

**DAILY  
CURRENT  
AFFAIRS  
ANALYSIS**



LAKSHYA ACADEMY®

**31 MAY 2024**

# 1 - Indian Ocean Warms Faster:

## GS I

### Geography related issues

- **Context:**
- A recent study by the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM) in Pune suggests that the number of maritime heatwaves has increased from 20 to 220–250 days year, potentially exacerbating cyclones. This is a tenfold increase in heatwaves.
- **Which are the report's main conclusions?**
- **Rise in the temperature of the ocean:**
- **Rapid Warming:** Between 1950 and 2020, the temperature of the Indian Ocean increased by 1.2°C, and between 2020 and 2100, it is expected to rise by another 1.7°C to 3.8°C.
- Forecasts suggest that the number of days with marine heatwaves will rise from an average of 20 to 220–250 each year.
- These heatwaves can cause a nearly persistent heatwave state in the tropical Indian Ocean and are associated with faster cyclone formation.
- Frequent and severe heat waves are expected to hasten the processes that are vital to the fisheries industry: coral bleaching, seagrass devastation, and kelp forest loss.
- **Variations in the Ocean's Heat Content:**
- **Deep Ocean Warming:** This is when the temperature rises to 2,000 metres below the surface, increasing the ocean's total heat content.
- The Indian Ocean's heat content is predicted to rise at a pace of 16–22 zetta-joules per decade in the future, from its current rate of 4.5 zetta-joules per decade.
- **Energy Comparison:** Over a ten-year period, the anticipated rise in heat content is comparable to the energy emitted by one Hiroshima atomic bomb detonation every second.
- **Increased Sea Level and Thermal Spread:**
- Rising heat content is the main cause of sea level rise in the Indian Ocean, with thermal expansion contributing more than half of the rise above the impacts of melting sea ice and glaciers.

- **Modifications to Monsoon and Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) Patterns:**

- IOD Alterations: By the end of the twenty-first century, the Indian Ocean Dipole—a key component in determining monsoon strength—is expected to see a 66% increase in extreme events and a 52% drop in moderate events as a result of the ocean's rising heat content.
- The variations have a significant impact on the monsoon season since the western portion of the country experiences warmer temperatures during positive phases of the dipole, which are ideal for the summer monsoon.

- **Prospects for the Future:**

- A positive phase of the IOD is partly responsible for the "above-normal" monsoon that is predicted for June–September 2024, despite the continuous heatwaves.

- **What Effects Does Rising Sea Levels Have on India?**

- **Sea Level Rise Rate:**

- The sea level along the Indian coast has been reported to be rising at a pace of approximately 1.7 mm/year on average over the last century, according to the Ministry of Earth Sciences (1900-2000).
- About 17 metres might be added to the inland sea level by a 3 cm rise in sea level.

- **India is Particularly Vulnerable:**

- The country of India is most at risk from the accumulative effects of sea level rise.
- Due to the ocean's rapid warming, half of the sea level rise in the Indian Ocean is caused by water volume expanding. The amount contributed by glacier melt is less.
- In terms of surface warming, the Indian Ocean is warming the quickest.
- Compound severe events are occurring all along India's coastline. Because of increased moisture and heat from ocean warming, cyclones are getting stronger very quickly.
- Because storm surges are amplifying sea level rise decade by decade, there is also an increase in the amount of flooding.
- There is more rain coming from cyclones than before.
- Super Cyclone Amphan (2020) flooded vast areas, saturating tens of km inland with saltwater intrusion.
- The Indus, Ganga, and Brahmaputra rivers may eventually dry up, and their massive deltas may become virtually uninhabitable in significant areas due to deep saline intrusion and rising sea levels.

