

Today's Prelims Topics

Amoebic Meningoencephalitis

Context

Kerala's health department has issued an alert in Kozhikode district following the detection of three consecutive cases of the rare infection **primary amoebic meningoencephalitis (PAM)** in the region.

Primary Amoebic Meningoencephalitis (PAM)

- **About:** A rare but severe infection affecting the brain and its protective membranes.
 - Mortality rate is extremely high (over 95%).
 - Usually affects young, active individuals.
- **Cause:**
 - Triggered by *Naegleria fowleri*, popularly called the “**brain-eating amoeba.**”
 - Found in warm freshwater and soil.
 - Enters the human body **through the nose.**
- **Types of Amoebic Encephalitis:**
 - **PAM:** Caused by *Naegleria fowleri*. Rapid onset, often fatal within days.
 - **GAE (Granulomatous Amebic Encephalitis):** Caused by *Acanthamoeba* species and *Balamuthia mandrillaris*. Progresses slowly but equally lethal if untreated.
- **Transmission:**
 - Present in shallow surface waters, hot tubs, spas, and poorly maintained swimming pools.
 - Infection occurs when contaminated water enters the nose (during diving, jumping, or swimming).
 - The amoeba travels to the brain via the nasal passages.
- **Symptoms:**
 - Early: sore throat, headache, forehead pain.
 - Later: nausea, vomiting, high fever, hallucinations, confusion.
- **Treatment:**
 - Early detection and rapid administration of specific antibiotics may help.
 - Despite treatment, recovery is very rare.

Source: [TheHindu](#)

UNHCR

Context

The UNHCR has suspended the repatriation of Sri Lankan Tamil refugees after several returnees were arrested in Sri Lanka on charges of violating immigration laws.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

- **Role:** Protects refugees worldwide, ensures their safety, and facilitates their voluntary return or resettlement.
- **History:**
 - Established in **1950** by the UN General Assembly after World War II.
 - Created to assist millions displaced by the war.
- **Nature:** A global humanitarian body committed to saving lives, protecting rights, and supporting people forced to flee due to **conflict or persecution**.
- **Awards & Recognition:**
 - Won the **Nobel Peace Prize** in **1954** and **1981**.
 - Introduced the **Nansen Refugee Award (1954)** to honor exceptional service to refugees, displaced, or stateless persons.
- **Headquarters:** Geneva, Switzerland.

Rohingya Refugees

- **Who are they?**
 - A **Muslim minority ethnic group** originally from the **Arakan kingdom (now Rakhine State, Myanmar)**.
 - The term "**Rohang**" derives from *Arakan*, while *ga/gya* means "from."
- **Cultural identity:**
 - Distinct from Myanmar's Buddhist majority.
 - Speak a **Bengali dialect**, different from Burmese.
- **Citizenship status:**
 - Myanmar **denies them recognition as an ethnic group**.
 - Citizenship was revoked under the **1982 Myanmar Citizenship Law**.
 - To qualify, they must prove ancestors lived in Myanmar before **1823**.
 - Without this, they are classified as "**resident foreigners**" or "**associate citizens**," even if one parent is a Myanmar citizen.

Source: [TheHindu](https://www.thehindu.com)

Who decides nomination to UT assemblies?

Context

- Debate on **nominations to Union Territory (UT) Assemblies** revived after the Union Home Ministry's affidavit in J&K and Ladakh High Court.
 - The affidavit stated that the **Lieutenant Governor (LG) of J&K can nominate 5 members** to the Assembly without the Council of Ministers' advice.

Constitutional Provisions on Nominations

- **Parliament & State Legislatures:** Constitution allows nominated members.
 - Anglo-Indian representation abolished in 2020.
 - Rajya Sabha: 12 nominated members (appointed by President on Union Cabinet's advice).
 - Legislative Councils: One-sixth nominated by Governor (on ministerial advice).
- **Union Territories:** Guided by Parliamentary statutes.
 - **Delhi:** No nominated MLAs (70 elected members).
 - **Puducherry:** Union govt can nominate up to 3 members (UT Act, 1963).
 - **J&K:** 90 elected seats; LG can nominate 5 members (women, migrants, displaced persons) under J&K Reorganisation Act, 2019 (amended 2023).

Judicial Precedents

- **Puducherry Case (2018):** Madras HC upheld Union govt's power to nominate 3 members **without ministerial advice**.
 - Recommended statutory clarity, but Supreme Court later upheld Union govt's power.
- **Delhi Services Case (2023):** SC highlighted "**triple chain of command**":
 1. Civil servants → Ministers
 2. Ministers → Legislatures
 3. Legislatures → People
 - Strengthens the argument that LGs should act on ministerial advice in Assembly matters.

