



# Daily Current Affairs



## To The Point by Dhananjay Gautam

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## 1 Is Delhi Becoming an Uninhabitable City?

**Context:** Delhi's **air pollution crisis** has escalated to alarming levels, especially during **winter**, posing severe **health risks** to its residents. The worsening **Air Quality Index (AQI)**, compounded by **extreme weather conditions**, highlights the city's declining **liveability**, particularly for its vulnerable populations.

### Understanding the Air Quality Index (AQI):

The **Air Quality Index (AQI)**, defined by the **Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB)**, simplifies complex pollutant data into scores for public understanding. It evaluates **eight major pollutants**:



Pollutant	Description
<b>PM10 &amp; PM2.5</b>	Fine particles that penetrate deeply into the lungs and bloodstream, causing <b>asthma, bronchitis, heart disease</b> , and other chronic conditions.
<b>Nitrogen Oxides</b>	Emitted from burning fuels, these aggravate <b>respiratory issues</b> like asthma and can lead to long-term susceptibility to infections.
<b>Ozone (O<sub>3</sub>)</b>	A surface-level pollutant formed by reactions in sunlight, linked to <b>COPD, respiratory illnesses</b> , and premature deaths.
<b>Sulfur Dioxide</b>	Released by fossil fuel combustion, it harms <b>cardiovascular health</b> and damages plants, reducing air quality further.
<b>Ammonia</b>	Predominantly from fertilizers and livestock waste, ammonia contributes to <b>aerosol pollution</b> and ecological harm such as <b>algal blooms</b> and <b>dead zones</b> in water.
<b>Lead</b>	A toxic heavy metal from industrial activities, particularly dangerous for <b>children</b> , causing permanent developmental and behavioral damage.
<b>Carbon Monoxide</b>	An odorless, toxic gas from incomplete combustion of fuels, leading to <b>heart disease</b> risks and potentially fatal poisoning at high concentrations.

### Sources of Delhi's Air Pollution:

- Beyond Stubble Burning**
  - During peak stubble-burning season, **PM2.5** levels increase by **15-35%**. However, even without stubble burning, Delhi's AQI rarely drops below "**very poor**", revealing **systemic internal issues**.
- Internal Pollution Sources**
  - A 2023 report by **IIT Kanpur, IIT Delhi, TERI, and Airshed Kanpur** shows that **50% of PM2.5** during winter originates from **within Delhi itself**.
- Vehicle Emissions**
  - Responsible for **58%** of Delhi's pollution:
    - 34% from exhaust gases.**
    - 24% from tyre and brake wear.**
  - Addressing this requires a major **shift to public transport** powered by **clean energy** and enhanced **last-mile connectivity**.

### Health and Environmental Consequences

- Respiratory Illnesses:** Chronic exposure to pollutants like **PM2.5, ozone, and SO<sub>2</sub>** significantly increases cases of **asthma, bronchitis, and COPD**.
- Cardiovascular Risk:** Prolonged contact with **CO and PM particles** raises the likelihood of **heart disease**.
- Ecological Harm:** Excessive **ammonia** leads to water **dead zones**, while **lead contamination** has long-term environmental and health impacts.
- Child Vulnerability:** Young children face irreversible developmental harm due to exposure to pollutants like **lead**.

### Conclusion: Can Delhi Overcome the Crisis?

Delhi's rising pollution levels and poor AQI pose an existential challenge to the city's **liveability**. While measures like banning stubble burning and transitioning to **clean transport** are critical, addressing **internal pollution sources** and fostering **public awareness** are equally vital. Without coordinated efforts, Delhi risks becoming an increasingly **uninhabitable city**, jeopardizing the health of millions.



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## Democratizing AI needs a radically different approach

**Context:** To democratize artificial intelligence (AI) effectively, the world needs a **transformative approach** that ensures equitable access and widespread benefits. Current practices often centralize AI's power and resources in the hands of a few, leaving many excluded from its potential advantages. A shift toward inclusivity and transparency is essential.

**Why Democratizing AI Matters:**1. **Inclusive Growth**

- AI has the power to drive **economic development**, but its benefits must reach all sections of society, not just privileged groups or tech giants.

