

● POLITY

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SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Randomised Control Trials: The Technique That Transformed TB Care

CONTEXT: The evolution from palliative measures to modern antibiotics and the pivotal role of Sir Austin Bradford Hill's work in revolutionizing TB treatment through randomized control trials and shaping modern epidemiology is critical in the treatment of TB.

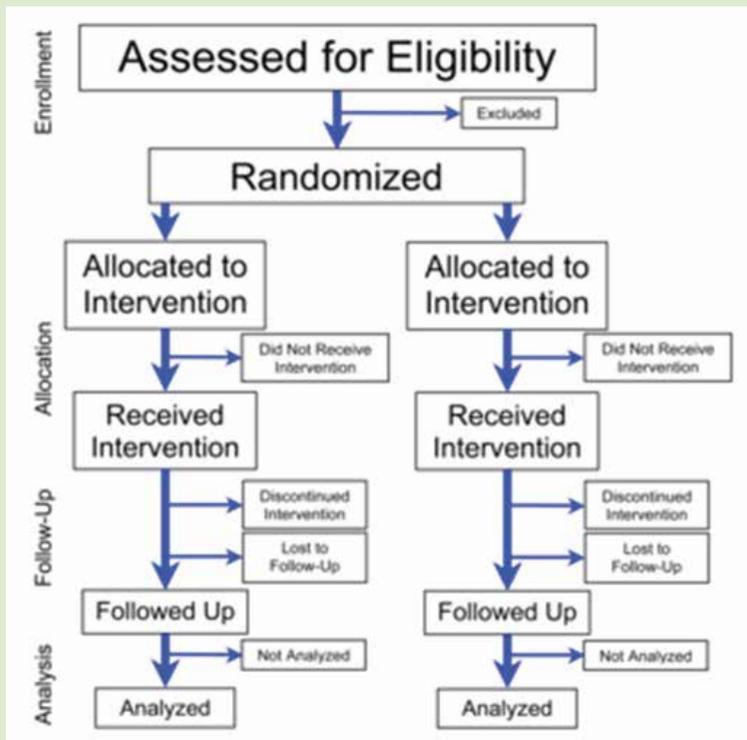


image Flow chart of Randomised Control Trial

BACKGROUND: The treatment of tuberculosis (TB) has evolved significantly over time. Before antibiotics, TB treatments were primarily palliative, focusing on rest and fresh air in sanatoriums or resort-like settings. Surgical interventions like lobectomy and pneumonectomy were also attempted. However, the discovery of antibiotics, notably streptomycin, marked a revolution in TB treatment, followed by advancements in clinical trials and epidemiological research that further refined treatment approaches and contributed to the goal of TB elimination.

MAJOR POINTS

1. Chilling Testament to TB's Impact

Millions globally, including privileged individuals, succumbed to TB, highlighting the lack of effective treatments despite knowing its causative agent since 1882.

The narrative of TB treatment has transformed over

almost a century, with the goal of global elimination by 2030.

2. Mycobacterium tuberculosis: A Persistent Foe

TB, caused by Mycobacterium tuberculosis, has plagued humanity for millennia, necessitating palliative treatments before antibiotics.

3. Pre-Antibiotic Era Treatments

Pre-antibiotic TB treatments focused on palliative care in sanatoriums or surgical interventions, albeit with limited success.

4. Antibiotics' Arrival and Revolution

Sir Alexander Fleming's discovery of antibiotics marked a turning point in TB treatment, but the real revolution came with Sir Austin Bradford Hill's work.

Hill's pioneering randomized control trial (RCT) technique evaluated antibiotics' efficacy against TB, leading to practical solutions and establishing ethical guidelines in medicine.

5. Role of RCTs and Hill's Contributions

RCTs have been instrumental in evaluating various medical treatments, including antibiotics for TB, and shaping modern medicine's approach.

Hill's meticulous work with streptomycin and the 'Bradford Hill Criteria' not only transformed TB management but also impacted epidemiology and public health policy.

6. Gratitude to Sir Bradford Hill

Hill's legacy inspires gratitude as we aim to eliminate TB, despite challenges like Multi-Drug Tuberculosis (MDR-TB) and Extensively Drug-Resistant Tuberculosis (XDR-TB).

