

**DAILY
CURRENT
AFFAIRS
ANALYSIS**



LAKSHYA ACADEMY®

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1 - Surge in Tobacco Prices:

GS III

Indian Economy:

- **Context:**

- Tobacco farmers in Andhra Pradesh are set to benefit after crop yields in Brazil, Zimbabwe and Indonesia declined due to droughts and untimely rainfall.
- Auction prices in Andhra Pradesh have surged to near-record levels and are expected to rise further.

- **How are Tobacco Farmers in Andhra Pradesh Benefiting?**

- Surge in Auction Prices: Prices have risen to near-record levels, marking a 30% increase from initial expectations.
- Impact of Global Crop Yields: Trade analysts attributed the price increase to crop damage in Brazil and Zimbabwe.
- Drought conditions in Indonesia, another tobacco-producing country, also resulted in crop failures.
- China, another significant producer, has imposed limitations on tobacco exports to protect its domestic cigarette industry in response to reports of global stock shortages, further fueling price increases in tobacco-producing nations.
- Potential Impact on Indian Growers: Tobacco exporters and the Indian Tobacco Board are expecting that the disparity between demand and production is expected to sustain price escalations for another year, which is likely to benefit Indian growers.
- Indian Tobacco Board: It was constituted as a statutory body on 1st January 1976 under Section (4) of the Tobacco Board Act, 1975.
- The Board is headed by a Chairman with its headquarters at Guntur, Andhra Pradesh. It is responsible for the development of the tobacco industry.

- **What are the Key Facts About Tobacco Production in India?**

- **Agro-Climatic Facts:**

- Tobacco is of tropical origin but thrives under tropical, subtropical, and temperate climates.

- Ideal conditions include a frost-free period of 100 to 120 days with an average temperature of 80°F and well-distributed rainfall of 88 to 125 mm per month.
 - Relative humidity ranges from 70-80% in the morning to 50-60% during midday.
 - Various tobacco types have specific soil and climatic preferences for optimal growth.
 - FCV thrives on various soils, including sandy loams, red loams, and black cotton soils.
- **Economic Significance:**
- Tobacco ranks among the most economically significant crops globally.
 - India's tobacco cultivation covers approximately 0.27% of the net cultivated area, producing around 750 million kg of tobacco leaf annually.
 - Annually, tobacco contributes excise revenue of (Rs 14,000 crores), accounting for 4% of the country's total agri-exports.
 - China, India, and Brazil were rated among the leading producers worldwide.
 - As regulations tighten in middle- and high-income countries, tobacco companies are increasingly targeting African countries to scale up tobacco leaf production.
 - India is the third largest tobacco-producing nation and second largest consumer of tobacco worldwide.
- **Diversity in Production:**
- India produces various types of tobacco, including Flue-cured Virginia (FCV), Bidi, Hookah, Cigar-wrapper, Cheroot, Burley, Oriental, and others.
 - Different types of tobacco are cultivated under diverse agro ecological conditions across 15 states in India.
 - Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka occupy the top 3 positions in both the area and production of tobacco in the country.
- **Employment and Livelihood:**
- Tobacco cultivation provides livelihood security to around 36 million people in India, including farmers, farm labourers, and workers in processing, manufacturing, and exports.
 - Bidi rolling alone employs around 4.4 million people, and 2.2 million tribals are engaged in tendu leaf collection.
- **Export Market and Competition:**
- India exported tobacco and tobacco products worth Rs 9,740 crore during 2022-23 with a major contribution coming from cigarette-type tobacco like FCV and Burley.
 - Major importers of Indian FCV tobacco include the UK, Germany, Belgium, South Korea, and South Africa.

- Brazil, Zimbabwe, Turkey, China, and Indonesia are key competitors in the export market.
- Despite a 13% share of the world's tobacco production, India accounts for only 5% value of global tobacco leaf exports.
- It exports only 30% of the tobacco produced in the country whereas other leading tobacco-growing countries viz. Brazil, USA, and Zimbabwe export between 60-90% of their production.

- **Competitive Advantage of Indian Tobacco:**

- Indian tobacco exhibits lower levels of heavy metals, Tobacco Specific Nitrosamines (TSNAs), and pesticide residues compared to other tobacco-producing countries.
- India's varied agro-climatic conditions allow for the production of different styles of tobacco, meeting diverse customer preferences globally.
- India enjoys a competitive edge in terms of low production costs and export prices, making Indian tobacco considered 'value for money.'

