

Today's Prelims Topics

Predatory Pricing

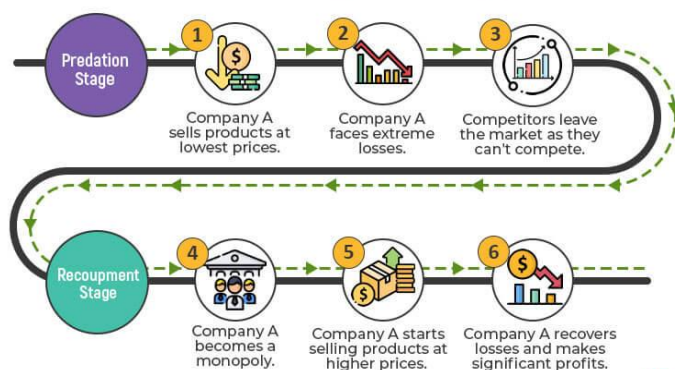
Context

The Competition Commission of India has revised the definitions of various cost measures it will apply in assessing whether a company's pricing of goods or services constitutes predatory pricing.

About Predatory Pricing

- It is a form of **anti-competitive behaviour** where a **company lowers its prices to drive out competitors** and establish a strong market position.
 - The goal is to **eventually raise prices** once the competition is weakened or removed.
- Predatory pricing is often used by large, established companies that can absorb short-term losses.
- Predatory pricing is **illegal** in India **Under Section 4, the Competition Act, 2002**.
- It is illegal because it can create a monopoly and eliminate choice.

How Predatory Pricing Works?



- Competitive Pricing:** It is a strategy where a company sets its prices in line with its competitors.
- Competition Commission of India (CCI)**
- Establishment:** Formed in 2003 under the provisions of the Competition Act, 2002.
- Parent Ministry:** Ministry of Corporate Affairs.
- Body:** Statutory body created to enforce the Competition Act, 2002.
- Composition:** Chairperson + 6 Members (maximum).
- Appointment:** All appointments are made by the **Central Government**.
- Qualification:** Must be qualified to be a **High Court judge**
 - or
 - Have at least **15 years of professional experience** in fields like international trade, economics, law, finance, management, public affairs, or other areas deemed relevant by the Central Government.
- Objective:** Aims to **promote and sustain a competitive environment** in the Indian economy by engaging with stakeholders, the government, and international counterparts.
- Amendment – 2009:** The **Competition (Amendment) Act, 2009** led to the establishment of the **Competition Appellate Tribunal (COMPAT)** to hear appeals against CCI's orders.
 - COMPAT served as the **appellate authority** for CCI decisions **until 2017**.
- Revised Appellate Mechanism (2017):** In 2017, COMPAT was replaced by the **National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT)** as the appellate body for CCI orders.

Related Facts

- The repeal of the Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices Act, 1969 (MRTP Act), and the enactment of the Competition Act, 2002 was based on the **Raghavan Committee's recommendations**.

Source: [The Hindu: CCI new definition to curb predatory pricing](#)

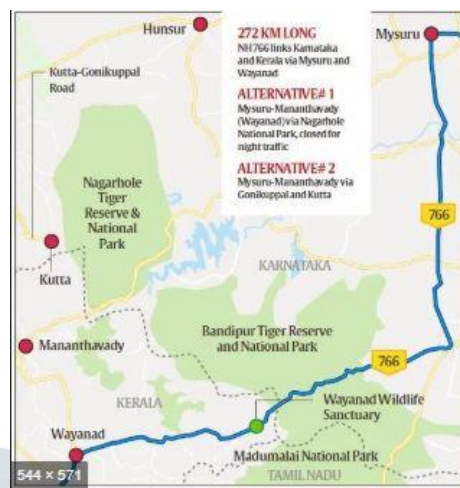
Nagarhole National Park

Context

The forest department has served notices to protesting members of 52 Jenukuruba families in the Atturukolli reserve forest of Nagarhole tiger reserve in Kodagu, who have been demanding forest land rights.