His contributions continue to inspire researchers worldwide, showcasing the power of scientific inquiry and resilience in addressing global health challenges.

CONCLUSION: The evolution of TB treatment, from palliative measures to modern antibiotics, underscores the transformative impact of randomized control trials pioneered by Sir Austin Bradford Hill. His legacy inspires gratitude as we strive to eliminate TB, highlighting the power of scientific inquiry in addressing global health challenges.



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INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Indonesia Evacuates Thousands After Volcano Erupts, Raises Tsunami Threat

CONTEXT: Mount Ruang volcano in Indonesia erupted multiple times, causing evacuations, flight closures, and a tsunami warning.



Mount Ruang volcano in Indonesia, during a series of eruptions on Wednesday

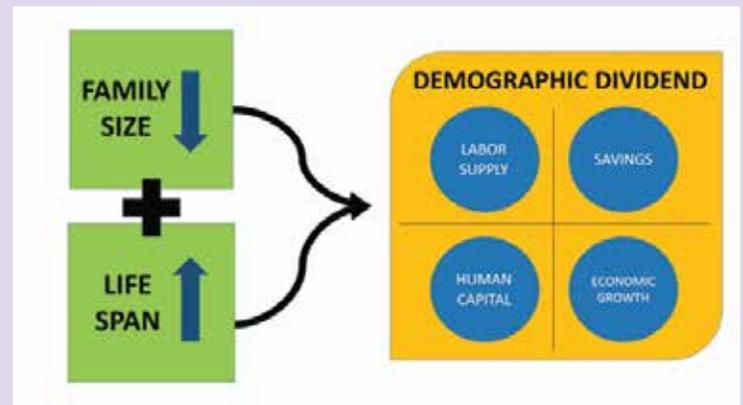
Mount Ruang Erupts in Indonesia: Evacuations and Tsunami Warning

- **Volcano Erupts Multiple Times:**
 - Mount Ruang on a remote Indonesian island erupted five times, spewing ash and lava.
 - The ash column reached over a mile high, forcing authorities to raise the alert level to the highest.
- **Evacuations Underway:**
 - Thousands of people are being evacuated from the surrounding areas, including Tagulandang Island with a population of 20,000.
 - A prison on Tagulandang was also evacuated by boat.
 - No casualties reported yet, but rescuers are working amidst volcanic material covering the roads.
- **Tsunami Warning Issued:**
 - Authorities warn of a potential tsunami due to volcanic debris falling into the sea.
- **Indonesia Prone to Volcanic Activity:**
 - Indonesia's location on the Pacific "Ring of Fire" makes it vulnerable to frequent volcanic eruptions.

ECONOMICS

India Must Invest More In Education, Health To Tap Demographic Dividend: IMF

CONTEXT: The IMF recommends India invest heavily in education and healthcare to equip its young population with the skills needed to benefit from the economic growth and compete in the job market.



INDIA'S DEMOGRAPHIC DIVIDEND: A BALANCING ACT

A Promising Future:

- India has a young population, with 65% under 35. This presents a demographic dividend, a chance for economic growth with a large workforce.
- A skilled workforce can drive innovation, productivity, and overall prosperity.

Challenge of Youth Unemployment:

- High youth unemployment (over 40% in 2022-23) is a major hurdle.
- A significant portion of the young population remains unemployed, hindering their contribution to the economy.
- This underemployment wastes human capital and burdens the employed population.

World Bank's Warning:

- The World Bank highlights that India, along with other South Asian countries, is squandering its demographic dividend.
- This emphasizes the urgency to address the skills gap that limits youth employability.

The IMF's Prescription: Investing in Human Capital

- **Prioritizing Education and Healthcare:**
 - The IMF proposes prioritizing investments in education and healthcare to unlock India's demographic potential.
 - Education needs revamping to align with current and future job market demands.
 - Focus on areas like technology, data science, and renewable energy to prepare for the evolving work landscape.
 - Investment in healthcare is crucial for a healthy and productive workforce.
 - The IMF emphasizes prioritizing these investments for their significant potential returns.

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India's Economic Landscape

- **Growth Drivers:**

- India's economic growth is driven by public investment in infrastructure and private consumption.
- Public spending has a positive impact, but concerns exist about crowding out private investment, essential for long-term growth.
- Recent signs of increased private investment are encouraging.
- Decelerating inflation might also be contributing to higher consumption.

YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT'S SHADOW:

- High youth unemployment remains a challenge despite a projected 6.8% growth rate for FY25.
- Significant improvement in youth employability is needed to truly benefit from the demographic advantage.

CONCLUSION: SEIZING THE OPPORTUNITY

India's young population offers a unique chance for economic prosperity. However, bridging the skills gap that hinders youth employability is crucial. The IMF's recommendation to prioritize investments in education and healthcare provides a roadmap for achieving this. By equipping its young population and fostering good health, India can transform its demographic advantage into a powerful engine for sustained economic growth. The choices made today will determine whether this young generation becomes a burden or a boon for India's future.

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

Nestlé Baby Food Sold In India Has Higher Sugar Content

CONTEXT: A report alleges Nestle uses more sugar in baby food sold in developing countries like India than in Europe, raising health concerns and accusations of double standards.



NESTLÉ BABY FOOD AND SUGAR CONTENT: A GLOBAL DISPARITY?

- **Higher Sugar Levels in Developing Countries:**

- A report by Public Eye and IBFAN alleges Nestle's baby food in India, Africa, and Latin America has more added sugar than those sold in Europe.

- Independent tests found higher sugar content (2.7g per serving in India) in Cerelac for babies compared to the sugar-free version sold in Europe. Products in Ethiopia and Thailand had even higher sugar levels (nearly 6g).
- **WHO Recommendations and Regulations:**
 - The World Health Organization (WHO) advises against added sugar for children under 3.
 - However, Indian regulations currently allow some sucrose and fructose in baby food.
- **Nestlé's Response:**
 - Nestle India claims a focus on reducing added sugar, with a 30% decrease in infant cereals over the past five years.
 - They emphasize ensuring essential nutrients are met for early childhood development.
 - Nestle highlights adherence to CODEX standards and local regulations regarding sugar content.
 - They plan for further reductions in added sugar while maintaining other qualities.
- **FSSAI Investigation:**
 - The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) is investigating the IBFAN report.
- **Health Concerns and Double Standards:**
 - The Breastfeeding Promotion Network of India (BPNI) argues against added sugar or salt for children under 2 due to health risks.
 - WHO warns about potential addiction and preference for sweet tastes with early sugar introduction.
 - Dr. Cyriac Abby Philips accuses Nestle of "double standards" due to differing sugar content in baby food sold in Western vs. Asian markets.
 - He points to high sales figures in low- and middle-income countries like India and Brazil as points to buttress his claims.

CONCLUSION: With health experts and advocates criticizing the sugar content and potential double standards, Nestle faces pressure to reconcile its global baby food formulations while Indian regulators weigh in on the sugar allowances in baby food.

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EDUCATION

Activity-Based Curriculum Drawn Up For Anganwadis

CONTEXT: In a major push for early childhood development, India has created an activity-based curriculum for anganwadis (rural childcare centers) to stimulate children's development from birth to age 3.

NURTURING YOUNG MINDS: A NEW ACTIVITY-BASED CURRICULUM FOR ANGANWADIS



Early Learning Takes Center Stage:

- A new framework, the National Framework of Early Childhood Stimulation (2024), emphasizes the importance of learning from birth.
- It outlines month-by-month activities for children aged 0 to 3, designed to be conducted by parents, anganwadi staff, and ASHA workers.

Collaborative Development:

- This framework is the result of a joint effort by various ministries (Women & Child Development, Health & Family Welfare, Education), departments (School Education & Literacy), research bodies (NCERT, IHE), and civil society organizations.

Navchetana: A Curriculum for Holistic Development:

- Titled "Navchetana" (meaning "New Learning"), this activity-based curriculum aligns with the National Education Policy's (NEP 2020) focus on continuous learning.
- Staff across 1.4 million anganwadis will be trained to implement this curriculum.

Activities for All Senses:

- Navchetana focuses on activities that:
 - Encourage talking, playing, and movement.
 - Stimulate all senses, especially sight and touch.
 - Promote early language development, emergent literacy, and numeracy skills.

Building a Strong Foundation:

- Experts highlight the crucial role of the first three years in brain development (75% of brain development occurs during this period).

- The framework provides detailed information on this critical stage and offers step-by-step instructions for caregivers and frontline workers on conducting early stimulation activities.

