

# Topics



- The International Health Regulations (IHR)
- China In europe
- Reduction in Household saving
- Balfour Declaration
- China focus on food security
- India in Africa - critical minerals
- Mad honey
- Mains



By saurabh Pandey



# Target Mains -2024/25

**Q “ Critical Minerals can shape india’s diplomacy in Africa” Discuss**

प्रश्न "महत्वपूर्ण खनिज अफ्रीका में भारत की कूटनीति को आकार दे सकते हैं" चर्चा करें

**Connect with sir  
9057921649**

**send your answer - Saurabh pandey upsc  
telegram channel**

# The hindu session pdf

**Download the hindu session pdf**

**Telegram link in description box**

**Download the hindu pdf - <https://t.me/gesreporter>**



## Kunal Roy

Q =

With growing closeness between Russia and China, India's depth of dilemma will increase. Discuss.

(Please don't write anything in this space)

In order to emerge as a superpower in Asia, India needs to have strong friends like Russia, whose growing closeness with China, is a dilemma for India.

The Indo-Russia ties originated during the Cold-war era when India maintained its Non-Alignment stance but leaned towards USSR due to its support for India in the Kashmir issue and economic cooperation.

Post-Soviet era, Russia continued good relations and strategic partnership with India.

But, with the changing dynamics of Asian geopolitics, we can see that our friend has held/shaken one hand with our foe-China.

China has not always been a good neighbour to us as we have been to them. From pushing boundaries at the LOC, to pushing buttons of our

(Please don't write anything in this space)

(Please don't write anything in this space)

(Please don't write anything in this space)

brother nation Pakistan, by wedging them against us with arms and ammunitions.

Post Russia-Ukraine war, the European and the American nations have put economic sanctions on Russia. They have ban import of Russian oil and Russian goods, also ceasing their reserves with the World Bank. Russia has found a trade partner with China. China being a manufacturing economy, imports resources from Russia, keeping its economy afloat.

They both have joined hands in China's Built and Road initiative. Their trade

value has reached \$240 billion in 2023. Russia is also predominantly dependent on China for exports of energy and critical inputs.

Russia was the largest crude oil supplier to China with volume averaging 2.1 million barrels a day in 2023.

(Please don't  
write anything  
in this space)

Russia and China are trying to form a power bloc against the west, both being the members of BRICS, SCO, ~~As~~ Asian Development Bank, to resist their influence and hegemony.

India has also been a close friend and partner to Russia. India at many incidents has acted as a peace negotiator between Russia and other nation.

The bilateral trade between India and Russia had reached \$45 Billion in December, 2022.

India as always, has tried to maintain a balance between the west and Russia, without affecting its own sovereignty. But it will be a huge dilemma for India, if Russia decides to side with China, causing disruption in the geopolitics and security on land as well as in water.

(Please don't  
write anything  
in this space)





Google Play

Games

**Apps**

Movies & TV

Books

Kids



# Saurabh Pandey CSE

Saurabh Pandey CSE

4.8★

73 reviews

1K+

Downloads



Everyone ⓘ



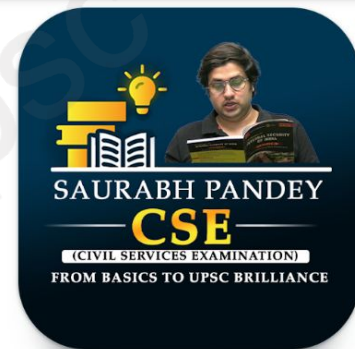
Share



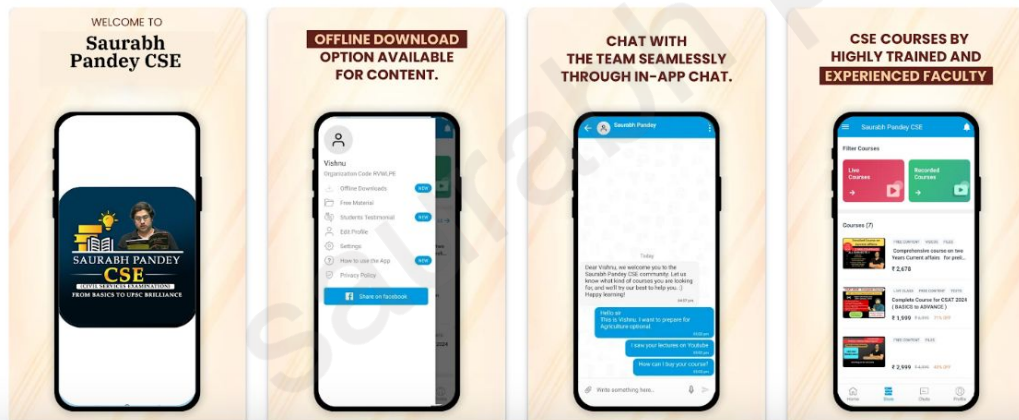
Add to wishlist



You don't have any devices



**Visit -saurabhpandeyupsc.com**



App support ▾

# At the upcoming World Health Assembly, a toolkit to prepare nations for pandemics



**Ramya Kannan**

When the World Health Assembly (WHA) meets next week, it will create a historic milestone for global public health. A package of amendments, based on 300 proposals made by member countries after the pandemic, will be the star of the agenda. These amendments to the International Health Regulations will target improving the ability of countries to respond to public health emergencies of international concern.

The International Health Regulations (IHR), first adopted by the WHA in 1969 and last revised in 2005, were conceived to maximise collective efforts to manage public health events while minimising disruption to travel and trade. There are 196 State Parties to the IHR, comprising all 194 WHO Member States plus Liechtenstein and the Holy See. The IHR provides an overarching legal framework that defines countries' rights and obligations in handling public health events and emergencies that have the potential to cross borders. They also introduce important safeguards to protect the rights of travellers and other persons in relation to the treatment of personal data, in-



Lockdown during the COVID-19 pandemic. GETTY IMAGES

formed consent and non-discrimination in the application of health measures under the Regulations. Therefore, the IHR is an instrument of international law that is legally binding on 196 countries.