About Nagarhole National Park

- **Located:** Western Ghats in Karnataka
- **Also Known:** Rajiv Gandhi National Park.
- **Establishment:** Wildlife sanctuary in 1955 and National park in 1983.
 - Under **Project Elephant in 2000**.
 - Declared a **Tiger Reserve** under Project Tiger in **2003** (as an extension of Bandipur Tiger Reserve.)
 - **Independent Tiger Reserve in 2007**
- **Boundary Sharing:** **Southern boundary:** Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary (Kerala)
 - **Southeastern:** Bandipur Tiger Reserve (Karnataka) .
- **Rivers:** Nagarhole River, Kabini River (also is a boundary between Nagarhole and Bandipur).



Source: [Deccan Herald: Notice served to protesters in Nagarhole forest](#)

Snail Infestation in Cardamom

Context

According to cardamom farmers in Idukki, Kerala, numerous small snails are feeding on the new panicles and flowers of cardamom plants, causing significant damage to the crop.

About Cardamom

- **Referred As:** Queen of Spices.
- **Varieties:** Small cardamom (*Elettaria cardamomum*) and large cardamom (*Amomum subulatum*).
- **Production In India– Top 5 States:**
 1. Kerala
 2. Sikkim
 3. Nagaland
 4. Arunachal Pradesh
 5. Karnataka
- **Rainfall:** 1500-2500 mm annual rainfall, well-distributed.
- **Temperature:** Mean temperature of 15°C to 35°C.
- **Altitude:** 600-1200 meters above mean sea level (MSL).
- **Soil Type:** Forest loam soils, acidic (pH 5.5-6.5).
- **Soil Nutrients:** Thrives in humus-rich soils with low to medium available phosphorus and medium to high available potassium.
- **Crops Can be Damaged by:** Small snails, Malabar parakeets, and weather conditions like drought and heavy rains.



Source: [The Hindu: Small snail infestation a growing threat to cardamom farmers in Idukki district](#)

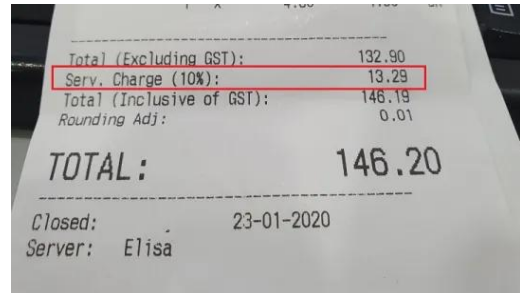
Do restaurants have the right to charge a service fee?

Context

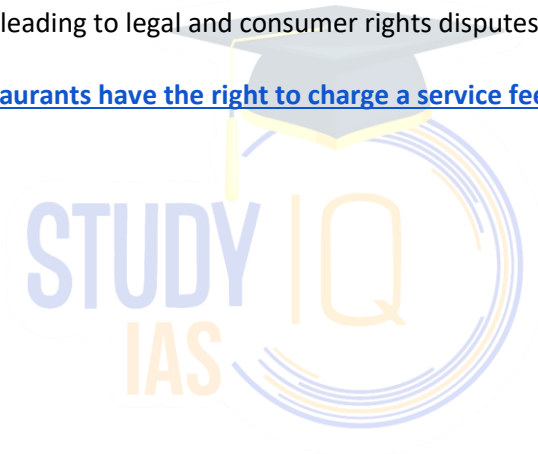
The legal tussle over the legitimacy of service charges in restaurants has been fiercely contested for three years in the Delhi High Court.

What is Meant by Service Charge?