Source: [TheHindu](https://www.thehindu.com)

PM Jan Dhan Yojana

Context

As many as **23% of PM Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) accounts are inoperative**, i.e., around **13.04 crore out of 56.03 crore accounts** (as of July 31, 2025), with **Uttar Pradesh** having the highest number.

Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY)

- **Launch Date:** August 28, 2014
- **Objective:** Financial inclusion by providing affordable access to banking, savings, remittance, credit, insurance, and pensions.
- **Significance:**
 - Backbone of many government economic schemes.
 - Facilitates Direct Benefit Transfers (DBTs).
- **Eligibility:**
 - Must be an Indian national.
 - Age: 18–59 years.
 - Minors above 10 years can open accounts with guardian support.
- **Features:**
 - **Zero-balance accounts:** No minimum balance requirement.
 - **RuPay debit card:** Comes with accident insurance.
 - **Insurance cover:**
 - Accident insurance up to ₹2 lakh.
 - Life insurance up to ₹30,000 (for first-time account holders).
 - **Overdraft facility:** Up to ₹10,000 per household.
 - Extra ₹5,000 loan after 6 months of satisfactory account activity.

Source: [TheHindu](https://www.thehindu.com)

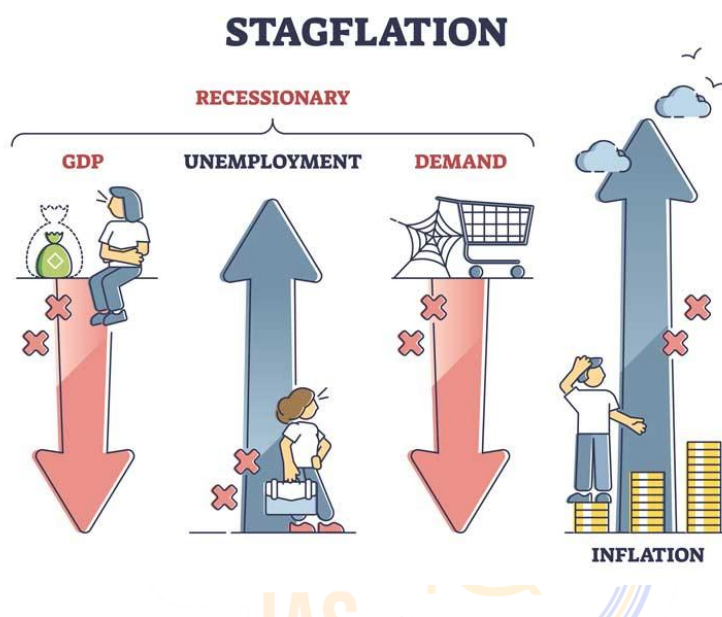
Stagflation

Context

The threat of U.S. stagflation is unsettling global markets, prompting some investors to adjust their portfolios in anticipation of the economic strain that new tariffs could impose on growth and inflation in the world's largest economy.

What is Stagflation ?

- It is an economic situation characterised by **high inflation, slow economic growth, and high unemployment**.
- The term comprises of the words "**stagnation**" + "**inflation**".



Related Information

Inflation: It refers to a sustained rise in general level of prices over a period of time in the economy.
Deflation: Refers to a fall in the general level of prices over a period of time. (Negative rate of inflation)
Disinflation: slowing down of rate of inflation

Source: [The Hindu](https://www.thehindu.com)

Environment Protection (Management of Contaminated Sites) Rules, 2025

Context

The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) has notified the Environment Protection (Management of Contaminated Sites) Rules, 2025 under the Environment Protection Act (EPA), 1986.

Key Provisions

- **Definition of Contaminated Sites:** Sites polluted due to historical hazardous waste dumping, leading to soil, groundwater, or surface water contamination.
 - Examples: old landfills, chemical waste dumps, and spill sites.
- **Identification and Reporting:** District Administration to submit **half-yearly reports** on suspected sites to the State Pollution Control Board (SPCB) or designated authority.
 - SPCBs/expert bodies to carry out a **preliminary assessment within 90 days**, followed by a **detailed investigation in the next 90 days**.
 - If hazardous chemicals (from the list of **189 under Hazardous Waste Rules, 2016**) exceed safe limits, the site is formally declared “contaminated.”
 - Names and details of such sites must be **publicly notified**; restrictions placed on access.
- **Remediation Planning:** A designated **reference organisation (expert body)** will prepare a site-specific remediation plan.
- **Liability and Cost Recovery:**
 - **Polluter Pays Principle:** the identified polluter bears clean-up costs.
 - If polluter is **untraceable/unable to pay**, expenses will be shared between the Centre and States.
- **Criminal Liability:** Any **loss of life or environmental damage** due to contamination will attract penalties under the **Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023**.
- **Exclusions:** Rules **do not apply** to contamination from:
 - Radioactive waste
 - Mining operations
 - Marine oil pollution
 - Solid waste dumps
 - These are governed by **separate, specific legislations**.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

State Health Regulatory Excellence Index (SHRESTH)

Context

The Union Health Secretary, Punya Salila Srivastava recently launched the SHRESTH initiative.