## Surveillance systems

The IHR requires that all countries have surveillance systems capable of detecting acute public health events in a timely manner, assessing these events, reporting to the WHO those that may constitute a public health emergency of international concern, and responding to public health risks and emergencies. The goal of country implementation is to limit the spread of health risks to neighbouring countries and

to prevent unwarranted travel and trade restrictions.

WHO Director General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said: "The IHR has served for 20 years, but our experience in using this vital tool for the management of multiple public health emergencies, including COVID-19, has demonstrated important areas in which they could be strengthened."

Of the amendments, he added: "This is historic. Countries have come together around improved international mechanisms to protect every person in the world and future generations from the impact of epidemics and pandemics."

IHR Working Group co-chair Ashley Bloomfield hoped the amendments would hold out. "It has been a long process to achieve consensus on the majority of amendments. This shows the importance the world places on being able to prepare effectively for and respond better to epidemic and pandemic threats, and that there is strong international consensus on how to go about international public health protection." This process has been running in parallel with an intergovernmental process to develop an international agreement on pandemic pre-

vention, preparedness, and response. The draft pandemic agreement, with its own Member State-led negotiating process, is also due to go to the World Health Assembly.

## Building capacities

A potential new pandemic agreement and the amended IHRs would be complementary to international instruments designed and negotiated by Member States to help countries protect their peoples better from future pandemic threats. The IHR focuses on building countries' capacities to detect and respond to public health events, which could take on international dimensions, while the draft pandemic accord focuses on a coordinated international response to pandemics, with equitable access to vaccines, therapeutics, and diagnostics at the centre.

([ramya.kannan@thehindu.co.in](mailto:ramya.kannan@thehindu.co.in))

## For feedback and suggestions

for 'Science', please write to [science@thehindu.co.in](mailto:science@thehindu.co.in) with the subject 'Daily page'

## **The International Health Regulations (IHR)**

- **The International Health Regulations (IHR), first adopted by the WHA in 1969 and last revised in 2005, were conceived to maximise collective efforts to manage public health events while minimising disruption to travel and trade.**
- **There are 196 State Parties to the IHR, comprising all 194 WHO Member States plus Liechtenstein and the Holy See.**
- **The IHR provides an overarching legal framework that defines countries' rights and obligations in handling public health events and emergencies that have the potential to cross borders.**



Table 5.1 Seven strategic actions to guide IHR (2005) implementation<sup>a</sup>



	Strategic action	Goal
<b>GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP</b>		
<b>1</b>	<b>Foster global partnerships</b>	WHO, all countries and all relevant sectors (e.g. health, agriculture, travel, trade, education, defence) are aware of the new rules and collaborate to provide the best available technical support and, where needed, mobilize the necessary resources for effective implementation of IHR (2005).
<b>STRENGTHEN NATIONAL CAPACITY</b>		
<b>2</b>	<b>Strengthen national disease surveillance, prevention, control and response systems</b>	Each country assesses its national resources in disease surveillance and response and develops national action plans to implement and meet IHR (2005) requirements, thus permitting rapid detection and response to the risk of international disease spread.
<b>3</b>	<b>Strengthen public health security in travel and transport</b>	The risk of international spread of disease is minimized through effective permanent public health measures and response capacity at designated airports, ports and ground crossings in all countries.
<b>PREVENT AND RESPOND TO INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCIES</b>		
<b>4</b>	<b>Strengthen WHO global alert and response systems</b>	Timely and effective coordinated response to international public health risks and public health emergencies of international concern.
<b>5</b>	<b>Strengthen the management of specific risks</b>	Systematic international and national management of the risks known to threaten international health security, such as influenza, meningitis, yellow fever, SARS, poliomyelitis, food contamination, chemical and radioactive substances.
<b>LEGAL ISSUES AND MONITORING</b>		
<b>6</b>	<b>Sustain rights, obligations and procedures</b>	New legal mechanisms as set out in the Regulations are fully developed and upheld; all professionals involved in implementing IHR (2005) have a clear understanding of, and sustain, the new rights, obligations and procedures laid out in the Regulations.
<b>7</b>	<b>Conduct studies and monitor progress</b>	Indicators are identified and collected regularly to monitor and evaluate IHR (2005) implementation at national and international levels. WHO Secretariat reports on progress to the World Health Assembly. Specific studies are proposed to facilitate and improve implementation of the Regulations.

<sup>a</sup> Strategic actions 2–5 are key because they call for significantly strengthened national and global efforts.

# International Health Regulations

## Protecting People Every Day

The **International Health Regulations (IHR)** represent an agreement between 196 countries, including all WHO Member States, to work together for global health security. Under the IHR, all countries must report events of international public health importance.

### The IHR require that all countries can:



#### Detect

Make sure surveillance systems and laboratories can detect potential threats



#### Assess

Work together with other countries to make decisions in public health emergencies



#### Report

Report specific diseases, plus any potential international public health emergencies



#### Respond

Respond to public health events



We share a responsibility to protect our world from outbreaks of infectious diseases and other health threats. The goal of the IHR is to stop events in their tracks before they become international emergencies.

- **They also introduce important safeguards to protect the rights of travellers and other persons in relation to the treatment of personal data, informed consent and non-discrimination in the application of health measures under the Regulations.**
- **Therefore, the IHR is an instrument of international law that is legally binding on 196 countries.**

- **The IHR requires that all countries have surveillance systems capable of detecting acute public health events in a timely manner, assessing these events, reporting to the WHO those that may constitute a public health emergency of international concern, and responding to public health risks and emergencies.**
- **The goal of country implementation is to limit the spread of health risks to neighbouring countries and to prevent unwarranted travel and trade restrictions.**

# A visit to preserve China's interests in Europe



**T**he Chinese President Xi Jinping's first trip to Europe (except Russia) in five years, earlier this month, was carefully constructed as evidenced by his ports of call – France, Serbia and Hungary. The first is a leading proponent of the notion of “strategic autonomy” of Europe, the second is a non-North Atlantic Treaty Organization, non-European Union (EU) outlier close to Russia, and the third is a pro-Russian maverick that has blocked many resolutions criticising China in EU.

