

ISSUES FACED BY THE INDIAN JUDICIAL SYSTEM

The article discusses the problem of over 10 million pending cases in India's courts. It focuses on the need for reform in the judicial system, like limiting adjournments, using technology, and improving court management to make the process faster and more efficient.

- **Issues faced by the Indian judiciary system**
- **Overwhelming Case Backlog:** Over 10 million cases are pending in Indian courts, leading to significant delays.
- **Frequent Adjournments:** More than half of the cases exceed the three-adjudgment limit, contributing to delays.
- **Staff Shortage:** Courts operate with insufficient staff regardless of the number of cases, affecting efficiency.
- **Ineffective Court Management:** Lack of clear timelines and effective management strategies slow down case processing.
- **Technology Underutilization:** Despite potential benefits, technological solutions like e-filing and video conferencing are not fully integrated.

Impacts of these issues

- **Prolonged Detention:** With 77.1% of over 500,000 inmates in 2021 awaiting trial, prolonged pre-trial detention is a major issue.
- **Business Challenges:** The slow judicial process hinders 'ease of doing business,' affecting economic growth and investor confidence.
- **Public Trust Erosion:** The unreliability and inefficiency of the judiciary decrease public trust in the legal system.

Way Forward

Strict Enforcement of Three-Adjudgment Rule: Limit adjournments per case to three to avoid unnecessary delays, as currently, more than half of the cases exceed this limit.

Improve Court Management: Adopt clear timelines for each case, a practice effective in developed countries but lacking in India.

Enhance Staffing in Courts: Address the staff shortage, as courts often have the same number of staff regardless of the increase in case files.

Integrate Technology Effectively: Fully utilize e-filing and video conferencing, proven useful during the COVID-19 pandemic, to expedite cases.

Implement NCMS Policy and NFCE: Fully enforce the National Courts Management Systems policy and the National Framework of Court Excellence to establish performance benchmarks and improve court operations.

Monetary Disincentive for Adjournments: Introduce fines, such as ₹10,000 for the first adjournment, doubling for subsequent ones, to discourage unnecessary delays.

Social Audit of Judiciary Policies: Conduct social audits of policies like NCMS to ensure their effectiveness and enhance judicial efficiency.

CONSERVATION, ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION AND DEGRADATION**Role of political parties in addressing climate issues**

WHO has recently released The State of the Global Climate report which states that 2023 was the hottest year in the recorded history of the planet. As per the report, records for a rise in ocean temperatures, glacier retreat and diminishing Antarctic ice cover were also broken.

The negative impact of rising global temperature

1) There has been a rise in the frequency of extreme weather events such as heat waves, torrential rains and tropical cyclones.

2) It disrupts many activities including agriculture and significantly impacts socio-economic developments around the world.

principal driver of industrial progress since the mid 18 century

The principal drivers of this progress have been mechanization and technology-led innovations in all sectors. There has been over exploitation of natural resources to drive progress in the post-Industrial Revolution period.

However, over dependence on natural resources for energy requirements has negatively impacted the climate. For example use of fossil fuel has led to large emissions of greenhouse gases that leads to the rise in global temperatures.

steps taken by the world and India particularly

1) **Paris Climate Deal**– It is a legally binding global agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) that was adopted in 2015. It aims to combat climate change and limit global warming to well below 2o C above pre-industrial levels, with an ambition to limit warming to 1.5o C.

2) **Indian government initiative**–

- a) It has launched the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC). The National Solar Mission was one of the missions under the NAPCC.
- b) It has also announced the National Green Hydrogen Mission. This demonstrates India's strong commitment to the energy transition plan.

election season present an opportunity to ensure climate justice

- 1) The concerns expressed in WMO report should alarm all political parties to take climate change as an important election issue. It is possible that people may wholeheartedly welcome such stands taken by political parties.
 - 2) Political parties can commit themselves to enhancing public awareness on climate change and spelling out mitigatory steps to reduce global warming.
 - 3) It is possible to have political differences in approaching climate change issues, but this will provide voters an opportunity to assess these views and make an informed decision.
 - 4) In order to be counted as a true world power in the Amrit Kaal, Indian political parties can demonstrate strong commitment to the principle of climate justice and make this an important political issue.
- All political parties are presenting their ideas to shape India's economic prosperity and the well-being of its people. However, without addressing the issue of a climate change action plan, this idea of prosperity would be incomplete.