About it

- **Developed by:** Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO).
- **Nature:** First-of-its-kind national index to benchmark and strengthen state drug regulatory systems.
- **Purpose:** Ensure consistent drug safety, quality, and efficacy across India through a transparent, data-driven framework.
- **Objectives:**
 - Benchmark and evaluate performance of state drug regulatory authorities.
 - Promote **uniform implementation** of the Drugs & Cosmetics Act, 1940.
 - Facilitate **cross-learning of best practices** among states.
 - Drive improvements in human resources, infrastructure, surveillance, and responsiveness.
 - Strengthen India's position as the **"Pharmacy of the World."**
- **Key Features:**
 - **Categorisation of States/UTs:**
 - **Manufacturing States** (with pharma industries).
 - **Primarily Distribution States/UTs.**
 - **Indicators:**
 - **Manufacturing States:** 27 indices across 5 themes – Human Resources, Infrastructure, Licensing, Surveillance, Responsiveness.
 - **Distribution States:** 23 indices.
 - **Data Reporting:** States submit metrics to CDSCO by **25th of every month.**
 - Scores compiled on **1st of next month** and shared with states/UTs.
- **Supporting Initiatives: NSQ (Not of Standard Quality) Dashboard** to be extended to all states.
 - Regular **capacity-building workshops & seminars** for regulators.
 - Proposed **symposium on Drug Regulatory Systems.**
 - **Joint trainings and audits** for harmonisation.

Source: [PIB](#)

Places in News

Niger



News? The auction of a large Martian meteorite which was discovered in Niger in New York for \$3.5 million has sparked a global debate over its ownership.

About it

- **Landlocked country** in **West Africa**, straddling the Sahara and sub-Saharan zones.
- **Bordering Countries:**
 - **North:** Algeria and Libya
 - **East:** Chad
 - **South:** Nigeria and Benin
 - **West:** Mali and Burkina Faso.
- **Geographical Features:**
 - Niger River.
 - **Climate:** Predominantly **arid to semi-arid**.

Related Fact:

- **Niger**, along with **Mali** and **Burkina Faso**, has officially **withdrawn** from the **Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)** and have also **formed** their own alliance, the **Alliance of Sahel States**.

Source: [TheHindu](https://www.thehindu.com)

Editorial Summary

The path to ending global hunger runs through India

Context

- According to *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2025 (SOFI)*, undernourishment fell to **673 million (8.2% of world's population) in 2024**, down from 688 million in 2023.
 - India has played a decisive role in this progress by reforming its food security architecture and leveraging digital innovations.

India's Achievements

Decline in Undernourishment: From **14.3% (2020–22) to 12% (2022–24)** – 30 million fewer hungry

Government Policies Driving Decline

- **National Food Security Act (NFSA, 2013):** Legal right to subsidised grains.
- **Revamped PDS:** Digitalisation, Aadhaar seeding, biometric authentication, real-time inventory tracking.
 - **800+ million people** get subsidised food under the PDS.
- **One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC):** Ensured nationwide portability, especially for migrants.
- **PM Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY):** Free foodgrains during COVID-19 and extended later.
- **PM POSHAN (Mid-day Meal) & ICDS:** Shift towards dietary diversity and nutrition sensitivity.
- **Digital Agriculture Platforms:** e-NAM, AgriStack, geospatial data → improving farm-to-market linkages.

Issues That Still Persist

- **Nutritional Deficiencies:** Micronutrient deficiency, anaemia, obesity rising.
 - E.g., **Over 60% of population cannot afford nutrient-rich foods.**
- **Post-Harvest Losses:** ~13% of food lost between farm and market due to weak cold chain & logistics.
- **Agricultural Skew:** Focus still on cereals → limited production of pulses, fruits, vegetables, animal proteins.
- **Climate Risks:** Threats to food security from erratic rainfall, heatwaves, and resource stress.