## World events, visit's goals

The COVID-19 pandemic had the effect of closing off China to the rest of the world for an extended period, forcing Beijing to re-adjust its global investment goals because of economic problems. Indeed, Mr. Xi did not travel abroad for two and a half years and has not been too frequent a traveller even after the restrictions were lifted last year.

In this period, the world had been turned upside down geopolitically by the Russian invasion of Ukraine. In the meantime, the China-United States trade war has morphed into a technology war and the Biden administration has broadened and intensified the technology restriction regime on China. In the U.S. and Europe, accusations of Chinese dumping of cheap goods have intensified and there are calls for retaliation. A lot of them focus on electric vehicles (EV), an area where China has emerged a world leader.

Mr. Xi had three goals – to prevent the EU from getting too close to the U.S., to avert a trade standoff with EU and to bolster China's standing in Europe. He has had to do all this in the face of the fallout of the Russian invasion of Ukraine that has hardened the western alliance against Russia, with China having to sustain some collateral damage. It has also had an indirect influence in shaping negative EU views on China's trade policy.



**Manoj Joshi**

is Distinguished Fellow, Observer Research Foundation, New Delhi

The Chinese President's trip to Europe was a carefully constructed one in the face of adverse geopolitics

The goals of French President Emmanuel Macron were fairly straightforward – to promote French trade interests as well as to push China to stop supplying weapons components to Moscow. He did his own messaging by meeting the Tibetan Sikyong (Prime Minister of the government in exile) Penpa Tsering on the eve of the Xi visit.

In Paris, Mr. Xi also met with the European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen who has advocated a policy of “de-risking” from China by reducing dependence on Chinese imports and technology. Both Mr. Macron and the EU chief urged China to ensure a more balanced trade with Europe.

France is united with the EU on the issue of the cost advantage that Chinese EVs have over European cars. While the Chinese are keen to ride on the strength of their EV industry, the Europeans are equally keen to protect their car manufacturers.

In 2019, the EU had recast its doctrine to define China as “a partner for cooperation, an economic competitor and a systemic rival.” A sceptical Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi has described it as driving to a crossing where the lights are simultaneously green, yellow and red. But this somewhat convoluted formulation seeks to balance Europe's China policy between the economic opportunity it sees there, with the risks from China's economic policy and its national security postures.

## The focus on Hungary

Mr. Xi got a warm welcome in Serbia and Hungary which do not otherwise attract top-drawer visitors. Chinese foreign direct investment in Serbia is growing and it has invested \$5.5 billion in the country, mainly in copper mining and a steel processing plant. The big investment common to both countries has been in the upgradation of the Belgrade-Budapest high-speed railway project, and there are plans for more roads, tunnels and bridges with Chinese

investment. Newer plans exist for railways to link Chinese factories in eastern Hungary to markets in western Europe. CATL, the giant Chinese battery company, is setting up a plant to supply German EV makers. The Chinese EV giant, BYD, which hopes to capture the European market, has chosen the southern Hungarian city Szeged to set up its first factory in Europe.

Hungary is today the closest ally of China within the EU and it provides China access to the world's largest trading bloc. Its world view is at odds with its Eastern European neighbours who are wary of Russian aggressiveness, and by extension, China.

## Between eastern and western Europe

China had sought to develop ties with eastern European countries through the so-called 17+1 China and Eastern Europe (CEE) community to serve as a gateway for markets in rich western Europe. However, this has now fallen victim to the Ukraine war which has strained ties between China and many of the Eastern European countries which are backing Ukraine. In all fairness the CEE had begun to pall even before the invasion of Ukraine as the countries realised that despite promises, the Chinese remained focused on western Europe.

Europe itself figures large in Beijing's world view. Among the key Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) projects have been railways linking China to Europe via Central Asia. With the help of high-speed trains, the Chinese aim is to crunch the overland distance between themselves and prosperous Europe, which they see as a market for their increasingly sophisticated products.

Given the global developments, Mr. Xi's visit can be seen as a defensive one, aimed at preserving Chinese interests in Europe in the face of adverse geopolitics. But visits to Hungary and Serbia, though high on the friendship front, are not likely to break much ice with the rest of Europe which is increasingly sceptical of China.



# China In Europe



- **China had sought to develop ties with eastern European countries through the so-called 17+1 China and Eastern Europe (CEE) community to serve as a gateway for markets in rich western Europe.**
- **However, this has now fallen victim to the Ukraine war which has strained ties between China and many of the Eastern European countries which are backing Ukraine.**
- **In all fairness the CEE had begun to pall even before the invasion of Ukraine as the countries realised that despite promises, the Chinese remained focused on western Europe. Europe itself figures large in Beijing's world view.**