ISSUES IN INDIAN SOCIETY**Living wills –A dignified way to death**

Recently, 30 people in Thrissur in Kerala have executed living wills. The Supreme Court has legalized living wills since 2018 to allow terminally ill patients, with no hope of a cure or recovery, to withdraw treatment and die with dignity.

living will

It is a legal document that outlines preferences for medical treatment for terminally ill patients who are unable to communicate their decisions, particularly regarding life-sustaining measures and end-of-life care.

Existing procedure for executing living will

1) **Streamlined procedure**– The Supreme Court has streamlined the procedure to overcome the challenges posed by previously recommended complicated procedure-

A) Under this, living wills must be handed over to a “competent officer” in the local government after being signed in the presence of two witnesses and attested before a notary or a gazette officer. The competent officer will serve as a custodian of living will.

B) If the patient is terminally ill and can't make decisions anymore, the doctor will check the living will either against the copy kept by the custodian or against digital health records of concerned patients.

2) **Certification by medical board**-The decisions on withholding or withdrawing treatment are certified first by a primary medical board and then confirmed by a secondary medical board. The secondary board should have a doctor who is nominated by the chief medical officer.

Further, as per the Supreme Court, if the patient does not have a living will then the primary medical board will have to obtain the written consent of the ‘next of kin’ for withdrawing/withholding treatment.

Issues in the implementation of living will in India

1) **Lack of custodians for living wills**- State governments have not designated custodians for living wills. For ex- a public interest litigation had to be filed in the High Court of Bombay to appoint custodians across the State recently.

2) **Absence of protocol**- The National Health Authority has not produced protocols that could allow living wills to be authenticated through digital health records.

3) **Complicated Procedure**-As per guidelines, the secondary board must have a doctor nominated by the chief medical officer. This implies that hospitals cannot have secondary medical boards unless the chief medical officer has nominated a doctor in the hospital where the concerned patient is admitted. Therefore, terminally ill patients, even those who have made living wills, are not able to make critical decisions about medical care

4) **Ambiguous guidelines**– Indian law does not have a clear definition for ‘next of kin’. Further, there is lack of clarity when any family members disagree about the best course of action. Due to all this, officials will refrain from taking decisions on such a sensitive subject.

5) **Lack of state government willingness**– This area is complex and requires attention from medical and legal experts, therefore state governments are reluctant to implement it with determination.

way forward

The Central government can bridge the gap in expertise by developing and publishing model orders and protocols. These protocols can provide the State governments with the necessary confidence and the guidance to effectively implement the Supreme court judgment.

PRELIM FACTS**1. Leap Second**

According to a recent study, Earth's changing rotation, influenced by factors such as climate change and geological shifts, may result in clocks skipping a second, potentially leading to the need for a "negative leap second" around 2029.

1. **About-** It is a one-second adjustment used to address the gradual slowdown of Earth's rotation, caused by the continuous melting and refreezing of ice caps.
2. **Introduced by-** International Earth Rotation and Reference Systems Service in 1972.
3. **Addition of leap second-** It is periodically added to Coordinated Universal Time (UTC) to keep clocks worldwide synchronized with atomic time and to compensate for the Earth's gradually slowing rotation. So far, 27 positive leap seconds have been added.
4. **Reason for addition-** Earth's rotation on its axis is not consistent; it can speed up or slow down due to factors like the moon's gravitational pull, which leads to ocean tides.
5. **Usual date of addition-** A leap second is typically added either on June 30th or December 31st.

Negative leap Second

1. **About-** It is a second that is removed from our clocks to maintain synchronization with the Earth's rotation. So far, no negative leap second has been needed because the Earth's rotation has generally been slightly slower over the past few decades.
2. **Administration-** The International Earth Rotation and Reference Systems Service (IERS) oversees Earth's rotation and determines when to add or subtract a leap second.
3. **Recent impact-** Recently, because the Earth has been spinning faster than usual, timekeepers thought about using negative leap seconds for the first time.