Engaging Activities with Everyday Objects:

- The framework includes 36 sets of activities specifically designed for children aged 0 to 36 months.
- These activities encourage the use of readily available household items like cups, bottles, and fabric scraps.
- Examples include reaching for objects, imitating sounds, playing with bangles, putting objects in and out of containers, and untying knots (for children in their first year).

A Step-by-Step Approach:

- The framework outlines a developmental progression for activities:
 - After 1 year: Encouraging self-feeding, house exploration, kitchen participation, playing with dough, and mirror exploration.
 - At 18 months: Crayon scribbling.
 - At 24 months: Shoe sorting and matching.
 - By age 3: Introduction to cycles, name recognition, and color identification.

Early Identification of Developmental Delays:

- The framework highlights how these activities can aid in identifying potential developmental delays in children.
- In such cases, anganwadi workers or parents can adapt the activities by using those recommended for slightly younger age groups.

CONCLUSION: This new curriculum, with its focus on accessible activities and collaborative implementation, aims to equip anganwadis to nurture a generation of young learners. By emphasizing early engagement and identifying developmental needs, Navchetana has the potential to significantly improve outcomes for millions of children in India's rural areas.

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POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

On Doordarshan, President, CJI, CEC Appeal To Voters

CONTEXT: The statement from top Constitutional office-holders emphasizes the importance of voter participation and civic duty in strengthening Indian democracy, urging citizens, especially first-time voters, to actively engage in the electoral process.



- Historic Appeal by Constitutional Office-Holders**
 - Top Constitutional office-holders made a historic appeal through Doordarshan National for voter participation to strengthen Indian democracy.
- President Droupadi Murmu's Urgent Call**
 - President Murmu urged all voters, especially first-time ones, to engage in the electoral process and shape the nation's future.
- Chief Justice Chandrachud's Civic Duty Emphasis**
 - Chief Justice Chandrachud highlighted citizens' duty to vote, emphasizing the Constitution's expectation of active participation in shaping the country's path.
- Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar's Encouragement**
 - CEC Rajiv Kumar commended Election Commission efforts in enrolling voters and urged citizens, particularly millennials and Gen Z, to exercise their voting rights.
- ISRO Chairman S. Somanath's Visionary Appeal**
 - ISRO Chairman Somanath emphasized voting as an investment in technological progress, urging voters to choose a path toward a better tomorrow for India.

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

India Votes From Today; 102 Seats, 16 Cr. Voters In Phase 1

CONTEXT: The commencement of voting in India, with over 16 crore voters participating in the first phase of the general elections across 102 Lok Sabha constituencies, marks the beginning of a significant democratic exercise where the ruling NDA seeks a third term while facing competition from the opposition INDIA bloc.

INDIA'S GENERAL ELECTION: PHASE 1 OVERVIEW

- Election Commencement**
 - 102 Lok Sabha constituencies begin voting, involving over 16 crore voters.
 - Polling officials transport EVMs and election material across the Brahmaputra in Assam.
- Key Players and Objectives**
 - BJP-led NDA seeks a third term, emphasizing Viksit Bharat (developed India).
 - INDIA bloc aims to challenge the ruling alliance, focusing on issues like unemployment and democratic threats.
- Phase Details**
 - Includes all 39 Lok Sabha seats in Tamil Nadu, significant seats in Rajasthan, western Uttar Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh.
 - Assembly polls concurrently held in Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Manipur, and Naxal-affected areas.
- Candidate Profiles**
 - Notable candidates include Union Ministers Nitin Gadkari and BJP heavyweights from various states, alongside Congress leaders.
- Voting Logistics**
 - Over 1.87 lakh polling stations set up, extensive transport arrangements made for polling personnel.
 - Special provisions for elderly and disabled voters to cast their votes conveniently.
- Election Day Operations**
 - Voting from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., with different closure timings in certain areas.
 - Rigorous surveillance measures deployed to ensure fair and transparent elections.
- Post-Election Procedures**
 - Vote counting is scheduled for June 4, with expectations of a high voter turnout and active participation in this "festival of democracy."

CONCLUSION: The commencement of India's General Election Phase 1 marks a pivotal moment in the democratic process, with extensive participation and significant political stakes. As voters exercise their rights, the focus on key issues and the logistics of fair polling underscore the importance of transparency and inclusivity. The forthcoming vote count on June 4 holds the promise of a vibrant democratic outcome.

