



## **DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 12-05-2025**

### **GS-1**

1. Tapti Basin Mega Recharge Project

### **GS-2**

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## **Tapti Basin Mega Recharge Project**

**Syllabus: GS-1: Indian geography – Water Resource.**

### **Context:**

The **Tapti Basin Mega Recharge Project** represents a significant step in inter-state water cooperation between **Madhya Pradesh (MP)** and **Maharashtra**, aiming to enhance **water security, irrigation, and drinking water supply** in the region.

### **Key Highlights of the Project**

#### ➤ **Objective:**

- Divert water from the **Tapti River** to:
  - Provide **drinking water** to **Nagpur (Maharashtra)**.
  - Support **irrigation** in **southern/southeastern MP** (**Burhanpur, Khandwa**).

#### ➤ **Water Allocation:**

- **Total Utilisation: 31.13 TMC** (Thousand Million Cubic feet).
  - **Maharashtra: 19.36 TMC.**
  - **Madhya Pradesh: 11.76 TMC.**

#### ➤ **Benefits:**

- **Irrigation Coverage: 5.78 lakh acres** (1,23,082 ha in MP; 2,34,706 ha in Maharashtra).
- **Drinking Water:** Critical supply for **Nagpur and nearby regions**.
- **No Displacement:** Uses **3,362 hectares** in MP without village displacement.

#### ➤ **Funding & Cost:**

- **Estimated Cost: ₹19,244 crores.**
- **Central Support:** Expected to fund **90%** of the project.

#### ➤ **Historical Context:**

- **Third major inter-state water project** by MP after:
  1. **Ken-Betwa Link** (with Uttar Pradesh).
  2. **Parvati-Kalisindh-Chambal** (with Rajasthan).

- Originally proposed in the **1990s**, now revived.
- **Governance & Next Steps:**
  - **MoU Signed** during the **MP-Maharashtra Inter-State Control Board** meeting in **Bhopal**.
  - Next meeting scheduled for **October 2023** to discuss implementation.

### Significance

- **Largest Recharge Scheme:** Touted as the "**world's largest recharge project**".
- **Sustainable Development:** Promotes **collaborative water management** amid growing scarcity.
- **Economic & Agricultural Boost:** Expected to improve **farm productivity** and **water availability** in drought-prone areas.

### Challenges & Considerations

- **Implementation Timeline:** Delays possible due to inter-state coordination.
- **Environmental Impact:** Proper assessment needed for river basin health.
- **Funding Clarity:** Awaiting final confirmation of Central government's 90% support.

### Conclusion

The project marks a **major milestone** in India's inter-state water-sharing efforts, aligning with long-term **water security** and **agricultural growth**. If executed efficiently, it could serve as a model for future collaborations.

## South Asia Press Freedom Report 2024-25

### Syllabus: GS-2: Freedom of Press.

#### Context:

The **23rd Annual South Asia Press Freedom Report 2024-25**, titled "*Frontline Democracy: Media and Political Churn*", highlights a concerning decline in press freedom across South Asia, with **India** being a significant part of this trend.

#### Key Findings from the Report:

- **Widespread Media Rights Violations:**

- Over **250 violations** recorded, including **69 journalists jailed/detained** and **20 killed** in the line of duty.
- **India ranked 151st** in global press freedom, while **Bhutan fell to 152nd**, its lowest ever.
- **Pakistan** experienced its **most violent year for journalists in two decades**.

➤ **Major Threats to Press Freedom:**

- **Legal Suppression:** Use of **UAPA, PMLA, sedition, and defamation laws** to silence critical journalists.
  - Example: **Income Tax and ED raids** on dissenting media outlets.
- **Disinformation & AI Risks:**
  - Political "**IT Cells**" amplify **hate speech and fake news**, eroding public trust.
  - **AI-generated content** threatens journalistic authenticity.
- **Crackdown on Independent Media:**
  - **Government ad denials**, digital media restrictions, and **internet shutdowns**.
- **Gender Inequality in Media:**
  - **Low representation of women** in leadership; widespread **gender-based harassment**.

➤ **Consequences of Declining Press Freedom:**

- **Self-Censorship:** Fear of legal action forces media to avoid critical reporting.
- **Democratic Erosion:** Weakens accountability, transparency, and public trust.
- **Shrinking Information Access:** Laws like **DPDP Act 2023** and diluted **RTI provisions** block legitimate public queries.

**Way Forward:**

- **Media Law Reforms:** Pass the **Media Transparency Bill 2024** to curb monopolies and politicized ad distribution.
- **Independent Media Ombudsman:** To review censorship complaints and ensure fair editorial standards.

- **Protect Journalists:** Enact **labour protections** for gig journalists and provide **legal aid/safety mechanisms**.
- **Fact-Checking Infrastructure:** Strengthen independent bodies to counter **election-related disinformation**.
- **Digital Pluralism:** Support **independent and community media** to counter corporate/political dominance.

### Conclusion:

Press freedom in **South Asia** is under **acute strain**, with **India** facing **severe challenges** due to **state control, legal harassment, and disinformation**. To safeguard democracy, **urgent reforms** are needed to protect journalists, ensure transparency, and uphold citizens' **right to information**. A **free press remains the bedrock of participatory governance**.

## Extended Fund Facility

**Syllabus: GS-3: Economy – terms.**

### Context:

The IMF's approval of a \$1 billion loan to Pakistan under its **Extended Fund Facility (EFF)** highlights both the country's ongoing economic struggles and its recent efforts to implement reforms. Here's a breakdown of the key aspects and implications:

### Why Pakistan Needs the IMF Loan

- **Economic Struggles:** Pakistan has faced **stagnant GDP growth** (\$338 billion in 2023, lower than in 2017), **high inflation** (peaking at 29.1% in 2023), and **chronic fiscal deficits**.
- **Structural Weaknesses:** Issues like **low savings, poor infrastructure, rapid population growth, and excessive borrowing** have led to repeated balance-of-payments crises.
- **Dependence on External Funding:** Pakistan has sought **24 IMF bailouts since 1958**, reflecting its inability to achieve self-sustaining growth.