- A **service charge** is a **pre-determined, fixed percentage** (usually 5% to 20%) **added to the bill** by a hotel or restaurant **for the service provided by the staff**.
- It is **not a government levy** like GST or VAT; it is collected **by the business**.
- Unlike a **tip**, which is **voluntary** and given at the customer's discretion, a **service charge is often added automatically** to the final bill.
- It is meant to **compensate service staff**, often pooled and distributed among waiters, kitchen staff, and cleaners.
- **Controversy:** When levied **without customer consent** or **automatically added**, it is seen as **unfair and misleading**, leading to legal and consumer rights disputes.



Source: [The Hindu: Do restaurants have the right to charge a service fee?](#)



News in Short

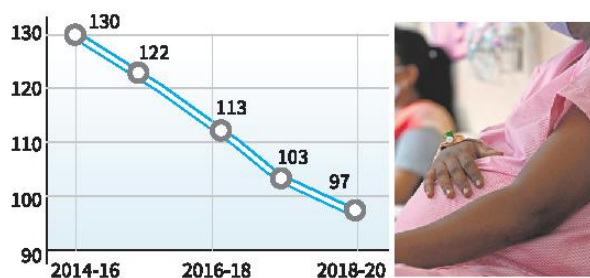
Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR)

News? As per the latest data released by the Office of the Registrar- General and Census Commissioner of India, **MMR in India declined to 93 per lakh live births** in 2019-21 from 97 in 2018-20.

- **MMR (Maternal Mortality Ratio)** is the number of maternal deaths per 100,000 live births in a given time period.
- It is a **key indicator of the reproductive health of women** in a region.
- **Maternal death** is defined by WHO as the **death of a woman during pregnancy or within 42 days of termination**, due to causes related to pregnancy or its management (not due to accidents/incidental causes).

Facts

- **Age group with highest MMR:** 20–29 years, followed by 30–34 years.
- **States with High MMR (2019–21):**
 - Madhya Pradesh – 175
 - Assam – 167
 - Uttar Pradesh – 151
 - Odisha – 135
 - Chhattisgarh – 132
 - West Bengal – 109
 - Haryana – 106



Source: Office of the Registrar General, India

- The **UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** aim to reduce the global MMR to **below 70 per 100,000 live births**.
- **Global Maternal Mortality (WHO, 2023):**
 - Approximately 700 women die daily due to preventable causes related to pregnancy and childbirth.
 - A maternal death occurs roughly every 2 minutes.
 - Global MMR decreased by about 40% between 2000 and 2023.
 - Over 90% of maternal deaths occur in low- and lower-middle-income countries.

Editorial Summary

Public health in India

Context

Public health in India is strained by flawed policy, weak training.

What is Public Health?

- **Public Health** refers to the **science and art of preventing disease, prolonging life, and promoting health through organized efforts** of society — including governments, communities, and individuals.
- It involves:
 - **Disease prevention** (e.g., vaccinations, sanitation)
 - **Health promotion** (e.g., awareness campaigns, nutrition education)
 - **Community well-being** (e.g., access to clean water, safe housing)
 - **Interdisciplinary approach** combining medicine, engineering, economics, sociology, and communication.

Common Misunderstandings About Public Health in India

- **Seen Only as a Medical Field:** Many perceive public health as a sub-branch of medicine, limited to doctors, hospitals, and disease treatment.
- **Neglect of Interdisciplinary Nature:** It is not recognised as a combination of **medical science, engineering (sanitation, water), and social sciences (behavior, poverty)**.
- **Viewed Solely as a State Subject:** Public health is simplistically treated as a State matter, ignoring its **cross-sectoral and multi-governmental dimensions** in the Constitution.

Structural Flaws in India's Public Health System

- **Fragmented Governance:** Scattered responsibilities across Union, State, and Local governments.
 - No unified public health leadership structure.
 - Ministries (Health, Water, Food, Urban bodies) work in silos.
- **Colonial Legacy & Federal Mismatch:** Inherited British unitary health structure, unsuited to India's federal nature.
 - Lack of coordination among departments leads to inefficiencies.
- **Contradictory Policies:** For example, promoting tobacco cultivation while also running anti-tobacco health campaigns.

