,000 crore.
- While the railway industry has not made much headway in commercialising essential assets like stations, it would finalise certain deals involving train stock, Gati Shakti freight terminals, and railway colony rehabilitation.
- By March 2024, the oil and gas industry may have made up to Rs 8,000 crore, up from its current total of about Rs 4,000 crore.

- **What Difficulties Are Associated with NMP?**

- Problem with Taxpayers' Money: Concerns regarding possible double charging for public assets have been voiced by taxpayers. They have already paid for the development of these assets, but now they have to pay private parties to use them after they are monetized.
- The difficulty is in resolving this seeming overlap of responsibilities and making sure that public and private investment in the upkeep and use of these resources are fairly balanced.
- Cycle of Creating and Monetizing Assets: The NMP is probably going to start a vicious cycle whereby new assets are created and then subsequently turned into liabilities for the government.
- Asset-specific Challenges: Limited capacity utilisation in networks of gas and petroleum pipelines; controlled prices in assets of the electricity sector; limited investor interest in national highways with fewer than four lanes; and numerous stakeholders holding equity in the business.

- **Monopolisation:** One of the main criticisms levelled at the NMP is the possibility of asset transfers leading to monopolisation, which could result in higher prices.
- Monopolies may result from ownership consolidation, especially when it comes to railroads and roadways. This worry focuses on the potential for diminished market dynamics and competition, which could lead to increased costs for end consumers.
- **Way Ahead:**
 - To foster confidence among all parties involved in the asset monetization process—investors, governmental organisations, and the general public—it is imperative to increase openness.
 - Promote the advantages of asset monetization in terms of enhanced infrastructure, job development, and economic growth.
 - To take advantage of new opportunities and challenges, the policy framework must be updated and improved on a regular basis.
 - Establish a regulatory framework that is favourable to the involvement and investments of the private sector.
 - Provide a thorough monitoring and assessment framework to measure the success of asset monetization initiatives.

Source → *The Hindu*

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4 - Rules for Wild Life Licencing in 2024:

GS III

Environmental Conservation related issues:

- **Context:**
 - The Wildlife Trade Rules, 1983 were amended by the federal government with the introduction of the Wild Life (Protection) Licencing (Additional Matters for Consideration) Rules, 2024. This resulted in notable modifications to the licencing procedure and the exclusion of specific species.
 - On January 16, 2024, the revisions went into effect, making it the first revision since 1983.

- **What is the 2024 Wild Life Licencing Regulation?**

- **Schedule I:**

- According to the 1983 regulations, a licence of this kind cannot be obtained to trade in any wild animal listed in Schedule I or Part II of Schedule II to the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, unless the central government has first been consulted.
- The revised rules have modified this requirement, stating that no such permission shall be issued if it relates to any wild animal listed in Schedule I to the Act, unless the Central Government has been consulted beforehand.
- This indicates that, with a clause for consultation, the limitations on Schedule I species—which include creatures like tigers, elephants, rhinos, and others—remain in effect.

- **Second Schedule:**

- The elimination of licencing limitations for species included in Schedule II of the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972 is a notable modification to the current rules.
- This suggests that the central government, which was previously necessary, need not be consulted or given consent before licences for the trafficking of Schedule II species can be issued.

- **Considerations for Licencing:**

- The new regulations also outline the criteria that the authorised officers must take into account when awarding licences, including the applicant's qualifications, the location and mode of acquiring supplies, the quantity of current licences in the region, and the effects on the hunting or trading of the relevant wild animals.

- **What worries people about the new rules?**

- **Schedule II Species Exclusion:**

- The notification leaves unclear the rationale behind the removal of licencing requirements for Schedule II species.
- Important species like threatened or endangered birds, mammals, geckos, turtles, and snakes are included in Schedule II, and their removal from licence restrictions raises questions about the degree of protection these species will receive.
- To make sure that the updated regulations appropriately address conservation demands and do not unintentionally jeopardise the preservation of fragile wildlife, more examination is necessary due to the ambiguity.

- **Schedule Rationalisation in 2022:**

- The Wild Life (Protection) Amendment Act, 2022 rationalised the schedules of the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972, which resulted in modifications to the way species are classified.
- Schedules were established according to the degree of species endangerment prior to the 2022 modification. The criteria for classifying species might have changed as a result of the recent rationalisation.
- Experts debate whether the rationalisation process was followed when some species were excluded from Schedule II and whether their greater abundance justifies a lesser degree of protection.

- **The state of the wildlife trade:**

- India is home to around 6.5% of all known wildlife species worldwide, making it a biodiverse nation. India is home to over 12.6% of the world's bird species and 7.6% of the world's mammals.
- The subcontinent has witnessed an increase in wildlife crime due to the unlawful demand for wildlife and its products worldwide.
- Numerous things are traded in wildlife in India, such as hair from mongooses, snakeskins, rhino horn, claws, bones, skins and whiskers from tigers and leopards, elephant tusks, deer antlers, turtle shells, medicinal herbs, lumber and caged birds like parakeets, mynas and munias, among others.
- There is no direct demand for a significant portion of this trade in India; it is intended mostly for export.
- India ranks in the top 10 for wildlife trafficking by air and among the top 20 countries for wildlife trafficking.
- According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime's World Wildlife Report 2020, 6,000 distinct species of plants and animals were taken into custody worldwide between 1999 and 2018.

- **The Wildlife (Protection) Act of 1972: What is it?**

- A legislative framework for the preservation of different wild animal and plant species, the management of their habitats, and the regulation and control of the trade in wild animals, plants, and products derived from them is provided by the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972.
- The act also includes schedules of the plants and animals that are subject to different levels of government protection and oversight.
- Following the passage of the Jammu & Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019, the Jammu & Kashmir Union Territory and Ladakh were subject to the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.

- **Most recent modification:**
- **Act to Amend for the Protection of Wildlife, 2022:**
 - There are now only four schedules instead of the previous six.
 - Animal species with the highest level of protection are found in Schedule I.
 - Schedule II pertains to animal species that are protected to a lower extent.
 - For protected plant species, see Schedule III.
 - The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) has designated Schedule IV for scheduled specimens.
- **The Way Ahead:**
 - putting in place a strong and open system for the approval and consultation process for Schedule I species, and making sure that all pertinent parties are involved and represented.
 - supplying a concise and logical justification for the Schedule II species' exclusion from the consultation and approval procedures, as well as the selection criteria.
 - bolstering the consequences and rewards for both compliance and noncompliance with the laws and regulations governing the wildlife trade.

Source → The Hindu

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