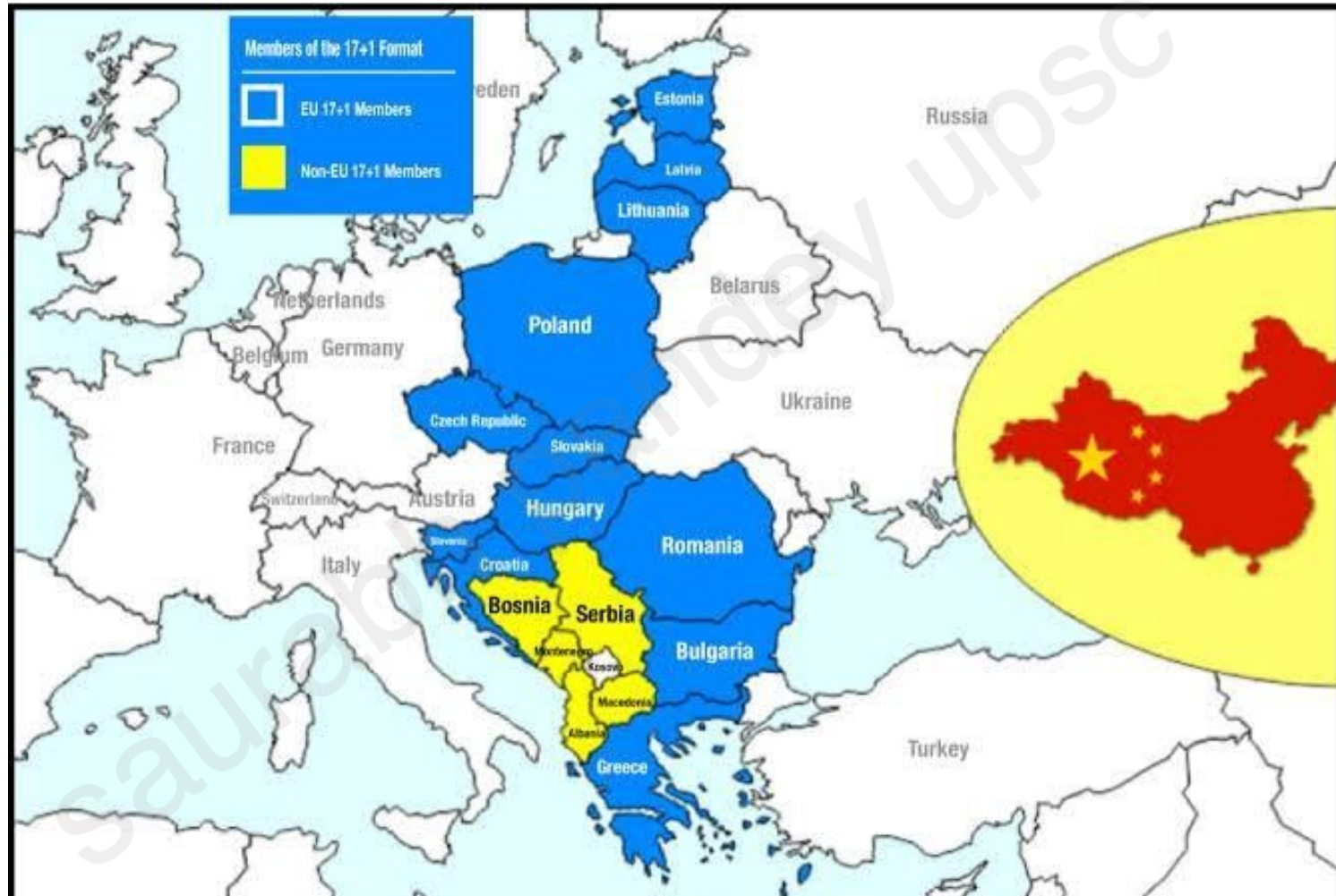




Figure 1: The Chongqing-Duisburg Trans-Eurasia Railroad & Schengen Area

#### TRANS-EURASIA RAILROAD

The 11,179-kilometre rail line is the most important connection to Europe. Launched in 2011 by a joint venture with Germany, China, Kazakhstan, and Russia, the rail goes from the city of Chongqing in southwestern China to Duisburg, Germany.

#### SCHENGEN AREA

It is an area without internal borders, within which citizens, many non-EU nationals, business people and tourists can freely circulate without being subjected to border checks. Since 1985, it has gradually grown and encompasses today almost all EU States and a few associated non-EU countries.

[http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/borders-and-visas/schengen/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/borders-and-visas/schengen/index_en.htm)

- **Among the key Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) projects have been railways linking China to Europe via Central Asia.**
- **With the help of high-speed trains, the Chinese aim is to crunch the overland distance between themselves and prosperous Europe, which they see as a market for their increasingly sophisticated products.**
- **Given the global developments, Mr. Xi's visit can be seen as a defensive one, aimed at preserving Chinese interests in Europe in the face of adverse geopolitics.**

**Link in description**

**Msg -9057921649**

**Download - saurabh  
pandey cse app**

**Visit -  
saurabhpandeyupsc.com**

**NEW BATCH LAUNCHED**

**Connect with sir 90579 21649**

**Complete Agriculture  
optional**

**Paper 1 and Paper 2**

**Live classes**

**Starting 1st July**

**Score 300+**





# Rising debt strains household savings

Household net financial savings to GDP ratio have declined due to increased borrowing and structural shifts rather than a mere change in savings pattern: there's a need for macroeconomic policies to support household income growth to reduce its own financial stress and stabilise the macroeconomy



## ECONOMIC NOTES

Zico Dasgupta  
Srinivas RagHAVendra

The bone of contention in the recent debate has been the drastic fall in household net financial savings to GDP ratio during 2022-23 on account of a higher borrowing to GDP ratio. In response to our previous article 'On the Fall in Household Savings' (The Hindu, April 21, 2024), the Chief Economic Advisor (CEA) to the Government of India has interpreted this trend as a mere shift in the composition of household savings, where households are argued to incur greater borrowing (or reduce net financial savings) solely to finance higher physical savings (investment). In this article, we argue that this interpretation is inconsistent with broad trends and highlight some signs of structural shifts in the Indian economy.

**Not a mere change in savings pattern**  
The household savings to GDP ratio is the sum of its net financial savings to GDP ratio, physical savings to GDP ratio and gold and ornaments. A mere shift in the composition of savings would have kept the overall household savings to GDP ratio unchanged, with lower net financial savings to GDP ratio or higher borrowing to GDP ratio being fully offset by higher physical savings to GDP ratio. Figure 1 shows the extent to which these ratios changed during 2022-23 as compared to 2021-22 and indicates a contrary phenomenon.