2. Kallakkadal: A phenomenon leading to floods in Kerala

Recently, numerous homes in Kerala's coastal regions have been flooded due to high sea waves, which are referred to as swell waves. These flooding incidents are termed swell surge or Kallakkadal in Malayalam.

Kallakkadal

- Kallakkadal refers to coastal flooding caused by swell waves during the pre-monsoon season (April-May) and sometimes during post monsoon along the southwest coast of India.
- The term "Kallakkadal," coined by local fishermen, combines two Malayalam words: "Kallan," meaning thief, and "Kadal," meaning sea. When spoken, these words were combined as "Kallakkadal," signifying the sea arriving like a thief. In 2012, UNESCO formally approved this term.

What causes Kallakkadal ?

1. **Ocean swell and distant storms:**
 - a. It is caused by waves formed by ocean swells, which originate from distant storms such as hurricanes or prolonged periods of intense gale winds.
 - b. These storms transfer significant energy from the air into the water, resulting in the formation of extremely high waves.
 - c. These waves can travel vast distances from the storm centre until they reach the shoreline.
2. **Formation-** Typically, Kallakkadal occurs due to strong winds in the southern Indian Ocean, where ocean swells are generated. These waves then travel northward, taking around two to three days to reach the coastline.

Challenges in its Preparedness

1. Kallakkadal happens suddenly without local wind activity, making it hard for coastal residents to receive advance notice.
2. Yet, systems like the Swell Surge Forecast System, initiated by the Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS) in 2020, provide a seven-day warning.

3. RBI@90

The Prime Minister addressed the opening ceremony of RBI@90 in Mumbai, marking 90 years of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

Brief History of RBI:

Royal Commission on Indian Currency, 1926 (Hilton Young Commission) recommended the establishment of the RBI, a suggestion reiterated by the Indian Central Banking Enquiry Committee in 1931.

The RBI was founded in 1935 under the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934, with Sir Osborne Smith serving as its inaugural Governor.

In 1949, the RBI was nationalized, marking a pivotal moment in its institutional history.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has evolved significantly in recent years:

- Inflation-targeting central bank
- Foreign exchange reserves
- Macroeconomic stability
- Reduction in NPAs
- Technology in payments
- Central bank digital currency

However, the RBI faces several challenges:

- Banking Regulation and Supervision
- Transparency with Regulated Entities
- Regulating New-Age Fintech Firms
- Limited Powers over Public-Sector Banks
- Potential Fiscal Dominance of Monetary Policy

4 .Shallow fakes

- The prevalence and impact of shallow fakes during elections have been a concern.
- Shallow Fakes are manipulated images, videos, and voice clips created without AI technology.
- Unlike deepfakes, shallow fakes rely on traditional editing tools to deceive viewers.
- They are increasingly used in political contexts, particularly during elections, to spread misinformation.
- The blurring line between shallow fakes and deepfakes, coupled with the accessibility of editing tools, has amplified their prevalence.

5.Artificial sun

- Scientists in South Korea have achieved a new world record in nuclear fusion, sustaining temperatures of 100 million degrees Celsius, seven times hotter than the sun's core.
- This feat, conducted using the Korea Superconducting Tokamak Advanced Research device (KSTAR), aims to replicate the fusion reaction powering stars to unlock clean, limitless energy.
- The experiment involved fusing atoms to release massive energy without carbon emissions, crucial for addressing climate change.
- KSTAR sustained these high temperatures for 48 seconds, breaking the previous record of 30 seconds. To achieve this, scientists used tungsten instead of carbon in the reactor's "diverters" to extract impurities and heat.
- Their goal is to sustain these temperatures for at least 300 seconds by 2026, critical for scaling up fusion operations.
- This research will contribute to the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER) in France, aiding in advancing fusion energy commercialization.