## 2 - Japan's Modifying Approach to Diplomacy:

### GS II

#### International Relations

- **Context:**
- Japan, a longtime poster child for post-war pacifism, is enhancing its military might, marking a watershed in the recent history of shifting geopolitics. This change has the capacity to drastically change the distribution of power throughout Asia and beyond.
- **What Are the Most Important Details Regarding Japan's Diplomatic Position?**
- **Japan's Pre-World War II Diplomatic Path:**
- **Private (1650s–1850s):**
- For more than 200 years, Japan maintained its isolation from the outside world. The goal of this isolationist strategy was to protect social order and ward off outside influence.
- **Regaining Ground (1850s–1900s):**
- Japan was compelled to leave its self-imposed isolation upon the arrival of Portuguese Commodore Perry's "Black Ships" in 1853. The Japanese government sought to:
- To become a powerful country, they embraced Western technology and updated their armed forces.
- In order to take back control of its trade and foreign policy, Japan renegotiated earlier treaties.
- Despite its successes, Japan was not viewed as a full equal by Western countries, especially when it came to racial equality (as evidenced by its rejection of the Treaty of Versailles' racial equality clause).
- A change towards aggressive expansionism, such as the military conquest of Manchuria in 1931 and the formation of the Axis Alliance prior to World War II, was sparked by this dissatisfaction with the West.
- Japan eventually embarked on a path of aggressive conquest that culminated in international War II due to this sense of contempt and a desire to oppose the international order ruled by the West.
- **Japan's Post-World War II Diplomatic Journey:**
- The United States led the Allies in the occupation and reconstruction of the Japanese state following Japan's defeat in World War II. As a result, Japan adopted a pacifist stance.

- Spending on the military was severely curtailed as the country concentrated on reviving its economy. Through this highly effective approach, Japan's economy grew to become the second largest in the world by the 1970s.
- Japan's diplomatic stance has changed significantly over the past few decades, moving away from rigid post-war pacifism and in the direction of a more active position on the international scene.

- **What Causes Caused Japan to Modify Its Diplomatic Approach?**

- **Outside Factors:**

- **China's Rise:** Japan feels compelled to fortify its defences in response to China's increasing military might and assertive claims in the East China Sea, particularly with regard to disputed areas like the Senkaku Islands.
- **North Korean Threat:** Japan continues to be extremely concerned about its security due to North Korea's ongoing development of nuclear and ballistic weapons.
- **Uncertain US Commitment:** Japan has been forced to become increasingly self-reliant in its defence due to the perception that the US is becoming less committed to Asian security under the Trump administration and the emergence of isolationist sentiments in the US.
- One example is how the United States' Middle East policy has failed to keep the peace.

- **Internal Elements:**

- The resurgence of conservative voices in Japan is characterised by their call for a more proactive role in security and their belief that, as a "normal power," Japan must protect its interests and promote stability in the region.
- **Pacifist Fatigue:** After decades of exclusively depending on the United States for security, some have questioned the viability of this strategy, particularly in light of the evolving regional environment.

- **What is Japan's New Diplomatic Approach?**

- **Signs of Transition:**

- **Spending on Defence Has Increased Significantly:** Japan has lifted the self-imposed 1% GDP cap on defence spending.
- Japan's military spending stayed at or below 1% of GDP between 1960 and 2020.
- Japan is building up its armed forces by obtaining modern weaponry, such as cruise missiles, and by loosening export prohibitions on weaponry.
- By 2027, Japan's yearly defence spending would account for 2% of GDP, according to Prime Minister Kishida's announcement.
- **Increased Security Cooperation with the Allies:** Japan and the US are collaborating closely on joint military drills and investigating a greater degree of command structure integration.