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POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

Impossible To Tamper With Evms At Any Stage: EC In SC

CONTEXT: The Election Commission asserts the impossibility of tampering with electronic voting machines (EVMs) at any stage, amidst Supreme Court hearings on ensuring transparency in the electoral system for India's 97 crore registered voters.

EVM INTEGRITY ASSURANCE BY ELECTION COMMISSION

- **EVM Tamper-Proof Affirmation**
 - The EC declared EVMs impossible to tamper with at any stage, addressing concerns over electoral transparency.
- **Judicial Proceedings**
 - Supreme Court hears pleas for enhanced transparency, balancing the use of EVMs and traditional paper ballots.
 - Bench response highlights caution against excessive suspicion, emphasizing system robustness.
- **Petitioners' Stance**
 - Advocates stress voters' fundamental right to verifiable and accurate voting processes.
- **VVPAT Verification Demands**
 - Petitions call for 100% cross-verification of EVM votes with VVPAT slips, aiming for enhanced scrutiny.
- **VVPAT Verification Statistics**
 - EC reports over 41,000 instances of random verification without mismatches, detailing challenges in manual VVPAT counting.
- **EVM and VVPAT Functionality**
 - EC clarifies EVM-VVPAT integration, ensuring no mismatches through automated confirmation and 'fall error' mechanism.
- **Election System Enhancements**
 - EC outlines technological and procedural advancements, highlighting increased voter and machine capacities from 2019 to 2024.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

One Of The 17 Indian Crew Members Of Iran-Seized Vessel Returns Home

CONTEXT: The return of an Indian sailor from the detained MSC Aries in Iran has sparked efforts by the Ministry of External Affairs to secure the release of the remaining crew members amid diplomatic dialogues and logistical challenges.

1. Detainment of MSC Aries:

- Iran detained the Portugal-flagged MSC Aries, claiming it violated international maritime law.
- The ship was seized by Iran's Revolutionary Guards on April 13 in what Israel's Foreign Minister called a "pirate operation."

2. Return of Indian Sailor:

- Ann Tessa Joseph, one of the 17 Indian sailors, returned to Kerala, while the remaining 16 are still in Iranian custody.
- The Indian Mission in Tehran is actively engaged in ensuring the well-being of the detained sailors.

3. Complex Situation:

- The return of the other 16 Indians is complicated due to logistical challenges, including the impounded ship and the need for a second vessel.
- External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar intervened, leading to an exception for the female cadet and improved communication for other crew members.

4. Diplomatic Efforts:

- The Ministry of External Affairs initiated dialogues with Iranian authorities through embassies in Tehran and India.
- Mr. Jaishankar reached out to Iran's counterpart for assistance in securing the early release of the Indian crew members.

CONCLUSION: The situation surrounding the detained MSC Aries underscores the complexities of international maritime issues. The return of one Indian sailor highlights ongoing diplomatic efforts by the Ministry of External Affairs to ensure the safety and release of the remaining crew members, showcasing the importance of diplomatic dialogue and intervention in such situations.

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

Vice-Admiral Tripathi To Be Next Navy Chief

- Vice-Admiral Dinesh Kumar Tripathi appointed as the next Chief of the Naval Staff, succeeding Admiral R. Hari Kumar.
- Currently serving as Vice-Chief of the Naval Staff (VCNS), Vice-Admiral Tripathi will assume office on April 30, 2024.
- The government's announcement of his appointment was made late at night on Thursday.
- Vice-Admiral Tripathi, born on May 15, 1964, joined the Indian Navy on July 1, 1985, in the Executive Branch.
- He specializes in Communication and Electronic Warfare, boasting nearly 39 years of distinguished service in the Navy.

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POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

War Of Attrition

CONTEXT: The fight against the Maoist insurgency in India has become a war of attrition, with military victories failing to fully address the root causes of the conflict.