6. Anti-Dumping Investigation

India has launched an anti-dumping investigation (initiated by the Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR)), into the import of a chemical used in the rubber industry from China and Japan.

What is dumping ?

When the goods are exported by a country to a foreign country at a price lower than the price it charges in its own home market is called dumping.

What is Anti-Dumping?

Anti-dumping duties are taxes imposed on imported goods in order to compensate for the difference between their export price and their normal value, if dumping causes injury to producers of competing products in the importing country. This practice can harm domestic industries by undercutting their prices and creating unfair competition. Anti-dumping measures are part of WTO regulations aimed at creating a level playing field for domestic producers against foreign competitors

Why Anti-dumping investigation

An anti-dumping probe is underway for imports of 'insoluble sulphur' from China and Japan. Insoluble sulphur, an amorphous form of sulphur, doesn't dissolve in carbon disulphide and is crucial in the rubber industry. It serves as a vital additive agent in rubber products like tyres and shoes, enhancing their quality and wearability. Additionally, it acts as a vulcanization accelerator in the rubber manufacturing process, facilitating the hardening of rubber through cross-linking of molecules with other substances.

What is anti-dumping?

Anti-dumping is a protective tariff imposed by a government on foreign imports sold at a price lower than the home market price. It aims to counter distortions in trade caused by dumping. Anti-dumping is permitted by the WTO.

ANSWER WRITING

Q. Discuss the Consequences of Climate Change on the Food Security in Tropical Countries.

According to IFPRI's Global Food Policy Report 2022, around 70 million people are at risk due to climate change-induced hunger, with 28 million people from regions like Eastern and Southern Africa.

Impact of Climate Change on Food Security in Tropical Countries

Forest degradation: Rising temperatures and reduced rainfall lead to more forest fires in tropical forests like the Amazon. This damages the forest, making future fires more likely, creating a destructive cycle of degradation and permanently changing into shrubland. This impacts the livelihood of the people dependent on these forests.

Double Vulnerability: Smallholder Farmers and High Population Density: Smallholder farmers in tropical regions, coupled with high population density, face amplified challenges from climate change. They often lack the resources and technology needed to adapt, magnifying the impact on food security.

According to the World Bank, 80% of those most vulnerable to climate-induced hunger and crop failures reside in Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and Southeast Asia, exacerbating the vulnerability of the poor.

Complex interdependencies among climate change, political instability, and poverty: Tropical areas like Africa are already grappling with these complexities. Climate change exacerbates existing vulnerabilities, leading to food and water scarcity, displacement, and economic setbacks.

Decline in Crop Yields:

Rising temperatures and increased evaporation in tropical areas decrease the soil moisture, which impacts crop productivity

According to IPCC 2nd AR, one-third of the land is already degraded, and by 2050, Rice and maize production will be reduced upto 20-30%.

Nations like India, Nigeria, Brazil, and Indonesia will face slowed agricultural growth, raising food availability concerns.

Loss of Arable Land:

Sea-level rise, coastal erosion, saltwater intrusion and flooding make agricultural lands unusable in tropical coastal areas and small islands.

Countries like Bangladesh, Philippines, Fiji, etc., with large coastal populations, face risks of permanent loss of fertile lands and freshwater sources.

Migration and loss of livelihood for farmers accelerate food insecurity for the poor who have limited alternate means of income generation.

Changing Growing Seasons: A rise in global temperatures is causing trees and plants to produce fruit earlier or later than before — throwing off the species that feed on them, including humans.

Reduced water availability and soil degradation:

Increased rainfall variability, shrinking glaciers and reduced river flow due to higher evaporation decrease water availability for irrigation in tropical countries.

Water scarcity will directly limit crop production in tropical agricultural zones, which often lack developed irrigation infrastructure.

For example, rain-fed agriculture employs 60% of India's farmers.

Increased Pests and Diseases: According to the FAO, upto 40 per cent of food crops are lost to plant pests and diseases each year. Pests thrive in warm and humid tropical climates and impact the food security of the region.

The recent invasion of desert locusts throughout the Horn of Africa shows the vulnerability of crops to pests.