The net financial savings to GDP ratio declined by 2.5 percentage points, whereas the physical savings to GDP ratio increased only by 0.3 percentage points. The household borrowing to GDP ratio increased by 2 percentage points, significantly more than the increase in the physical savings to GDP ratio. With the gold savings to GDP ratio remaining largely unchanged, the household savings to GDP ratio declined by 1.7 percentage points. In short, the phenomenon of a household's higher borrowing to GDP ratio cannot be explained exclusively in terms of change in savings composition. In our last article, we argued that lower net financial savings to GDP ratio and higher borrowing to GDP ratio largely reflected a household's need to finance greater interest payment commitments at a given income amid higher interest rates and debt-income ratio, leading to an increase in financial distress of the household.

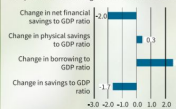
Surprisingly, the CEA's response is based on the analysis of absolute nominal numbers of household total savings. He argues that the nominal value of a household's total savings has increased, as the nominal value of physical savings has increased more than the fall in nominal value of net financial savings. However, this trend merely shows that the nominal (inflation unadjusted) growth rate of total household savings has been positive during 2022-23, which has hardly been a topic of contention. A positive nominal growth rate of savings neither addresses the historic fall in net-financial savings to GDP ratio nor refutes our explanation of the higher borrowing to GDP ratio and the phenomenon of greater interest payment burden of the household that we pointed out.

The phenomenon of household's higher interest payment burdens and debt-income ratio in the post-COVID period, however, brings forth two

## Rising interest, falling savings

Challenges ahead include narrowing the gap between income growth and lending rates, and averting potential decreases in aggregate demand

**Declining trends: Figure 1a** Changes in the components of the savings to GDP ratio in FY21-FY23



**Table 1a: Lending rate and the household GNI growth (%)**

	2019-20 to 2021-22	2019-20 to 2022-23
Avg. lending rate (RBI)	9.3	8.4
Average household GNI growth rate	8.0	9.3
Average household GNI growth rate minus Average WALK*	-1.3	-0.1

**Table 1b: Lending rate and the GNI growth (%)**

	2003-04 to 2007-08	2019-20 to 2021-22
Average Lending rate (RBI)	11.8	8.8
Average GNI** growth rate	14.5	8.7
Average GNI growth rate minus Avg. lending rate	2.7	-0.1



the previous episodes when household borrowing increased?

### Signs of structural shift

Since the share of interest payment in household income (interest payment burden) is the product of interest rate and debt-income ratio, any increase in the latter would lead to a greater interest payment-income ratio at a given interest rate. The recent period has been associated with a sharp rise in both these variables. The debt-income ratio of the household can potentially change through two distinct factors. The first factor pertains to a higher net borrowing-income ratio of the household, where net borrowing is the difference between total borrowing and interest payments. Household's stock of debt would rise at any given level of income if they decide to increase their net borrowing for financing higher investment or consumption.

The second route involves factors that are largely exogenous to the household's decisions namely, the interest rate on the outstanding debt and the nominal income growth rate of the household. Any increase in interest rates or reduction in nominal income growth rate increases a household's debt-income ratio during a particular period. If the growth in interest payments outweighs income growth, the debt-income ratio will continue to grow. Such mechanism can be described as "Fisher dynamics" following Irving Fisher, who explained the phenomenon of rising debt-income ratio in terms of changes in interest rate and nominal

income growth rate. The post-COVID period has seen a sharp rise in the ratio between nominal debt and nominal income of the household, largely on account of a lower nominal income growth rate. The debt-income ratio as an indicator of household leverage (or repayment capacity) has received scrutiny, particularly after the global financial crisis. Notwithstanding the recent rise in the lending rate that has contributed to the rise in debt-income ratio, the key structural feature that has emerged in the recent period is that the nominal income growth rate has often been lower than the weighted average lending rate. This seems to be the very mechanism by which a household's interest payment burden and debt-income ratio have increased.

Table 1a shows that the average value of the growth rate of household disposable income has been lower than the weighted average lending rate (WALK) for the period 2019-20 to 2022-23. The average value of the lending rate for this period is constructed from the Reserve Bank of India's quarterly figures. The household disposable income data is not yet available for 2022-24. However, the gross national income (GNI) growth rate, which is closely associated with the growth rate of household disposable income in the recent period, has recorded the lower than the average WALK for this year. The emerging features seem to stand in contrast with previous episodes of high household borrowing, like the period of 2003-04 to 2007-08. While a long-run comparison becomes difficult

average GNI growth rate was greater than the average lending rate from 2003-04 to 2007-08. In contrast, the average GNI growth rate was lower than the average lending rate during the period 2019-20 to 2022-23.

### Macroeconomic challenges

The conforning news at the present juncture is that India's debt servicing ratio is still lower than that of many countries. But with the emergence of the Fisher dynamics, there are at least two unique challenges that confront the Indian economy.

The first challenge pertains to decreasing the gap between interest rate and income growth and slowing down the growth of the debt-income ratio of the household. While the level of debt-income ratio presently remains low, frequent episodes of income growth lagging behind the lending rate can quickly push up household's interest payment burdens.

The second challenge involves stemming the possibility of downward adjustment of aggregate demand amid high interest payment and debt commitments of the household. Such possibilities emerge when households tend to maintain stock-flow norms in debt and wealth management by curtailing their consumption expenditure. The sharp decline in the consumption to GDP ratio in 2023-24 points towards such a possibility.

These challenges point towards the need to include an additional macroeconomic policy target to stimulate

## THE GIST

➤ The household net financial savings to GDP ratio fell significantly in 2022-23, primarily due to a higher borrowing to GDP ratio. This decline cannot be solely explained by a shift in the composition of savings.

➤ The increase in household borrowing has led to a higher debt-income ratio, resulting in greater interest payment burdens. This trend has been particularly pronounced in the post-COVID period.

➤ Unlike previous periods of high household borrowing, the current period is characterised by a lower nominal income growth rate compared to the average lending rate, leading to increased financial stress on households.

➤ There is a need for macroeconomic policies that not only address inflation and government debt targets but also stimulate and support household income growth to mitigate these emerging challenges.

Sources for the Figure and Tables: Figure 1a: RBI, Table 1a: RBI, Table 1b: RBI, National Accounts Statistics.