Challenges in Public Health Education (Master of Public Health (MPH) programmes)

- **Lack of Standardised Curriculum:** Varying eligibility and course content across institutions.
 - Inadequate technical depth and practical exposure.
- **Neglect of Key Areas:** Limited focus on **public health engineering, nutrition, behavioural sciences, and health technology assessment**.
- **Compressed & Overburdened Course Structure:** Unrealistic expectations within a 2-year programme without specialisation.
- **No Career Path for MPH Graduates:** Absence of dedicated public health cadre leads to underutilisation of trained professionals.

Way Forward

- **National Public Health Framework:** Integrate health responsibilities across levels of government under a **coherent command structure**.
- **Reform MPH Curriculum:** Standardised national curriculum with **interdisciplinary focus**.

- Include modules on behavioural change, tech assessment, and food safety.
- **Extend and Modularise MPH Programme:** Consider longer duration or flexible modular structure to ensure **depth over breadth**.
- **Create Public Health Cadres:** Establish structured career paths in health departments as proposed in **National Health Policy 2017**.
- **Leverage Public Health for National Priorities:** Train MPH graduates to address issues like AMR, climate change, and future pandemics.

Source: [The Hindu: Public health in India strained by flawed policy, weak training](#)



80 Years of Victory of Europe (VE) Day

Context

This year is the 80th year anniversary of VE day.

Background

- **End of World War II in Europe (May 1945):** On May 8, 1945, Germany surrendered, ending the war in Europe.
 - This day is remembered as **Victory in Europe (VE) Day**.
- **Europe's Condition Post-War:** Europe was **free but destroyed and bankrupt**.
 - After the war, the focus was on rebuilding and ensuring that such a war never happens again.
 - The motto was: "**Never again**."
- **Post-War Europe:**
 - After WWII, **America helped rebuild Western Europe** with two major efforts:
 - The **Marshall Plan** (financial aid for rebuilding)
 - **NATO** (military alliance for defense)
 - U.S. President Truman said they were "**two halves of the same walnut**" — both necessary for peace.
 - This led to **closer European integration**, eventually forming the **European Union**.

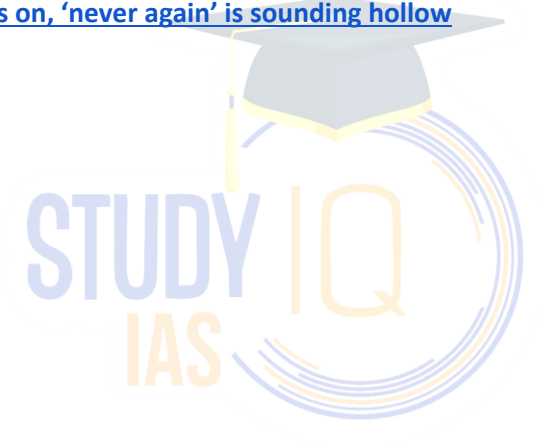
Indian Contributions to World War II and Victory in Europe

- **Massive Military Participation:** Over **2.5 million Indian soldiers** served under British command in various theatres of World War II — the largest volunteer force in history at the time.
 - Indian troops fought in **North Africa, Italy, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia**, providing critical manpower during key campaigns, including in Europe.
- **Scientific Contribution:** **Kolachala Sitaramaiah**, a scientist from Andhra Pradesh, contributed to **Soviet petrochemical research** during the war.
 - He developed **kerosene-based fuels and lubricants** that improved the performance of Soviet tanks in freezing conditions.
 - His work played a crucial role in **Soviet success at the Battle of Kursk (1943)** — the largest tank battle in history — where Soviet T-34s outperformed German Panzers and halted Nazi ground offensives.
- **Air Power:** **Air Chief Marshal Idris Hasan Latif**, an Indian of Yemeni descent, joined the **Royal Indian Air Force** in 1941.
 - He was deployed in **Europe and Burma**, flying **Hawker Hurricanes** to engage enemy forces and support ground troops.
 - Latif later became **Chief of the Indian Air Force (1978)** and **Ambassador to France (1985-88)**, contributing to defence diplomacy and India's modern air power evolution.
- **Economic Support & Civilian Sacrifice:** India provided **critical economic support**, including:
 - **Raw materials**, like iron, coal, jute, and textiles.
 - **Funds** through war bonds and taxes.
 - India faced **economic hardship, inflation, and even famine** (e.g., the Bengal Famine of 1943), partly because resources were diverted for the war effort.