Threats to Fisheries:

Ocean warming and acidification harm fish breeding, habitats, and stock distribution. This hits tropical countries like India, Indonesia, and Malaysia, dependent on marine fisheries.

Impacts nutrition security as they are the source of micronutrients and protein for the poor.

The UNFCCC-COP27 recognized that safeguarding food security and ending hunger is a fundamental priority.

It also focused on nature-based solutions, such as restoring forests and wetlands, in mitigating and adapting to climate change.

MCQs

1. Consider the following statements:
 1. The legalization of living wills, which grants terminally-ill patients to make decisions about withholding or withdrawing medical treatment and die with dignity, is pending in India.
 2. There is also no established protocol for authenticating living wills through digital health records by the National Health Authority.

Which of the statement(s) given above is/are correct?

 - a) 1 only
 - b) 2 only**
 - c) Both 1 and 2
 - d) Neither 1 nor 2
2. Consider the following statements:
 1. In India, the power to raise taxes rests largely with the Union government while a greater part of the overall government spending is done by the State governments.
2. The RBI's classification of developmental expenditures includes interest payments, pensions, and subsidies, all of which have seen a decline in spending by the Union government. Which of the statement(s) given above is/are correct?
 - a) 1 only**
 - b) 2 only
 - c) Both 1 and 2
 - d) Neither 1 nor 2
3. The 'State of the Global Climate Report' is an annual publication that tracks climate change indicators. Which one of the following organizations is responsible for publishing this report?
 - a) World Meteorological Organization (WMO)**
 - b) United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

- c) Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)
d) International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)
4. The Price-to-Earnings (PE) ratio measures:
a) **The company market capitalization divided by its annual earnings**
b) The company annual revenue divided by its market capitalization
c) The company annual earnings divided by its market capitalization
d) The company annual earnings divided by its annual revenue
5. Consider the following statements regarding Kallakkadal.
1. Kallakkadal are flash-flood events that take place without any noticeable advance change in local winds in the coastal environment.
2. They occur along the Indian coast, particularly the west coast.
3. Tsunami and Kallakkadal are similar types of waves with similar causes or mechanisms.
How many of the above statements are correct?
a) Only one
b) **Only two**
c) All three
d) None
6. Which of the following statements about Earth's rotation is correct?
a) Earth rotates on its axis once every 23 hours and 54 minutes.
b) Earth rotates counterclockwise when viewed from the North Pole.
c) **Earth's rotation speed is faster at the equator compared to the poles.**
d) Earth's rotation axis is perpendicular to its orbital plane.
7. Consider the following statements :
1. Statement-I: Earth's rotation is slowing slightly with time; thus, a day was shorter in the past.
2. Statement-II: This is due to the tidal effects the Moon has on Earth's rotation.
Which one of the following is correct in respect of the above statements?
a) **Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct and Statement-II is the correct explanation for Statement-I**
b) Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct and Statement-II is not the correct explanation for Statement-I
c) Statement-I is correct but Statement-II is incorrect
d) Statement-I is incorrect but Statement-II is correct
8. Consider the following statements regarding the Pacific Ring of Fire:
1. This is the area where the high-density Pacific Plate encounters the low-density plates surrounding it.
2. There is no occurrence of transform faults in this region.
3. Pacific Ring of Fire is characterised by active volcanoes and frequent earthquakes.
How many of the statements given above are correct?
a) Only one
b) **Only two**
c) All three
d) None
9. Consider the following statements regarding 'Green Steel':
1. Green steel uses green hydrogen that is produced from renewable energy and water.
2. Direct electrification through the electrolysis of iron ore can produce green steel.
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
a) 1 only
b) 2 only
c) **Both 1 and 2**
d) Neither 1 nor 2
10. With reference to Konda Reddi Tribe, consider the following statements:
1. They can be found in the Papikonda hill range in the Godavari region.
2. It is one of the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups.
3. Kula Panchayat is the institution of social control of the Konda Reddi Tribe.
How many of the above statements are correct?
a) Only one
b) Only two
c) **All three**
d) None