### IMF's Extended Fund Facility (EFF) – Key Features

- Designed for countries with **medium-term structural economic problems**.

- Provides **longer repayment periods** (compared to standard IMF loans) to allow for deep reforms.
- **Conditionalities** require policy changes (e.g., tax reforms, subsidy cuts, privatization).

### Why Did the IMF Approve This Tranche?

- **Progress on Reforms:**
  - **Inflation control** (dropped to **0.3% in April 2025**).
  - **Increased forex reserves** and reduced borrowing.
  - **Tax reforms**, including the **Agricultural Income Tax**, to broaden the revenue base.
- **Commitment to Austerity:** Pakistan has implemented **energy price hikes, subsidy cuts, and fiscal tightening** to meet IMF conditions.

### Concerns & Criticisms

- **Risk of Misuse:** India and other critics argue Pakistan has historically diverted IMF funds to **military spending or debt servicing** rather than structural reforms.
- **Debt Sustainability:** Pakistan's **public debt is over 75% of GDP**, raising questions about repayment capacity.
- **Reform Fatigue:** Past IMF programs saw Pakistan **reverse reforms** after initial compliance, leading to recurring crises.

### What's Next for Pakistan?

- **Continued Reforms Needed:**
  - **Tax system overhaul** (reducing evasion, expanding the tax base).
  - **Privatization of loss-making state enterprises** (e.g., PIA, power sector).
  - **Investment in infrastructure & human capital** to boost productivity.
- **Geopolitical Factors:** Relations with China (CPEC debt) and the Gulf states (financial support) will influence economic stability.
- **Political Stability:** Unrest over austerity measures (e.g., fuel price hikes) could derail reforms.

### Conclusion

While the IMF loan provides **short-term relief**, Pakistan's long-term stability depends on **sustained structural reforms** and reducing reliance on debt. If reforms stall, the country risks **another debt crisis** in the near future. The success of the EFF hinges on **political will and effective implementation**—something Pakistan has struggled with in the past.

## **United Nations Forum on Forests**

**Syllabus: GS-3: Forests and Organisations.**

### **Context:**

- India actively participated in United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF20) held at UN Headquarters, New York, presenting achievements in sustainable forest management.

### **About UNFF**

- **Established:** 2000 by **ECOSOC Resolution 2000/35**
- **Headquarters:** New York, USA (UN HQ)
- **Purpose:** Global platform for **sustainable forest management (SFM)** policy coordination.
- **Key Goals:**
  - Promote conservation & sustainable development of forests.
  - Implement **UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2017–2030**.
  - Combat deforestation through international cooperation.
- **Sessions:**
  - **Odd years:** Technical reviews.
  - **Even years:** Policy decisions.

### **India's Highlights at UNFF20**

- **Progress in Forest Cover:**
  - **25.17%** of India's land now under forest/tree cover.
  - **7.86% increase** in mangrove cover (last decade).
- **Key Initiatives:**

- **Aravalli Green Wall Project:** Ecological restoration.
- **Green India Mission:** 1.55 lakh hectares afforested.
- **Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam:** 1.4 billion seedlings planted.
- **Global Advocacy:**
  - Promoted **International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA)**.
  - Pushed for **Dehradun CLI (2023)** outcomes on forest fires & certification.

### Significance

India showcased leadership in **SFM**, aligning with global goals while emphasizing **community participation** and **biodiversity conservation**.

## Plastic Pollution Crisis in the Himalayas

**Syllabus: GS-3: Plastic Pollution.**

### Context:

The Himalayan Cleanup (THC) 2024 report highlights a severe plastic pollution crisis in the Indian Himalayas, driven primarily by single-use food and beverage packaging.

### Key Findings:

- **Dominance of Single-Use Plastics (SUPs):**
  - Over **80%** of plastic waste comes from food and beverage packaging.
  - Top polluting brands include **Wai Wai, Maggi (instant noodles), Sting, Mountain Dew (energy drinks), and Lays, Bingo (snacks)**.
- **Non-Recyclable Waste Crisis:**
  - **71%** of collected plastic waste is **non-recyclable**, including **multi-layered plastics (MLPs)**.
  - MLPs alone account for **68.5%** of the waste, with no viable recycling market.
- **Health & Environmental Risks:**
  - Toxic chemicals from plastics contaminate fragile Himalayan ecosystems.
  - Children are particularly vulnerable due to littering near schools.

### Policy Recommendations:



- **Ban Multi-Layered Plastics (MLPs):**
  - MLPs are non-recyclable and should be phased out immediately.
- **Enforce Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR):**
  - Brands must take accountability for post-consumer waste.
- **Protect Children from Junk Food Pollution:**
  - Ban sale of energy drinks and junk food near schools to reduce littering.
- **Mandatory Warning Labels:**
  - Front-of-pack labels should highlight environmental and health risks.
- **Shift from Recycling to Sustainable Design:**
  - Adopt a "**design-out-waste**" approach to eliminate non-recyclable packaging.
- **Empower Local Waste Management:**
  - Strengthen rural/municipal bodies with training and infrastructure.

#### **Urgent Need for Action:**

The report calls for **stricter regulations, corporate accountability, and sustainable alternatives** to combat the Himalayan plastic crisis. Without intervention, non-recyclable waste will continue to threaten biodiversity, water sources, and local communities.