- Keen Sword, Orient Shield, and Valiant Shield—a ballistic missile defense-focused exercise—are the three main cooperative military drills between the US and Japan.
  - The goal of the UK, Japan, and Italy-led Global Combat Air Programme (GCAP) is to work together to produce a sixth-generation stealth fighter by the year 2035.
  - Additionally, Japan has opted to relax its stringent defence export regulations, enabling it to work with Italy and Britain to develop a next-generation fighter plane that will be sold under specific circumstances.
  - Active Regional Diplomacy: Japan is advancing a "free and open Indo-Pacific" policy by fortifying its ties with other regional countries, such as Australia and India.
  - The US, Australia, Japan, and India engage in a strategic security dialogue known as the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) to discuss issues related to regional security.
  - Pacific Island Forum (PIF): Japan aggressively promotes stronger ties and development aid to Pacific Island countries.
  - Support for Ukraine: It is believed that Japan's resolute stand for Ukraine against Russia is an indication of its dedication to preserving international law and discouraging like acts of aggression in Asia.
  - Changing Attitude on former Issues: In an endeavour to forge a more unified regional security architecture, Japan is making efforts to make amends with South Korea, a former foe.
  - Take note:
  - Under the late Prime Minister Abe Shinzo, Japan "panoramic diplomacy" was demonstrated, normalising its security strategy and increasing its international profile.
  - The expression "panoramic diplomacy" means "diplomacy that takes a panoramic perspective of the world map" as well as "diplomacy with panoramic views."
  - It places a heavy focus on a proactive, multidimensional approach to international affairs with the goal of forging close relationships with a variety of nations.
- **Important attributes:**
  - Wider Scope: Panoramic diplomacy aims to build reciprocal links with as many nations as possible, even if their principles don't completely coincide with Japan's, in contrast to traditional alliances that concentrate on certain regions or ideologies.
  - Cooperation over confrontation: Although worries about China's expanding influence may have contributed, panorama diplomacy actively interacted with nations in Africa, Latin America, and other regions rather than concentrating only on the Indo-Pacific region.
- **What Impact Japan's Shifting Attitude Will Have on Indian Interest?**
- **Possible Advantages:**
  - Defying China: China is a strategic issue for both Japan and India. Japan's heightened military prowess and emphasis on the Indo-Pacific may make it more effective for both nations to fend off Chinese aggression.

- India and Japan are both participants in the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER) quad groupings, G20 and G-4.
- Created in 2017, the India-Japan Act East Forum seeks to offer a forum for cooperation between the two countries within the frameworks of Japan's "Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy" and India's "Act East Policy."
- Enhanced Security Cooperation: The new approach places a strong focus on working with like-minded nations, such as India. This could result in increased joint military drills, technological exchanges, and possibly even a loosening of export prohibitions on Japanese defence equipment to India.
- One of the few nations with whom India has two-way ministerial talks is Japan.
- The armed forces of Japan and India also coordinate a number of bilateral drills, including Dharma Guardian (Army), "Veer Guardian" and SHINYUU Maitri (Air Force), JIMEX (Naval), and Malabar (Naval Exercise).
- Infrastructure Development: India's defence readiness and connectivity would be enhanced by receiving much-needed finance for infrastructure projects in China's border areas thanks to the new Japanese Official Development Assistance (ODA) Loan framework for strategic purposes.
- Over the past few decades, India has benefited the most from the Japanese ODA Loan arrangement.
- One of the best instances of Japanese collaboration with the use of ODA is Delhi Metro.
- Japan International Cooperation Agency soft loan funds India's Western Dedicated Freight Corridor (DFC) project.
- Economic Cooperation: Greater trade and investment between India and Japan may result from a stronger Japan being a more dependable economic partner.
- In FY 2021–2022, Japan and India's bilateral trade amounted to USD 20.57 billion. In 2020, Japan ranked as India's 12th largest trading partner, and India ranked as Japan's 18th largest trading partner.

- **Possible Difficulties:**

- Competition: With Japan and India also working on long-range strike capabilities, there may be a regional arms race that puts a pressure on available resources.
- India's interests may be harmed in the long run by Japan and India's competition to export defensive equipment to allies like South America, Africa, and the Philippines.
- Diplomatic Difficulties: India may find it difficult to maintain a balance with more assertive nations in rival blocs like the BRICS and the Quad.
- Ideological Conflicts: India's position may diverge from Japan's with regards to issues like international involvement, nuclear proliferation, and human rights.
- The world and Asia will be greatly affected by Japan's diplomatic turnabout, which is expected to result in a more multipolar regional order where Japan will be more involved in determining security dynamics.
- Japan's dynamic posture will have an impact on India based on how well both nations handle their relationship; there is a great deal of potential for enhanced economic and security

cooperation, but for a mutually beneficial outcome, issues with competition, affordability, and strategic alignment must be resolved.