Present Global Scenario

- **Rising Conflict Today:** **Russia's invasion of Ukraine** is seen by European leaders as not just a threat to peace, but a **threat to Europe itself**.
 - French President Macron calls Putin "**an imperialist trying to rewrite history**."
- **Uncertainty about U.S. Role:** U.S. President **Donald Trump's unclear stance** on NATO and Ukraine has worried Europe.

- Europe fears the U.S. might pull back from NATO support, so it is **preparing for its own defense**.
 - **Europe is Rearming:** Countries like **Germany, France, Britain** are increasing defense spending.
 - The **EU has a new defense strategy**, and countries are being told to **stockpile emergency supplies**.
 - Nations like **Poland and the Baltics** are taking serious steps, even **leaving anti-landmine treaties** due to fear of Russia.
- The anti-landmine treaty in Europe is the **Ottawa Treaty**, formally known as the **Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction**.
 - Adopted in 1997.
- **Insular Commemorations:** European countries today often make WWII commemorations seem like a **purely European event**, ignoring the contributions of:
 - **Africans, Asians, Australians, Caribbean soldiers**, and others who fought and died in the war.
 - This reflects a **narrow perspective**, especially when **global peace is again at risk**.
- Sources:
- [The Hindu: Remembering the war, reminiscing forgotten Indians](#)
 - [The Hindu: Eighty years on, 'never again' is sounding hollow](#)



Is social media defining self-worth?

Context

Social media's pervasive influence on self-worth, especially among youth, is a growing concern in India and globally

Current Usage Trends in India

- India's digital landscape has grown dramatically. As of early 2024 there were roughly **462 million social media users** in India (about 32% of the population).
- In total, **886 million Indians** (~58% of the population) were internet users by end-2024. Notably, **55% of internet users now live in rural areas**, reflecting rapid rural adoption.
- **Smartphones dominate access**: Indians spend on average about **2h 28m daily on social apps** and nearly 3h 57m on mobile internet.
- Popular platforms include YouTube and Facebook (hundreds of millions of users) and fast-growing Instagram (over 360 million users by 2024).

Challenges Associated

- **Curated perfection**: Influencers project "curated perfection" (flawlessly styled lives) that many viewers internalize.
 - E.g., the popular "**morning routine**" genre features one fitness influencer's 3:52 AM routine (including journaling, ice baths, mouth-taping, etc.) went viral with 668 million views, but was widely mocked as "*unrealistic*".
 - This reflects how social media can set absurd benchmarks: young users see content emphasizing aesthetic results (low body fat, perfect schedules) and compare themselves unfavorably.
- **Algorithmic echo chambers**: Platforms tend to show users more of what they interact with (e.g., a diet video-watcher will see more weight-loss tips).
 - This creates filter bubbles of idealized content.
 - E.g., In India's context, some analysts observe that leading influencers mostly come from **urban, upper-class backgrounds** and promote a homogenized "modern" lifestyle.
 - Those images of luxury and success (designer clothes, exotic travel, skinny bodies) can feel out of reach to average teens, reinforcing feelings of relative deprivation.
- **Influencer impact**: The "looking-glass self" effect is strong: youths absorb feedback from online peers and stars.
 - A Bengaluru child psychologist notes that identities are increasingly tied to physical appeal online – e.g. gym bodies are seen as solutions to emotional problems.
 - When influencers showcase quick "fixes" (fitness hacks, diet plans) and glamorous outcomes, impressionable young followers may tie their self-worth to achieving similar results.