\* Gross domestic income / Weighted average lending rate / Gross national income

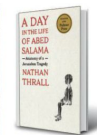
# Reduction in Household saving

- The household net financial savings to GDP ratio fell significantly in 2022-23, primarily due to a higher borrowing to GDP ratio.
- This decline cannot be solely explained by a shift in the composition of savings.
- The increase in household borrowing has led to a higher debt-income ratio, resulting in greater interest payment burdens.
- This trend has been particularly pronounced in the post-COVID period.

- Unlike previous periods of high household borrowing, the current period is characterised by a lower nominal income growth rate compared to the average lending rate, leading to increased financial stress on households.
- There is a need for macroeconomic policies that not only address inflation and government debt targets but also stimulate and support household income growth to mitigate these emerging challenges.



**Shadow of conflict:** People walk in an alley of the Palestinian refugee camp of Shatila in Beirut's southern suburb, AFP



## The 'Oslo trap', a number of wars and other challenges in the Israel-Palestine conflict

Two writers explain the reasons why peace is elusive in this West Asian region; while Rashid Khalidi gives a historical sketch of Israel's settler colonialism, Nathan Thrall writes about the impact of this colonial rule on ordinary Palestinian lives

Stamby Johny

**I**t was a wet, grey, and extremely windy February morning in 2002, Nathan Thrall writes in *A Day in the Life of Abed Salama: Anatomy of a Jerusalem Tragedy*. On that fateful day, a trailer truck flipped on an old bus carrying Palestinian children on a highway in the Israeli-controlled Area C of the West Bank outside Jerusalem. The children, from a private kindergarten, were on the way to a local play centre. A few minutes after the accident, Abed got a call from his nephew. "Did Milad go to the picnic today? There was an accident with a school bus near Jaba."

Milad Salama is Abed's five-and-a-half-year-old son. Earlier in the day, Milad's mother, Haifa, had helped her boy into his school uniform: "grey pants, a white-collared shirt and a grey sweater". After the crash, Milad's school bus rolled over on the road, doors against the ground. The fire soon engulfed the bus. Six children and a teacher were killed and many more were injured.

Thrall, a Jewish American journalist who lives in Jerusalem, follows Abed's frantic efforts to trace his son. And through the story of the accident and that of Abed, Thrall writes about the day to day life of Palestinians under the many yokes of the Israeli occupation in a non-sentimental yet powerful prose. The bus is "crackling with flames," writes Thrall. A crowd had gathered around the bus and was screaming and shooting. The site of the accident was a few minutes

drive away from a Jewish settlement and seconds from the Jaba checkpoint. It would take time for rescue workers to reach the site, navigating the morning traffic and Israeli checkpoints. An Israeli ambulance or soldiers could have reached the site in minutes. But about half an hour after the crash, Thrall writes, "not a single firefighter, police officer or soldier had come."

Thrall originally wrote about the accident in March 2002 in 'The New York Review of Books' in a 20,000-word essay. Abed Salama's quest to find his son "lays bare the reality of Palestinian life under Israeli rule," he wrote in the article. Later, he expanded the article into a book, with more details on the experiences of those whose children were there on the bus. The book won the Pulitzer Prize for non-fiction this year.

### Busting myths

Thrall is a familiar name for Israel-Palestine watchers. A former research director at the International Crisis Group, Thrall's previous book, *The Only Language They Understand*, is one of the most authoritative works on the Israel-Palestine conflict of recent times. The popular narrative about the Israel-Palestine conflict is that "terrorism" on the Palestinian side has been a major stumbling block for a two state solution. Thrall details the concessions the Palestinians made in *The Only Language*. "In the 1948 war, Israel captured 22% more territories than what even the UN had proposed for an

independent Jewish nation." When the PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization) was formed, its goal was to "liberate" all of Palestine. Later, the PLO settled for an independent Palestinian nation within the 1967 border – which is only 22% of the historical Palestine.

When the Oslo Accords were signed and a provisional government was formed in parts of the West Bank and Gaza, the Palestinian leadership excluded Jerusalem from the process, allowing Israel to continue the occupation of East Jerusalem. But even with these compromises, the Palestinians failed to move towards sovereignty. Almost a quarter century after the Oslo Accords, the Palestinian Authority controls only parts of a restive West Bank, with Israel building more settlements in the occupied land. Gaza has been blockaded from all sides. That's why Thrall calls the Oslo process the "Oslo trap." It was against this background the October 7, 2023 attack by Hamas in Israel unfolded.

### Brutal occupation

For the Israeli government, Hamas represents Palestinian terrorism, and the government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed to "crush" Hamas. Israel has killed over 35,000 Palestinians in Gaza since October 7 and wounded tens of thousands more. Israel claims that it is a victim of Hamas terrorism. What Israel doesn't want to talk about is its brutal, illegal occupation of the Palestinian territories. While Hamas's attack on Israeli civilians should be

condemned, any understanding of the Israel-Palestine conflict without the historical context would not be complete.

Rashid Khalidi, a Palestinian American historian, attempts to complete the circle by providing a compelling account of the loss of Palestine in his 2020 book, *The Hundred Years of War on Palestine: A History of Settler Colonial Conquest and Resistance*. Often provocative, sharp and insightful, Khalidi's account, rich with interesting historical anecdotes and personal history, stretches from the Balfour Declaration of 1917 to the then U.S. President Donald Trump's decision to recognise Jerusalem as Israel's capital in 2017.

According to Khalidi, there were six declarations of war on Palestinians during this time: the Balfour Declaration; the declaration of the state of Israel in 1948; the Security Council Resolution 242, which was passed after the 1967 war; Israel's attack on Lebanon in 1982 to oust the PLO from the country; the Oslo Accords; and, the sixth, Ariel Sharon's visit to the Haram esh-Sharif (Temple Mount) in 2000, which triggered the Second Intifada.

When Khalidi gives a historical sketch of Israel's settler colonialism, Thrall writes about the impact of this colonial rule on ordinary Palestinian lives.