*Source → The Hindu*

### **3 - De-Globalized Food Inflation in India:**

#### **GS III**

#### **Economy related issues**

- **Context:**
- While global food prices fell sharply from their 2022 highs in 2023, food inflation in India remained high in December 2023, at 9.5%, in contrast to a global deflation of -10.1%.
- The food price index of the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) decreased by 13.7% from an average of 143.7 points in 2022 to 124 points in 2023.
- **What Aspects of the Global Food Price Drop Are Contributing?**
- **Excess Supply of Important Crops:** In 2023, bumper harvests of important crops like wheat created an excess supply on the world market.
- This abundance is in contrast to 2022, when prices spiked due to fears of supply interruptions brought on by the conflict in Ukraine, a key supplier of grains.
- **Better Supply from Russia and Ukraine:** Both countries have been able to continue exporting wheat despite the Black Sea Grain Initiative's suspension in July 2023.
- The region's ongoing grain flow has assisted in easing some of the supply concerns.
- **Reduced Demand for Vegetable Oils:** In 2023, the UN's Vegetable Price Index fell by 32.7%, marking the largest decline in the index's history.
- A number of factors have contributed to this fall, including increased availability of vegetable oil and a decline in its use in the manufacturing of biofuel.
- The overall demand for vegetable oil declines as more is made available for food uses and less is diverted for biofuels, resulting in lower costs.
- **Demand is Slowing:** Fears of an impending recession and high inflation have reduced consumer demand around the globe, especially in large food-importing regions. This has lowered demand for several food items on import and driven down world prices.



- **Why, in spite of declining global food prices, is India facing high food inflation?**

- Limited Transmission of International costs: India's food costs remained high despite a decline in the worldwide price of food because there was little transfer of foreign pricing to domestic markets.
- The only major imports into India are grains and edible oils (which account for 60% of total consumption).
- India is either an exporter or self-sufficient for the majority of other agri-commodities, such as cereals, sugar, dairy, and fruits and vegetables.
- Export Prohibitions and Import Charges: To lessen the impact of international markets on home pricing, the Indian government eliminated import duties on a number of food products and placed export prohibitions on others, including wheat, non-basmati white rice, sugar, and onions.
- Domestic Production Challenges: Shortages and higher costs were caused in part by meteorological conditions that affected agricultural production, especially for grains, pulses, and sugar.
- In December 2023, cereal and pulse inflation rates were 9.9% and 20.7%, respectively, year over year.
- Low Stock Levels: Price pressure was further intensified by low stock levels for commodities such as sugar and wheat.
- The disruption of the Red Sea route has not significantly damaged India's international supply chain, as the country's imports of urad and arhar mainly come from Tanzania, Malawi, Mozambique, and Myanmar, thereby avoiding the recently disrupted Suez waterway-Red Sea route.
- Masoor travels via the North Pacific and Indian Ocean from Australia and Canada.
- The Houthi conflict has no impact on imports of edible oils from Argentina, Brazil, Malaysia, Indonesia, and the South Atlantic.
- Additionally, the possibility of import inflation in India has vanished due to falling worldwide prices, such as those of Indonesian palm oil at USD 940 per tonne and Russian wheat at USD 240–245 per tonne.

- **Imported Inflation: What Is It?**

- About: The term "imported inflation" describes the growth in a nation's prices for products and services as a result of rising import costs.
- Businesses frequently raise the prices of their goods and services to consumers in order to maintain profit margins in the face of rising import expenses.

- **Factors that are accountable:**

- Currency Depreciation Factor: A country's currency depreciation is frequently cited as the main cause of import inflation.