THE STALEMATED WAR ON MAOIST INSURGENCY IN INDIA

- **Military Stalemate:**
 - Recent blows to Maoists by security forces.
 - Maoists weakened as a political force but retain attack capabilities.
 - Government claims of wiping out threat seen as unrealistic.
 - Difficult terrain and some tribal support benefit Maoists.
- **Government's Shifting Strategies:**
 - Past failures of arming tribals against Maoists (Salwa Judum).
 - Increased focus on welfare programs in tribal areas.
 - Success in countering Maoist propaganda and reducing tribal support (except in Chhattisgarh).
- **The Roadblock: Maoist Ideology**
 - Maoists unwilling to abandon their ideology despite setbacks.
 - Misunderstanding of tribal needs: tribals seek improvement within the system, not revolution.
 - Maoist intransigence fuels the ongoing war of attrition.
- **Peace Efforts:**
 - Civil society and activists push for ceasefire talks and democratic solutions.

CONCLUSION: The entrenched Maoist ideology and the government's struggle to address tribal grievances create a stalemate. While military action weakens the Maoists, lasting peace hinges on resolving social issues and finding common ground through dialogue.

- The United States' dilemma in dealing with Russia and NATO's role.

3. Regional Conflicts

- Israel's actions in response to the Hamas attack and its implications.
- Iran's role in the Middle East and its impact on regional dynamics.

4. Geo-Political Disarray

- Decline of the 'rules-based international order.'
- Rise of new alliance patterns and their limitations.
- Concerns about sustaining global peace and order.

5. Global Power Dynamics

- US-China rivalry and its impact on international affairs.
- Europe's challenges in dealing with Russia and regional conflicts.
- China's economic struggles and changing power dynamics.

6. Disruptive Factors

- Politics of oil and its global implications.
- Technology as a disruptor, focusing on Artificial Intelligence and military advancements.
- Growing concerns about nuclear capabilities and arms control agreements.

7. Conclusion

- Warning about potential disruptions and doomsday scenarios if global challenges are not addressed effectively.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

India's Nuanced Approach In The South China Sea

CONTEXT: India's evolving stance on the South China Sea, articulated through increased support for countries like the Philippines, reflects a strategic shift towards proactive engagement in the Indo-Pacific, driven by economic interests, regional security concerns, and a commitment to international maritime law and stability.

INDIA'S EVOLVING STANCE IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA:

1. **Support for National Sovereignty:** India's External Affairs Minister, S. Jaishankar, expressed full support for the Philippines in upholding its national sovereignty during a visit to Manila in March 2024, amid ongoing disputes in the South China Sea.
2. **Shift from Caution to Engagement:** New Delhi's position marks a departure from its earlier cautionary stance, aligning more closely with international maritime law and principles of sovereignty in the region.
3. **Policy Evolution - Look East to Act East:** India's engagement initially focused on economic integration through the Look East Policy, evolving into the Act East Policy under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, emphasizing strategic partnerships and expanded security cooperation in the Indo-Pacific.
4. **Complex Relations with China:** Escalating tensions in the South China Sea are intertwined with India's complex

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

A World In Disarray, A Concern About The Future

CONTEXT: The current global geopolitical landscape, highlighting concerns about leadership, new alliances, economic challenges, technological advancements, and potential disruptions, particularly focusing on conflicts in Ukraine, Gaza, and broader international relations.

Title: A World in Disarray

1. Introduction

- Concerns about the future due to geopolitical challenges.
- Absence of influential global leaders.
- Emergence of new alliances.
- Economic issues and technological progress as contributing factors.

2. Leadership Challenges

- Critique of leaders like Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Benjamin Netanyahu, and Vladimir Putin for their handling of conflicts.

relationship with China, including border disputes and Beijing's assertive posture, necessitating a more nuanced approach.

5. **Strategic Engagement and Countermeasures:** India's strategic engagements, including naval exercises and military cooperation with Southeast Asian nations, serve to counter China's assertive territorial claims and enhance regional security.
6. **ASEAN Centrality and Regional Stability:** India recognizes the critical importance of the South China Sea to regional security and global maritime order, aligning its stance with ASEAN principles and advocating for a rules-based international maritime order.
7. **Advocacy for International Law:** India's emphasis on international law, particularly UNCLOS, reflects its commitment to regional stability, challenges unilateral actions, and indirectly counters China's expansive activities in the South China Sea.
8. **Contribution to Indo-Pacific Stability:** India's nuanced approach aims to safeguard its interests while contributing to collective efforts for peace, stability, and respect for international law in the Indo-Pacific region.