2. **Reducing Inequality**

- A **democratic AI ecosystem** can bridge the gap between developed and developing nations, empowering marginalized communities with access to life-changing technologies.

3. **Empowering Innovation**

- Opening AI to a broader audience can foster **grassroots innovation**, encouraging solutions tailored to local needs and challenges.

**Barriers to AI Democratization:**1. **Resource Centralization**

- Large corporations dominate AI due to their monopoly on **data, computing power, and talent**, creating barriers for smaller players.

2. **High Entry Costs**

- Developing and deploying AI requires substantial investment, making it inaccessible to startups, researchers, and governments in resource-constrained settings.

3. **Opaque Algorithms**

- Lack of **transparency** in AI models raises concerns about **bias, discrimination**, and unfair decision-making, further excluding underrepresented groups.

**A Radically Different Approach:**1. **Open Data Ecosystems**

- Governments and organizations must promote **open data platforms** while safeguarding privacy. Shared data resources will lower barriers to entry and encourage participation from smaller players.

2. **Collaborative Frameworks**

- Establish **global partnerships** among academia, industries, and governments to democratize AI tools and research for public good.

3. **Decentralized AI Infrastructure**

- Transitioning to **decentralized AI frameworks** using blockchain and edge computing can reduce reliance on big tech, making AI more accessible to all.

4. **AI Education and Awareness**

- Offering **affordable education programs** and free online resources can empower people worldwide with the skills to contribute to AI innovation.

5. **Transparent and Ethical AI**

- Enforcing **accountability mechanisms** will ensure that AI systems are fair, explainable, and free from harmful biases.

**Conclusion: Building an Inclusive AI Future**

Democratizing AI demands **radical change**, moving beyond business-as-usual to embrace an **inclusive and equitable framework**. By prioritizing **openness, collaboration, and education**, we can ensure AI's transformative power benefits **all of humanity**, fostering a future where innovation knows no boundaries.

### 3 Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty: A Collective Step Toward Eradication

**Context:** The **Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty** was officially unveiled at the **G20 Leaders' Summit** in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. This initiative aims to accelerate the fight against **hunger** and **poverty** while promoting the achievement of the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**.

#### What is Hunger?

The **Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)** defines hunger as the habitual consumption of fewer calories than needed for a person's minimum dietary energy requirement. Factors like **sex**, **age**, **stature**, and physical activity levels determine this threshold.

#### India's Hunger Scenario:

- India ranks **105th** out of 127 countries in the **Global Hunger Index (GHI) 2024**, reflecting a **'serious' hunger level**.
- India's **GHI score of 27.3** highlights the country's challenges, especially when compared to neighbors like **Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka**, which fall under the **'moderate' category**.

#### Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty:

##### Why is This Alliance Important?

- The **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** set ambitious goals to eradicate **poverty, hunger**, and achieve **food security**. However:
  - The **COVID-19 pandemic** reversed progress, increasing extreme poverty and worsening nutrition levels.
  - By **2030**, an estimated **622 million people** will live in extreme poverty, and **582 million** will face hunger—numbers unchanged from **2015**.
  - **Climate change, global conflicts, and inequalities** have further slowed progress.

#### What is the Alliance?

Launched during the **G20 Summit**, the alliance brings together nations and resources to combat hunger. Led by **Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva**, it emphasizes strategies like:

- **Cash transfers**
- **School meal programs**
- **Farmer support initiatives**

#### Goals and Objectives:

##### The alliance is committed to:

- **Eradicating hunger and poverty by 2030**, aligning with the **SDGs**.
- Removing all nations from the **FAO Hunger Map** by fostering **collaboration** and **resource-sharing**.

#### Structure and Membership:

##### Who Can Join?

- **Members:**
  - 148 entities, including **82 countries**, the **African Union**, the **European Union**, and 24 international organizations.
  - **Financial institutions (9)** and **NGOs (31)** are also part of this network.
  - Non-G20 nations have been eligible for membership since **July 2024**.
- Early participants include **Brazil, Bangladesh**, and G20 members, with representation across continents.

#### Key Pillars of the Alliance:

1. **National Framework:** Focuses on coordinating public policies to address hunger.
2. **Knowledge Integration:** Leverages **data** and **technology** to create evidence-driven solutions.
3. **Financial Mobilization:** Aims for large-scale funding to implement anti-hunger programs.