- When a currency depreciates, more local currency is required to purchase foreign goods or services, effectively increasing import costs.
  - The Asian Development Bank recently warned that India could face imported inflation due to a potential rupee depreciation amid rising interest rates in the West.
  - **Rising Import Costs Without Currency Depreciation:** Even without currency depreciation, a rise in import costs due to factors like an increase in international crude oil prices can lead to imported inflation.
  - This is a variant of cost-push inflation, which states that rising input costs can cause inflation in the prices of final goods and services.
- **How Food Inflation is Calculated in India?**
- **About:** Food inflation in India is primarily measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for Food and Beverages. CPI is a key measure of inflation in India that tracks the changes in the prices paid by typical consumers for a basket of goods and services over time.
  - **Recent Trends:** Food has a weight of 45.9% in the consumer price index but its contribution to overall inflation has increased from 48% in April 2022 to 67% in November 2023.
  - The government's first Household Consumption Survey released recently showed that food's share of the rural consumption basket fell below 50% for the first time to 46% and to 39% for urban consumers.
  - According to the RBI, about 90% of food inflation is determined by non-cyclical factors like the weather, supply conditions, international prices and availability.
  - On average, however, 10% of food inflation is driven by demand factors with significant time variation.
- **How India can Address Food Inflation Effectively?**
- **Increase Agricultural Productivity:** Investing in agricultural infrastructure, technology, and research to improve crop yields and reduce production costs can boost supply and stabilise prices.
  - **Efficient Supply Chain Management:** Enhancing logistics, storage facilities, and distribution networks can reduce wastage and ensure a steady supply of food items to the market, mitigating price fluctuations.
  - **Diversification of Agriculture:** Promoting diversification by encouraging the cultivation of a variety of crops and supporting alternative farming practices can reduce reliance on a few commodities and balance market dynamics.
  - **Price Monitoring and Regulation:** Monitoring food prices regularly and implementing effective price regulation mechanisms can prevent price manipulation and ensure fair pricing for consumers and producers alike.
  - **Climate Resilience:** Addressing climate change challenges through sustainable farming practices, water management strategies, and crop diversification can reduce production risks and enhance food security in the long term.

## 4 - Unclassed Forests in India:

### GS II

#### Government Policies and Interventions

- **Context:**
- Recently, in compliance with the Supreme Court order, the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC) uploaded the various State Expert Committee (SEC) reports on its website.
- This interim order was in response to a public interest litigation challenging the constitutionality of the Forest (Conservation) Act Amendment (FCAA) 2023.
- A key concern in the petition was that the status of unclassified forests, which were to be identified by the state SEC reports, wasn't known or if they had been identified at all.
- **What Did the SEC Reports Reveal?**
- **Highlights:**
- No state provided verifiable data on the identification, status, and location of unclassified forests.
- Seven states and Union Territories (Goa, Haryana, Jammu & Kashmir, Ladakh, Lakshadweep, Tamil Nadu, and West Bengal) did not even constitute the SEC.
- Only 17 out of 23 states submitted reports in line with the Supreme Court's directives.
- Most states relied on existing data from forest and revenue departments, without undertaking ground-truthing or physical surveys and demarcation of unclassified forest lands have not been conducted in most states.
- There is a lack of clarity on the geographic location and classification of these forests.
- Many states' reports showed significant discrepancies with the data from the Forest Survey of India (FSI).
- For example, Gujarat's SEC report stated unclassified forests of 192.24 sq. km, while the FSI reported 4,577 sq. km.
- Similarly, Assam, where the SEC report states the extent of unclassified forest area to be 5,893.99 sq. km whereas the FSI has reported 8,532 sq. km.
- Only nine states provided the extent of unclassified forests, while others shared data on different types of forest areas without clarity.
- Some states detailed the extent of degraded, cleared, or encroached forests, but this information varies across reports.

- There is a lack of clarity regarding the extraction of data from available records and the geographical location of forests, with no available topo sheet identification maps (a map showing a region's natural and manmade features).