Double Standards and Political Context:

- Double standards exist in international reactions to targeted killings, influenced by bilateral politics and ties between nations.
- India's responses are influenced by political considerations and the status of relations with each country.

Impact on India-U.S. Ties:

- Allegations of targeted killings could impact India-U.S. ties depending on how they are addressed and perceived by the U.S. system.
- The impact may vary based on public statements versus private discussions.

Strategic Messaging and PR:

- Importance of strategic messaging and PR to uphold India's international image and address criticisms effectively.
- Need for better communication and utilization of multiple channels in a democratic setup to navigate such issues.

CONCLUSION: the debate over targeted killings by governments involves complex legal considerations, international double standards, and political dynamics. While India argues justification under international law and self-defence principles, the impact on diplomatic relations, particularly with the U.S., underscores the need for strategic messaging and effective communication to manage such sensitive issues in the global arena.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Is The Government Justified In Targeting Terrorists Outside The Border?

CONTEXT: the complexities and legal considerations surrounding targeted killings by governments, particularly in the context of recent statements by Indian officials regarding operations in Pakistan, Canada, and the United States, and their potential impacts on international relations and strategic messaging.

Background on Targeted Killings:

- Recent statements by Indian officials regarding targeted killings in Pakistan, Canada, and the United States have sparked discussions on the legality and justification of such actions.

Double Standards in Transnational Killings:

- Comparison with the U.S. and Israel's targeted killings raises questions about double standards in international reactions to such actions.
- Lack of clear legal definitions in international law regarding targeted killings adds to the complexity.

Criteria for Targeted Killings:

- Three factors considered before carrying out targeted killings: terrorist designation, difficulty in extradition, and ongoing engagement in terrorist activities.
- The U.S.'s killing of Osama bin Laden is cited as an example that meets these criteria.

Legality of Indian Actions:

- Targeted killings by India are justified under international law and humanitarian law, particularly in cases of self-defence and pre-emption of imminent threats.
- India's actions in Pakistan are seen in the context of continuous conflict and UN sanctions.

ECONOMICS

Why Have Private Investments Dropped?

CONTEXT: Explores the factors that contribute to the decline in private investments in India, including an examination of the role of private Gross Fixed Capital Formation (GFCF), historical trends in investment patterns, the impact of government policies on private sector confidence, and the broader implications for economic growth and development.

1. Private Investment Decline

- Private Gross Fixed Capital Formation (GFCF) as a percentage of GDP has steadily declined since 2011-12, posing a major economic challenge.
- The government anticipated a boost in private investment after reducing corporate taxes from 30% to 22% in 2019.

2. Understanding GFCF

- GFCF refers to the growth in fixed capital in an economy, crucial for economic growth and improved living standards.
- Private GFCF indicates the willingness of the private sector to invest, a key indicator of economic health.

3. Trends in Private Investment

- Private investment surged post the late-1980s and early-1990s economic reforms, but declined post-liberalization.
- It peaked at around 27% of GDP in 2007-08 but dropped to 19.6% in 2020-21.

4. Reasons for Decline

- Economists attribute the decline to low private consumption expenditure, especially during the pandemic.

- While some advocate boosting consumption to spur investment, historical data shows an inverse relationship between consumption and investment.

5. Structural Issues

- Structural problems and policy uncertainties are cited as core reasons for the decline in private investment.
- The pace of reforms and policy stability significantly influence private sector confidence and investment decisions.

6. Impact of Low Private Investment

- Low private investment can lead to slower economic growth due to a limited fixed capital base.
- Government investment, while compensatory, can also crowd out private investment and may not be as efficient in resource allocation.

CONCLUSION: The decline in private investments in India reflects a complex interplay of factors, including subdued private consumption, policy uncertainties, and historical trends. While government measures like tax reductions aimed to stimulate investment, structural issues persist. Addressing these challenges requires a holistic approach, balancing government interventions with fostering a conducive environment for private sector confidence, essential for sustained economic growth and development.

without its permission, in response to the mosque's appeal against the High Court order.