In these three books, the writers show that history and faith have led with personal suffering which much of the international community has conveniently ignored for the past seven decades.

# Balfour Declaration

- Balfour Declaration, (November 2, 1917), statement of British support for “the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people.”
- It was made in a letter from Arthur James Balfour, the British foreign secretary, to Lionel Walter Rothschild, 2nd Baron Rothschild (of Tring), a leader of the Anglo-Jewish community.



# China's ambitious food security plan faces land, soil and water woes

The Chinese government envisions 92% self-sufficiency in staple grains and beans by 2033, up from 84% during 2021-2023; food security has long been a priority for China, which must feed nearly 20% of the global population with less than 9% of its arable land and 6% of its water resources

## NEWS ANALYSIS

Reuters  
BEIJING

China, the world's biggest agriculture importer, has set targets to drastically reduce its reliance on overseas buying over the coming decade in line with its push for food security, but they will be exceedingly difficult to meet, experts say.

With limited land and water, China will have to sharply increase farming productivity through technology, including genetically modified crops, and expand area under cultivation to meet Beijing's 10-year projections.

The government envisions 92% self-sufficiency in staple grains and beans by 2033, up from 84% during 2021-2023, according to a document released in late April, on a path towards President Xi Jinping's goal to become an "agriculture power" by the middle of the century.

Cutting the country's imports would be a blow to producers from the U.S. to Brazil and Indonesia, who have expanded capacity to meet demand from China's 1.4 billion people, the world's largest market for soybeans, meat and grains.

Over the 10 years to 2033 the agriculture ministry projects a 75% plunge



**Wake-up call:** Urgency to cut imports grew after supply-chain disruptions during pandemic. REUTERS

in corn imports to 6.8 million tons and a 60% drop for wheat to 4.85 million tons.

For soybeans, the biggest item on a farm import bill that totalled \$234 billion last year, Beijing sees imports falling 21% to 78.7 million tons in a decade.

Those targets defy the trends of the past decade in which grains and oilseed imports have surged 87%.

"Forecasting a sharp reversal where in 10 years the country will be importing less than it does today seems questionable," said Darin Friedrichs, co-founder of Sitiona Consulting.

China will struggle to meet its targets mainly due to a lack of land and water, five analysts and industry executives say.

In stark contrast to Bei-



Farms in China average 0.65 hectare, compared to 187 hectare in the U.S. and 60 hectares in Germany; China is gradually shifting towards a consolidation of its fragmented farms

ing's projections, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) sees China's corn imports in 2033/34 roughly in line with current levels and wheat imports declining 20%. In the biggest divergence, USDA expects soybean imports to rise 39%.

**National security**  
Food security has long

governments to include food security in their economic and development plans. That will add to other efforts to bolster food production, including stepped up grains insurance cover for farmers to protect their income, announced this week.

Last month, Beijing launched a drive to raise grain output by at least 50 million tons by 2030, spotlighting upgraded farmland and investments in seed technology for higher crop yields and quality.

### Soil challenges

China increased production of corn, soybeans, potatoes and oilseeds last year after expanding planting on previously uncultivated land and encouraging farmers to switch from cash crops to staples.

However, even as the world's no. 2 corn producer harvested a record 288.84 million metric tons last year, imports surged to a near-record 27.1 million tons, driven by traders' preference for corn from overseas that is often higher quality and cheaper.

Production growth has hit a bottleneck due to insufficient arable land, small production scale and a lack of farmers and agriculture technology, state media reported.

China's arable land per capita is less than one-third the level in Brazil and one-sixth the level of the

U.S., World Bank data from 2021 shows. Degraded and polluted soil in a country where a significant share of land is either rocky mountains or desert leave it with little space for expansion.

The government, which has increasingly called for protection of its fertile black soil, is set to complete a four-year soil survey in 2025. The last survey, in 2014, found that 40% of its arable land was degraded from overuse of chemicals and heavy metal contamination.

To compensate, China is pouring millions of dollars into research of farming water-intensive crops such as rice in the deserts of Inner Mongolia and Xinjiang.

By turning sand into soil and breeding saline-tolerant crops, it aims to develop more farmland, a strategy industry executives say will take time and heavy investments in fertiliser, irrigation and biotechnology.

One obstacle is China's predominance of small farms, run by aging owners who may not be able to afford or operate machinery such as drone sprayers, more productive seeds and technology such as big data and AI.

Farms in China average 0.65 hectares, compared to 187 hectares in the U.S. and 60 hectares in Germany. China is gradually shifting towards a consolidation of its fragmented farms.

# China Focus On food security

- china, the world's biggest agriculture importer, has set targets to drastically reduce its reliance on overseas buying over the coming decade in line with its push for food security, but they will be exceedingly difficult to meet.
- On June 1, China will implement a food security law that calls for absolute self-sufficiency in staple grains and requires local governments to include food security in their economic and development plans.
- That will add to other efforts to bolster food production, including stepped up grains insurance cover for farmers to protect their income, announced this week.

- **Last month, Beijing launched a drive to raise grain output by at least 50 million tons by 2030, spotlighting upgraded farmland and investments in seed technology for higher crop yields and quality.**
- **Soil challenges China increased production of corn, soybeans, potatoes and oilseeds last year after expanding planting on previously uncultivated land and encouraging farmers to switch from cash crops to staples**

- **To compensate, China is pouring millions of dollars into research of farming water-intensive crops such as rice in the deserts of Inner Mongolia and Xinjiang.**
- **By turning sand into soil and breeding saline-tolerant crops, it aims to develop more farmland, a strategy industry executives say will take time and heavy investments in fertiliser, irrigation and biotechnology.**
- **One obstacle is China's predominance of small farms, run by aging owners who may not be able to afford or operate machinery such as drone sprayers, more productive seeds and technology such as big data and AI.**

# India to ramp up Africa mineral play



**Stepping up:** China currently controls an estimated 8% of Africa's resources, says lobby groups. REUTERS

## Abhishek Law

NEW DELHI

India is looking to ramp-up its critical mineral play in Africa as it looks to resource securitisation and and upsetting the Chinese apple-cart in the region. There are MoUs in place with at least eight African nations for mining collaborations, including access to resources.