- **What are the Initiatives Related to Tobacco?**

- **Global:**

- To address the tobacco epidemic, the World Health Organization (WHO) adopted the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC) in 2003.
- Currently, 182 countries are parties to this treaty, including India.
- The WHO MPOWER measures are in line with the WHO FCTC and have been shown to save lives and reduce costs from averted healthcare expenditure.
- The Global Tobacco Surveillance System (GTSS) aims to strengthen countries' ability to implement tobacco control measures and monitor WHO's FCTC and MPOWER technical package.
- It involves collecting data through four surveys.

- **India:**

- **National Tobacco Control Programme (NTCP):**

- Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products (Prohibition of Advertisement and Regulation of Trade and Commerce, Production, Supply and Distribution) Act, 2003:
- The law regulates tobacco products by restricting advertisement, promotion, and sponsorship; prohibiting smoking in public places; sale to and by minors; and sale within 100 yards of educational institutions.
- It also requires specified health warnings on all tobacco product packs.
- The production, sale, storage, and distribution of food products containing tobacco or nicotine are prohibited under the Food Safety and Standards Act.

Source → *The Hindu*

2 – Rat Hole Mining:

GS III

Infrastructure related issues:

- **Context:**

- Recently, authorities were given four weeks by the National Green Tribunal (NGT) to respond in a case related to the death of six workers in a rat-hole coal mine fire in Nagaland's Wokha district.

- **What is Rat-Hole Mining?**

- **About:**

- Rat-hole mining, aptly named for its resemblance to rodent burrows, is an illegal and highly hazardous method of extracting coal prevalent in certain pockets of India, particularly the state of Meghalaya.
- Unlike large-scale mechanised mines, this practice involves digging narrow, horizontal tunnels barely large enough for a single person to squeeze through.
- These tunnels, often referred to as "rat holes," can extend tens of meters underground.
- Miners descend precariously using ropes, bamboo ladders, or makeshift supports and work in cramped, poorly ventilated conditions with basic tools like pickaxes and shovels.
- The extracted coal is then hauled back up through these narrow passages, making the entire process incredibly dangerous and backbreaking.

- **Types:**

- **Side-Cutting Procedure:** Narrow tunnels are dug into hill slopes in the side-cutting procedure, where workers enter to locate the typically less than 2m thin coal seam in Meghalaya's hills.
- **Box-cutting:** In box-cutting, a rectangular opening is created, followed by digging a vertical pit, and then rat-hole-sized tunnels are dug horizontally for coal extraction.

- **Geographical Spread:**

- While predominantly practised in Meghalaya, reports of rat-hole mining have surfaced in other northeastern states of India as well.
- This method thrives in regions with thin coal seams, unsuitable for large-scale mining techniques.

- **Causes of Rat Hole Mining:**

- **Poverty:** Local tribal populations with limited livelihood options, often resort to rat-hole mining as a means of survival.
- The quick cash generated from selling the extracted coal, despite the risks involved, becomes a tempting proposition for those struggling to make ends meet.

- **Land Ownership:**

- Ambiguous land titles pose challenges for establishing regulated mines, creating opportunities for illegal operators to exploit loopholes and persist in their activities.
- **Coal Demand:** The constant demand for coal, both legal and illegal, fuels the practice of rat-hole mining.
- Middlemen and illegal traders create a market for this illegally extracted coal, perpetuating the cycle and putting the lives of miners at risk.

- **Issues:**

- **Danger to Life and Limb:** The narrow tunnels are prone to collapses, often trapping miners underground.
- Poor ventilation leads to suffocation, and the lack of proper safety measures makes them vulnerable to accidents, injuries and life threatening diseases.
- **Environmental Damage:** Deforestation to clear land for access points, soil erosion from haphazard digging, and water contamination due to improper waste disposal are some of the lasting environmental consequences of this practice.
- Rat hole mines also cause acidic runoff, known as Acid Mine Drainage (AMD), leading to degraded water quality and reduced biodiversity in affected water bodies.

- **The Silkyara (Uttarakhand) Tunnel Collapse:**

- The 2023 Uttarakhand tunnel collapse, where 41 workers were trapped, presented a unique situation where a banned technique, rat-hole mining, became the key to their successful rescue.
- The miners successfully dug a narrow passage, enabling the rescue of all 41 workers. This case exemplifies the technique's potential for rapid rescue in extreme situations.