• Status Quo and Historical Context

- The complex has had a 20-year truce, with Hindus performing puja on Tuesdays and Muslims offering namaaz on Fridays since 2003.
- Historical background includes claims of a temple built in 1034 and a mosque from the reign of Alauddin Khalji, contested by Hindus and Muslims.
- **Muslim Claims and ASI Records**
- Muslims claim no demolition of a place of worship and cite ASI records from 1902 mentioning the Kamal Maula mosque.
- **Previous Surveys and Historical Incidents**
- Surveys during the British regime and subsequent historical incidents, including protests for temple restoration and clashes around ownership, contribute to the complex's contested status.
- **Truce and Legal Battles**
- Legal battles since 1998, including petitions and violence around worship ownership, led to a truce with designated worship days for both communities.

CONCLUSION: The Bhojshala-Kamal Maula complex dispute encapsulates a deep-rooted clash of historical narratives and religious sentiments, mirrored in legal battles and periodic tensions. As the site undergoes archaeological surveys and legal scrutiny, cautionary directives from the Supreme Court highlight the complex nature of this longstanding controversy, underscoring the need for careful consideration and balanced resolution amidst differing claims and perspectives.

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

What Is The Bhojshala-Kamal Maula Complex Dispute?

CONTEXT: The Bhojshala-Kamal Maula complex dispute centers on conflicting claims by Hindus and Muslims regarding the site's historical significance as a temple or mosque, leading to legal battles and periodic tensions over worship rights and archaeological surveys, with the Supreme Court issuing cautionary directives amid the ongoing controversy.

THE GIST

- On March 22, the 13th century Bhojshala-Kamal Maula complex in Madhya Pradesh's Dhar district became the latest site for a "scientific survey" by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI).
- The 'Hindu Front for Justice' petitioned the High Court, claiming the complex was a temple built in 1034 and the mosque here was constructed during the reign of Alauddin Khalji in the 13th century by "destroying and dismantling ancient structures of previously constructed Hindu temples".
- The Muslims claim no existing place of worship was demolished by Maula Kamaluddin Chishti after whom the mosque was named.

MAJOR POINTS

- **Survey and High Court Order**
- The Bhojshala-Kamal Maula complex underwent a "scientific survey" by the ASI following a Madhya Pradesh High Court ruling on March 11, instructing the ASI to conduct the survey within six weeks.
- **Supreme Court Caution**
- The Supreme Court cautioned against physical excavation altering the premises' character and ordered no further action



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ECONOMICS

Pale Green Shoots

CONTEXT: India's recent trends in merchandise exports, highlights a rebound in exports despite global challenges such as geopolitical tensions and disruptions in key shipping routes. It emphasizes the positive impact of resilient demand in major markets and lower commodity prices, while also noting potential risks like rising shipping costs and energy import dependence that could affect trade and economic balances.

MAJOR POINTS

1. Export Performance

- India's merchandise exports reached a 12-month peak of \$41.7 billion last month.
- This figure was slightly lower than March 2023 but higher than February's performance.
- Robust export numbers in the last two months contributed to a significant increase in outbound shipments for the full year.

2. Trade Deficit and Imports

- Imports fell by 6% to \$57.3 billion, leading to an 11-month low in the trade deficit.
- The decline in commodity prices supported this outcome, helping cushion the trade deficit.

3. Global Trade Outlook

- The World Trade Organization (WTO) downgraded its global trade volume growth projection to 2.6% from the earlier 3.3%, citing risks.

- Export volumes from Asia are expected to rise by 3.4% in 2024, with imports also increasing by 5.6%.

4. Challenges and Risks

- Persistent disruptions in key shipping routes like the Suez and Panama Canals pose risks to trade stability.
- Geopolitical tensions and skepticism about global trade benefits in certain countries add to these challenges.

5. Concerns for Exporters

- Exporters are cautious about the optimistic outlook and may need to raise prices due to shipping cost surges.
- Prolonged friction in critical supply routes like the Strait of Hormuz could significantly impact trade and macroeconomic balances.

6. Energy Imports Impact

- India's high energy import dependence exposes it to risks from global energy price fluctuations.
- Spike in crude prices in March led to a record monthly high in the petroleum trade deficit, affecting oil exports negatively.

CONCLUSION: India's recent surge in merchandise exports amidst global challenges showcases resilience in demand and favorable commodity price trends. However, rising shipping costs, geopolitical tensions, and energy import vulnerabilities pose ongoing risks. Exporters must navigate these complexities to sustain and enhance India's trade performance in the coming months.



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