- **Consequences:**

- The hasty and incomplete nature of the SEC reports is likely to have resulted in the large-scale destruction of unclassified forests.
- For example, Kerala's SEC did not include the Pallivasal unreserve, an ecologically fragile area in Munnar, which was also devastated during the 2018 floods.
- The report also failed to mention the Chinnakanal unreserve, an important elephant corridor in Munnar that is now overrun by intensive commercial tourism, leading to many instances of human-elephant conflicts.
- The failure to comprehensively identify and protect these forests undermines the 1996 Godavarman judgement and the Indian Forest Policy's goal of achieving 33.3% forest cover in the plains and 66.6% in the hills.
- The Forest Survey of India's 2021 report shows an overall 21% forest cover (which experts have disputed) in the country and 40% in hills. Approximately 900 sq. km has been lost in the last cycle of the Survey's review.

- **What are Unclassed Forests?**

- **Legal Protection:**

- Unclassed forests, also known as deemed forests, enjoy legal protection under the landmark case T.N. Godavarman Thirumulkpad vs Union Of India & Ors(1996).
- Definition:
- They encompass various types of land, including those belonging to forests, revenue, railways, government entities, community forests, or private ownership.
- Despite their diverse ownership, these forests are not officially notified under the Indian Forest Act, though the area has forest type vegetation.

- **Identification Process:**

- State Expert Committees (SECs) were tasked with identifying unclassified forests across the country.
- Identification involved examining available records such as Forest Working Plans and Revenue land records, as well as physically identifying land patches with forest characteristics.

- **Implications of FCAA:**

- The Forest (Conservation) Amendment Act, 2023, which came into force in December 2023, introduced significant changes to the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 (FCA).

- The amendment narrowed the coverage of the FCA to two types of lands:
  - Areas officially declared or notified as forests under the Indian Forest Act, 1927, or other relevant legislation.
  - Lands recorded as forests in government records since 25th October 1980.
  - FCAA, 2023 raised concerns about the loss of legal protection for unclassified forests, potentially leading to their diversion for non-forest use.
  - Under the FCAA, unclassified forests would require Central government approval for any diversion, even if not officially notified.
- **Challenges:**
- **Legal Protection:**
  - With the enactment of the Forest (Conservation) Amendment Act, unclassified forests risk losing their legal protection, leading to their diversion for non-forest use.
- **Impact on Forest-Dwelling Communities:**
  - The Amendment Act's failure to recognise 'deemed forests' as subject to the provisions of the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 undermines the rights of forest-dwelling communities.
  - Forest land classified as 'deemed forests' can be diverted without the consent of Gram Sabhas, violating their rights recognised under the Forest Rights Act of 2006.
- **Environmental and Ecological Concerns:**
  - The Act's narrow definition of forests based on legal status overlooks ecological considerations, leading to potential degradation and loss of biodiversity in unclassified forest areas.
  - In 1995, T.N. Godavarman Thirumulpad filed a writ petition with the Supreme Court of India to protect the Nilgiris forest land from illegal deforestation.
  - The Court issued detailed directions for the sustainable use of forests and the Court emphasised that any area defined as a forest, regardless of ownership, would be subject to the Forest Conservation Act, of 1980.
  - This new interpretation prevented states from de-reserving protected forests for non-forestry use without permission.
  - One of the key directions was that all forest activities throughout the country must cease without specific approval from the Central Government.
- **Way Forward:**
  - Ensure strict compliance with the T.N. Godavarman Thirumulpad vs Union Of India Case, 1996, ruling to protect all forest types, including unclassified forests.
  - Mandate physical surveys and ground-truthing to accurately identify and map unclassified forests.

- Address discrepancies between SEC reports and FSI data through cross-verification and updating records.
- Implement penalties for states and Union Territories that fail to constitute SECs or provide accurate data on unclassified forests.
- Establish a robust monitoring system to track progress towards these targets and adjust strategies as needed.

*Source → The Hindu*



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