Mental Health Effects

- A survey of Indian adolescents found that many Indian adolescents and young adults experience heightened anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem linked to social media pressures, including the fear of missing out (FOMO) and compulsive checking.
 - Participants also reported sleep disruptions.
- Body image issues are prevalent among Indian youth who are exposed to filtered and seemingly perfect bodies and lifestyles online, setting unattainable standards.
 - A 2025 review of Instagram use indicated that teenagers who are exposed to polished "ideal" images online **often experience body dissatisfaction and reduced self-worth**.

- Teenage girls often experience this more acutely, spending more time editing photos and reporting higher levels of social media anxiety compared to boys.
- Over 65% of Indian teens report feeling inadequate when comparing themselves to influencers or peers online.
- Clinicians in India caution that these issues are amplified by the design of social media platforms, such as constant notifications and endless feeds, as well as the tendency for social comparison.

Illustrative Cases and Events

- **Blue Whale Challenge:** In April 2024, an Indian student in the USA died by suicide after reportedly playing the Blue Whale Challenge, a dangerous online "suicide game" that had previously prompted government warnings.
 - This case highlights the potentially fatal consequences of viral online challenges.
- **Pranshu (Instagram influencer):** In late 2023, a 16-year-old transgender boy from Ujjain who had a beauty Instagram account died by suicide.
 - He had faced weeks of homophobic trolling and cyberbullying, including comments urging him to take his own life, following his posts featuring him in make-up and traditional Indian attire.
- **Misha Aggarwal (influencer):** In May 2025, the suicide of a 28-year-old Mumbai influencer who posted upbeat beauty videos shocked her followers.
 - Her Instagram comments reportedly revealed anxiety, and she apparently became depressed after experiencing a sudden decline in followers and likes.
 - Reports indicated she suffered from anxiety, self-doubt, and depression linked to the need for social media validation.
- **Cyberbullying and Harassment:** Media reports have emphasized the deadly potential of cyberbullying.
 - Following Pranshu's death, LGBTQ activists urged Meta, Instagram's parent company, to take stronger action against queerphobic cyberbullying.
- **Body Image Pressures on Boys:** In 2024, child psychiatrists in Bengaluru cautioned parents about new pressures faced by boys, citing studies that show how online "alpha-male" body ideals and expectations for muscular physiques with flat abdomens can significantly harm boys' self-esteem.

Mitigation Strategies and Solutions

- **Platform-level interventions:** Social media companies can be nudged to redesign features that drive comparison.
 - For example, experimenting with **hiding "like" counts** and adding **screen-time reminders** have been proposed.
- **Parental engagement:** Open family communication is key.
 - Rather than strict spying on kids' phones, parents are encouraged to **talk openly** about online content.
 - Guides like the Hyderabad Police's "Digital Parenting" advise setting clear but fair rules (e.g. no phones at dinner, limits on nighttime use) and explaining the reasons behind them.
- **School and community programs:** Educators can incorporate **digital literacy and emotional resilience** into the curriculum.
 - Introducing "digital detox" periods (phone-free classes or device drop-off) has shown benefits: Indian schools that banned phones report better attention spans.
 - Counselors and peer-support groups (Social & Emotional Learning programs) help students process online stress and build offline friendships.
- **Content creation norms:** Influencers and users alike can shift culture by **promoting authenticity**.
 - Campaigns emphasizing body positivity and media literacy (e.g. National campaigns, NGOs) aim to teach youth that online images are often misleading.

- **Professional support:** Teenagers showing signs of anxiety or depression should be connected to mental health services.
 - Child psychologists urge schools to have counselors on staff.
 - Some experts have called for training “influencer-coaches” – much like sports coaches – to guide content creators on psychological well-being.

Source: [The Hindu: Is social media defining self-worth?](#)