Way Forward – How Issues Can Be Addressed

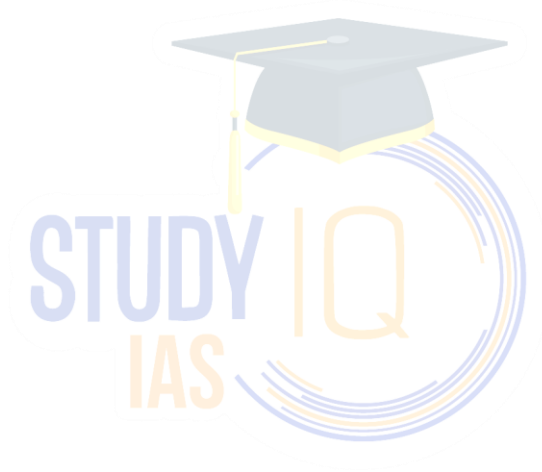
- **Diversify Food Production:** Incentivise pulses, fruits, vegetables, and animal-source foods.
- **Strengthen Supply Chains:** Invest in cold storage, warehouses, digital logistics to reduce food loss.
- **Affordable Healthy Diets:** Subsidise nutrient-dense foods, expand “fortification” programmes.
- **Women & FPO Empowerment:** Support women-led enterprises, Farmer Producer Organisations, and climate-resilient farming.
- **Nutrition-Centric Schemes:** Integrate health, education, and agriculture policies for tackling malnutrition.
- **Digital Advantage:** Scale up AgriStack, e-NAM, and geospatial tools for better planning and distribution.

Conclusion

India's journey shows **hunger can be reduced at scale** through smart policies, digital governance, and inclusive safety nets. The next phase must shift from **food security to nutrition security**,

ensuring not just calorie sufficiency but healthy, affordable, and sustainable diets. India's continued progress will be pivotal for achieving **Zero Hunger (SDG-2) by 2030**, both nationally and globally.

Source: [The Hindu](#)



S&P Upgrade of India's Sovereign Rating

Context

- **S&P Global Ratings** upgraded India's sovereign rating from **BBB-** to **BBB** (still in investment grade, but one notch higher).
 - First sovereign rating upgrade by S&P in **nearly two decades** (last in 2007).

About Credit Rating

- **Credit rating = measure of creditworthiness** (ability to repay debt).
- **Categories:**
 - **Investment Grade:** (BBB and above).
 - **Speculative Grade:** (BB and below).
- India's current level: **BBB (adequate capacity to repay, but vulnerable to shocks)**.
- Next upgrade target: **BBB+**, then **A category**.
- **Top-rated (AAA):** Germany, Canada, Australia, Denmark, etc.
- Example: USA was downgraded by S&P in 2011 (AAA → AA+) due to rising debt.

Reasons Behind the Upgrade

- **Fiscal Consolidation**
 - Fiscal deficit reduced from **9.2% (2020-21) → 4.4% target (2025-26)**.
 - Government committed to lowering **debt-to-GDP ratio** from **57.1% (2024-25) → 49-51% by 2030-31**.
 - Better fiscal discipline compared to earlier years.
- **Economic Growth**
 - GDP growth slowed to **6.5% (2024-25)** but still **among the fastest-growing major economies** globally.
 - **Nominal GDP growth** (important for debt sustainability) remains strong, helping reduce debt burden over time.
- **Inflation Management**
 - **Headline inflation fell to 1.55% in July 2025** (lowest since 2017).
 - RBI praised for credible inflation targeting and monetary discipline.
 - Low/stable inflation reassures investors and reduces risks of social/economic instability.
- **Macro Stability**
 - Strong fundamentals: stable growth, moderate external debt, comfortable forex reserves.
 - Improved clarity on fiscal roadmap convinced S&P of India's repayment capacity.

Implications of Upgrade

- **Borrowing Costs**
 - Indian govt can borrow at **lower interest rates** in global markets.
 - Corporate sector (esp. those raising funds abroad) also benefits.
- **Capital Inflows**
 - Opens access to **new pools of global funds**.
 - Improves India's attractiveness for **sovereign wealth funds, pension funds, and institutional investors**.
- **Market Sentiment**
 - Bond yields already dropped by ~10 basis points on the announcement.
 - Rupee gained strength in forex markets.

Conclusion

- India's sovereign rating upgrade to **BBB+** reflects confidence in its macroeconomic stability and growth momentum.
- However, sustaining this trajectory requires prudent fiscal management, as the fiscal deficit remains at **5.6% of GDP (2024–25 BE)**.
- With India aiming to become a **\$5 trillion economy by 2027**, accelerating infrastructure development under **PM Gati Shakti**, expanding green financing in line with its **Net Zero 2070 commitment**, and ensuring state-level fiscal prudence are essential.
- Equally, investing in **human capital** through skilling (PMKVY 4.0, Skill India Mission) and social sectors will broaden the base of inclusive growth.
- By combining fiscal discipline with structural reforms, India can aspire to move towards an **"A" category rating**, enhancing global investor confidence and consolidating its role as the fastest-growing major economy.

Source: [Indian Express](#)