- However, it's a high-risk technique. This case should not overshadow the importance of prioritising safe and regulated mining practices.
- **What are the Ways to Regulate Rat Hole Mining?**
- **Regulation of Rat-Hole Mining in Nagaland:**
 - Nagaland has 492.68 million tonnes of coal reserves scattered in small, erratic pockets, leading to the permission of rat-hole mining under its 2006 Nagaland Coal mining policy due to the impracticality of large-scale operations.
 - Rat-hole mining licences, known as small pocket deposit licences, are exclusively granted to individual landowners for limited durations and specific conditions.
 - Rat-hole mining requires approval from departments like Forest and Environment to ensure environmental compliance, yet illegal operations persist despite government clearance and plans.
 - Article 371A and Controlling Rat-Hole Mining in Nagaland:
 - Article 371A complicates government regulation in Nagaland, hindering oversight of small-scale mining, especially by individual landowners.
- **Remedies:**
 - **Livelihood Alternatives:** Providing sustainable income sources is crucial. This can involve skilling development programs, promoting alternative industries like tourism or handicrafts, and creating micro-financing opportunities.
 - By offering a more secure and less dangerous path to financial security, communities can be incentivised to leave behind rat-hole mining.
 - **Sustainable Mining Practices:** Exploring alternative, less hazardous mining techniques suitable for extracting coal from thin seams is essential.
 - Research into and adoption of technologies like bord and pillar mining or small-scale mechanised mining could pave the way for a safer and more efficient approach.
 - **Stricter Enforcement:** Strengthening law enforcement and imposing harsher penalties on those involved in illegal mining can act as a strong deterrent.
- **Legal Landscape:**
 - **International Context:** There's no specific international law directly addressing rat-hole mining.
 - However, international regulations promote sustainable mining methods and prioritise worker safety, indirectly influencing member states to adopt similar practices.
 - **Indian Context:** Recognising the dangers of this practice, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) banned rat-hole mining in India in 2014.

- **Government Initiative:**

- The NGT ban on rat-hole mining, though not fully effective, demonstrates a commitment to ending this practice.
- Schemes promoting alternative livelihoods, like the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), aim to provide alternative income sources for those dependent on rat hole mining.

- **Conclusion:**

- Moving forward, a multi-pronged approach is necessary. As seen in many countries, a complete ban on rat-hole mining offers a definitive solution.
- However, for regions economically dependent on small-scale mining, the focus should be on developing and implementing safe alternatives.
- Investing in research and development of mechanized, small-scale mining equipment can provide a safer and more efficient solution. Additionally, robust safety training programs and strict enforcement of regulations are crucial to prevent future tragedies.

Source → The Hindu

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3 - Climate Migration:

GS III

Environmental Conservation:

- **Context:**

- Recently, the issue of climate migration has garnered significant attention, yet the world still lacks a comprehensive legal framework to protect individuals forced to flee their homes due to increasingly severe weather disasters.
- This critical gap leaves a vulnerable population without adequate safeguards in a time of growing displacement.

- **Who are Climate Refugees?**

- **About:**

- According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), "climate migration" refers to the movement of a person or groups of people who are predominantly forced to leave their homes due to sudden or gradual environmental changes caused by climate change.
- This movement can be temporary or permanent and can occur within a country or across borders.
- This definition highlights that climate migrants are primarily those who have little choice but to leave their homes due to the impacts of climate change.

- **Causes of Climate Migration:**

- **Sudden-Onset Disasters and Displacement:**

- **Internal Displacement:** Reports by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) highlight that sudden-onset disasters like floods, hurricanes, and earthquakes often cause significant internal displacement.
- People flee to safer grounds within their countries, but returning home can be difficult due to destroyed infrastructure and livelihoods.
- **Disasters and Vulnerability:** The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) emphasises how disasters often disproportionately affect vulnerable populations.
- These populations, lacking resources or living in high-risk areas, are more likely to be displaced and struggle to recover.

- **Slow-Onset Disasters and Migration:**

- **Environmental Degradation and Livelihoods:** The IOM reports that slow-onset disasters like droughts, desertification, and salinisation degrade land and water resources.
- This makes it difficult for people to sustain their livelihoods, pushing them to migrate in search of better opportunities.
- **Sea Level Rise and Coastal Communities:** Reports by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) warn of rising sea levels threatening coastal communities. This can lead to permanent displacement as homes and farmland become submerged.