The nations include South Africa, Mozambique, Congo, Tanzania, Zambia, Malawi , Republic of Cote d'Ivoire and Zimbabwe. The key focus continues to be on critical minerals such as copper, cobalt, niobium, graphite, titanium, lithium, among others.

Some lobby groups in the U.S. have pointed out that China currently controls an estimated 8% of Africa's resources and the numbers have gone up from 2018 estimates.

## Key countries

In fact, the race for critical minerals primarily focuses on cobalt and copper – key EV battery making metals, apart from lithium. Congo - Zambia seem to be the key area of interest for countries - Western or Asian ones.

India, meanwhile, is pushing for increased presence in the region primarily through a mix of G2G negotiations and private entity interests.

Discussions covered facets like exploration of resources or mines in select nations, looking at possibilities of acquisition and subsequent commercial offtake, including processing of some of these minerals.

*(The writer is with The Hindu businessline)*



# India in Africa



- India is looking to ramp-up its critical mineral play in Africa as it looks to resource securitisation and and upsetting the Chinese apple-cart in the region.
- There are MoUs in place with at least eight African nations for mining collaborations, including access to resources.
- The nations include South Africa, Mozambique, Congo, Tanzania, Zambia, Malawi , Republic of Cote d'Ivoire and Zimbabwe.
- The key focus continues to be on critical minerals such as copper, cobalt, niobium, graphite, titanium, lithium, among others.

- **Some lobby groups in the U.S. have pointed out that China currently controls an estimated 8% of Africa's resources and the numbers have gone up from 2018 estimates.**
- **Key countries In fact, the race for critical minerals primarily focuses on cobalt and copper — key EV battery making metals, apart from lithium.**
- **Congo – Zambia seem to be the key area of interest for countries – Western or Asian ones.**

# Critical Minerals in Africa

- **Critical minerals such as copper, lithium, nickel, cobalt and rare earth elements are essential components in many of today's rapidly growing clean energy technologies – from wind turbines and electricity networks to electric vehicles**

**Figure 1 African countries with large shares of critical minerals**



Source: Papa Daouda Diene et al., *Triple Win: How Mining Can Benefit Africa's Citizens, Their Environment and the Energy Transition*, Research Report (New York: Natural Resource Governance Institute, 2022)

## BIG SHOT



'Mad honey' (komar honey in Turkish) is displayed in a shop in Cayeli, in the Turkish province of Rize. The lush green Pontic Alps are home to a subspecies of rhododendron whose purple flowers contain a hallucinogenic neurotoxin with which bees make 'mad honey'. Its fans swear it can cure heart palpitations, dodgy stomachs, and even impotence. Yet every year, hundreds of people end up in hospitals after gorging themselves on the substance. AFP



# Mad honey

- When bees feed on the pollen of rhododendron flowers, the resulting honey can pack a hallucinogenic punch.
- It's called mad honey, and it has a slightly bitter taste and a reddish color. More notably, a few types of rhododendrons, among them *Rhododendron luteum* and *Rhododendron ponticum*, contain grayanotoxin, which can cause dramatic physiological reactions in humans and animals.
- Depending on how much a person consumes, reactions can range from hallucinations and a slower heartbeat to temporary paralysis and unconsciousness.
-

# ADVANCE BOOKS FOR UPSC

## BOOKS SERIES (FOR UPSC 2025/26 )

### Advance books coverage

- M. Laxmikant -polity
- Spectrum - history
- GC Leong - geography
- Shankar ias environment
- Governance in india By M .laxmikant
- Lexicon book on ethics
- TMH Book on internal security
- Indian society by SC dubey

starting  
1st june  
2024



**BY SAURABH  
PANDEY SIR**

# ATTENTION!! BATCH FOR 2025/26 LAUNCHED

connect with sir -9057921649

## CURRENT AFFAIRS PLUS (FOR UPSC 2025 )

### INCLUDES



- PIB Analysis with pdf
- Down to earth
- physics.org
- science daily
- Major newspapers
- With practice test and Mains Mock

starting  
1st may  
2024



**BY SAURABH  
PANDEY SIR**

**Link in description**

**Msg -9057921649**

**Download -  
saurabh pandey  
cse app**

**NEW BATCH LAUNCHED**

**Connect with sir 90579 21649**

**Complete Agriculture  
optional**

**Paper 1 and Paper 2**

**Live classes**

**Starting 1st July**

**Score 300+**



**For upsc Prelims 2024**

**Visit - saurabhpandeyupsc.com**

**Msg - 9057921649**

**PRELIMS ACE OFFER ACTIVE  
40% off IN ALL COURSES**

**9057921649**

- **Advanced Current affairs**
- **Agriculture for GS**
- **International relation**
- **Advance topics sci,geo, environment**
- **10 Full length Tests**



**Link in description**



# FOR UPSC 2025 /26



## Launched

**1- Current affairs plus - PIB, YOJANA, Down to earth , physics.org , Major newspapers.**

**2- Books series - all advanced books in one course**

## UPCOMING

**1- Mains Mentorship program**

**2- GS-1 ,2,3 and 4**

**3- Mapping**

**4- NCERTS**

**5- Test series for 2025**

**6- essay**

**7- Agriculture optional**

**DOWNLOAD - Saurabh  
pandey cse app**

**+91 90579 21649**



# Target Mains -2024/25

**Q “ Critical Minerals can shape india’s diplomacy in Africa” Discuss**

प्रश्न "महत्वपूर्ण खनिज अफ्रीका में भारत की कूटनीति को आकार दे सकते हैं" चर्चा करें

**Connect with sir  
9057921649**

**send your answer - Saurabh pandey upsc  
telegram channel**

saurabh pandey upsc