- **The Complexities of Climate Migration:**

- **Mixed Drivers:** The UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) acknowledges that migration due to climate change is rarely caused by a single factor.

- Poverty, political instability, and lack of social safety nets often combine with disasters to force migration.
- Data Gaps and Policy Challenges: World Bank highlights the challenges in accurately quantifying climate migration.
- This makes it difficult to develop effective policies to support displaced people and build resilience in vulnerable communities.
- Chronological Overview of International Efforts Regarding Climate Refugees
- 1951: Geneva Convention gives a legal definition of refugees. It does not include climate disasters as a ground for seeking asylum.
- However, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, in 2019, says the Geneva Convention could be applied to persons affected by climate change.
- 1985: UN Environment Programme for the first time broadly defines environmental refugees as people who are forced to leave their traditional habitat, temporarily or permanently, due to "environmental disruption"
- 2011: Nansen Conference on Climate Change and Displacement in Norway formulates 10 principles on climate change and cross-border displacement
- 2013: European Commission downplays climate-induced migration into Europe
- 2015: The Paris Agreement calls for a taskforce to recommend approaches to avert, minimise and address climate change-related displacement
- 2018: The UN Global Compact on Refugees has a reference of climate refugees, but lacks actionable commitments from countries.
- 2022: Kampala Ministerial Declaration on Migration, Environment and Climate Change allows people affected by weather events to move safely across the borders in the Horn and East of Africa regions
- 2023: Pacific island countries agree on a framework to allow cross-border movement of people due to climate change.

- **What are the Challenges Faced by the Climate Migrants?**

- **Precarious Livelihoods:**

- Loss of Skills and Assets: The International Labour Organization (ILO) warn that climate migrants often lose their skills and assets due to displacement.
- This makes it difficult for them to find new jobs and rebuild their livelihoods in unfamiliar environments.
- Informal Work and Exploitation: The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) reports that climate migrants often end up in informal work sectors with low wages and poor working conditions.
- They may also be more vulnerable to exploitation due to their precarious situation.

- **Integration and Social Challenges:**

- **Lack of Access to Services:** World Bank highlight that climate migrants often struggle to access basic services like healthcare, education, and housing in their new locations.
- This can lead to social exclusion and marginalisation.
- **Cultural and Linguistic Barriers:** The IOM emphasises the difficulties climate migrants face adapting to new cultures and languages.
- This can hinder their ability to integrate into new communities.

- **Legal Status and Protection:**

- **Limited Legal Framework:** Reports by the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) point out that there's no clear legal framework to protect climate migrants.
- They don't qualify for refugee status under current international law.
- **Increased Risk of Statelessness:** The Journal of Environmental Law claims that climate change-induced displacement can lead to statelessness, particularly for those who move across borders.
- In 2021, the World Bank, in its Groundswell report, estimated that by 2050, some 216 million people worldwide would be internally displaced due to the impacts of climate change.

- **Psychological and Health Impacts:**

- **Trauma and Mental Health Issues:** WHO highlight the psychological distress and trauma climate migrants experience due to displacement and loss.
- Access to mental health services is often limited, further exacerbating their struggles.
- **Increased Vulnerability to Health Risks:** Climate migrants may be exposed to new health risks in their new locations, such as infectious diseases or extreme weather events. This is especially concerning for children and the elderly.
- **What are the Limitations of Policies Taken to Address the Issue of Climate Migration?**
- **Global Compact for Migration:** It acknowledges climate change as a factor for human mobility, its silence on climate refugees reflects the difficulty in reaching consensus on this issue at the international level.
- **Regional Treaties and Declarations:** Regional agreements, like the Kampala Declaration, often lack explicit recognition of climate refugees, highlighting the need for more comprehensive legal frameworks.
- **Identification of Climate Refugees:** One of the key challenges is identifying and categorising individuals or communities affected by climate change as refugees, given the complex nature of climate-induced displacement.
- **Collective Displacement:** Climate change often affects entire communities or nations, requiring collective responses and highlighting the limitations of individual-based refugee status.
- **What are the Steps Taken to Address the Issue of Climate Migration?**

- Countries like Bangladesh are investing in coastal embankments and flood-resistant infrastructure to protect communities from rising sea levels and storm surges.
- Island nations like Fiji are exploring innovative solutions like raising landmasses to adapt to rising sea levels.
- Kiribati are exploring options for planned relocation of their populations due to rising sea levels.
- This involves careful considerations of land acquisition, cultural preservation, and livelihood opportunities in the new settlements.
- Early warning systems for floods, cyclones, and other extreme weather events have been implemented in countries like India and Vietnam.
- These systems allow communities to evacuate vulnerable areas and minimise casualties and displacement.
- The Kampala Declaration on Protracted Displacement is a regional framework adopted by African countries to address the needs of people displaced by conflict, natural disasters, and climate change.
- It provides a model for regional cooperation on climate migration.
- Countries like Ethiopia are investing in drought-resistant crops and irrigation technologies to help farmers adapt to changing weather patterns and ensure food security.
- This reduces the risk of displacement due to food scarcity.
- **Other Examples of Adaptation Measures:**
- Pacific Island Climate Mobility Framework: This framework facilitates legal movement between Pacific island countries for populations affected by climate change, providing a model for regional cooperation and adaptation.
- Tuvalu-Australia Pact: The pact between Tuvalu and Australia, granting residency to Tuvaluans facing climate-related dangers, demonstrates a bilateral approach to addressing climate migration challenges.

Source → The Hindu

4 - Nepal's Currency Featured Kalapani Region:

GS II

International Issues

- **Context:**

- Recently, Nepal announced the printing of a new Rs 100 currency note with a map that shows the contentious territories of Lipulekh, Limpiyadhura and Kalapani, already termed as “artificial enlargement” and “untenable” by India.
- India responded sharply to Nepal's decision, with India's External Affairs Minister stating that it will not change the situation or the reality on the ground.

- **What are the Regions of Border Dispute Between India and Nepal?**

- **About:**

- Currently, India and Nepal have border disputes over the Kalapani-Limpiyadhura-Lipulekh trijunction and Susta area (West Champaran district, Bihar).
- Kalapani-Limpiyadhura-Lipulekh Trijunction (Kalapani Region):
- This is a 35-square-kilometre area located in the northwestern part of Nepal, near the tri-junction where India, Nepal, and China meet.
- Kalapani is a valley that is administered by India as a part of the Pithoragarh district of Uttarakhand. It is situated on the Kailash Mansarovar route.
- Kalapani is advantageously located at a height of over 20,000 ft and serves as an observation post for that area.
- The Kali River in the Kalapani region demarcates the border between India and Nepal.
- The Treaty of Sugauli was signed by the Kingdom of Nepal and British India (after the Anglo-Nepalese War) in 1816.
- The treaty designated the Kali River (or the Mahakali River) as the western boundary of Nepal.
- Land east of the Kali River came under Nepal's control, while territory west of the river became part of British India (present-day India).
- The discrepancy in locating the source of the Kali River led to boundary disputes between India and Nepal, with each country producing maps supporting their claims.

- **Claims of Different Parties over Kalapani Region:**

- **Nepal's Stand:**

- According to Nepal's claims, the Kali River originates from a stream at Limpiyadhura, northwest of Lipu Lekh.
- Thus Kalapani, Limpiyadhura, and Lipu Lekh, fall to the east of the river and are part of Nepal's Dharchula district.
- The territory of Kalapani was offered to India by King Mahendra after the 1962 India-China war who wanted to help India's security concerns due to perceived lingering Chinese threats.

- **India's Stand:**

- India claims that the Kali River originates in springs well below the Lipu-lekh Pass (or Lipulekh Pass itself), effectively bringing the Kalapani region under Indian control.
- The Sugauli Treaty does not demarcate the area north of these streams.
- The administrative and revenue records of the nineteenth century also show that Kalapani was on the Indian side, and counted as part of Pithoragarh district of Uttarakhand.

- **Susta Region:**

- The Treaty of Sugauli defined the Gandak River as the international boundary between India and Nepal.
- The right bank of the river was under Nepal's control while the left bank was under India's control.
- Susta village was initially on the right bank when the treaty was signed and it was a part of Nepal.
- However, over the years, the Gandak River changed its course and Susta moved to the left bank and is now currently under India's control.

- **Conclusion:**

- While both countries present historical documents and interpretations of the Sugauli Treaty to support their claims, a resolution remains elusive.
- Moving forward, constructive dialogue and a willingness to find common ground will be crucial to resolving this long-standing issue and fostering a stronger relationship between Nepal and India.

Source → The Hindu