#### Strategic Commitments:

- **Income Support:** Reach **500 million people** through income distribution programs by **2030**.

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- **School Meals:** Provide nutritious meals to **150 million children** in hunger-affected regions.
- **Financial Mobilization:** Partner with multilateral banks to generate billions for poverty alleviation projects.

**Operational Framework:****Funding:**

- Operates without an exclusive fund, relying on contributions from members and partners like **FAO**, **UNICEF**, and the **World Bank**.
- Estimated cost: **\$2-3 million annually**.

**Technical Office:**

- Headquartered under **FAO's** supervision with functional autonomy.
- Likely location: **Brasilia** or another **Global South country**.

**Core Activities:**

- **Regular Summits Against Hunger and Poverty.**
- Establishing a **High-Level Champions Council** to oversee alliance operations.
- Sharing **best practices** among members and offering **technical expertise** or **financial aid**.

**Features of the Alliance:**

- **Policy Tools:** A basket of over 50 strategies, including:
  - **School meal programs**
  - **Cash transfers**
  - Support for **smallholder farmers**
  - **Maternal and early childhood interventions**
  - **Water access solutions**
- **Matchmaking Platform:** Connects countries in need with donors and support organizations.

**A Unified Effort to End Hunger:**

The **Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty** represents a bold, collaborative initiative to tackle one of humanity's oldest challenges. By leveraging **resources**, **technology**, and **knowledge-sharing**, it aims to create a **world free of hunger and poverty** by **2030**, fostering hope for a better, equitable future.

## 4 ICC Issues Arrest Warrants for Netanyahu and Gallant Over Gaza Crisis

GS Paper 2 – Social Justice, and International Relations

**Context:** The International Criminal Court (ICC) has issued arrest warrants for Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, former defense minister Yoav Gallant, and Hamas leader Mohammed Diab Ibrahim Al-Masri for alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity.

**Why in News?**

The **International Criminal Court (ICC)** has issued **arrest warrants** for:

- **Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu**
- **Former Defense Minister Yoav Gallant**
- **Hamas leader Mohammed Diab Ibrahim Al-Masri**



The charges include **war crimes** and **crimes against humanity**. These warrants were issued after **ICC Prosecutor Karim Khan** linked these figures to:

1. **The October 7 Hamas attack** on Israel.
2. **Israeli military actions** in Gaza.

**What is the International Criminal Court (ICC)?**

About the ICC

- The **ICC** is a **permanent court** designed to prosecute individuals for severe international crimes such as:
  - **Genocide**
  - **War crimes**
  - **Crimes against humanity**
  - **Crimes of aggression**
- Established under the **Rome Statute** in 1998, it became functional in **2002**.

**Key Features:**

- The ICC is independent of the **United Nations**, but both are headquartered in **The Hague**, Netherlands.
- It differs from the **International Court of Justice (ICJ)**, which handles disputes between nations.

**Membership:**

- **124 countries** are ICC members.
- **Notable non-members:** **India, China, Israel, United States, Russia, and Turkey.**

**How the ICC Functions****Judges and Prosecutors:**

- The ICC has **18 judges** and prosecutors, each serving **non-renewable nine-year terms**.

**Investigation Process:**

1. **Preliminary Examination:**
  - The prosecutor evaluates the case's **gravity** and relevance.
2. **Approval:**
  - Pre-trial judges must grant permission for a full investigation.

**Ways to Open Investigations:**

- **Member State Referral:** A country requests investigation of crimes in its territory.
- **UN Security Council Referral:** The UN instructs the ICC to investigate.
- **Proprio Motu:** The prosecutor acts independently.

**Investigating Non-Member States**

Non-members, like Israel, can be investigated if:

- Crimes occur within a member state.
- The state accepts ICC jurisdiction.
- The UN Security Council authorizes action.



## Details of the Arrest Warrants

### Accusations Against Netanyahu and Gallant

- **War Crimes:**
  - Depriving civilians in Gaza of essential resources (food, water, medicine, fuel, electricity).
  - Restricting medical supplies, causing immense suffering.
- **Crimes Against Humanity:**
  - Murder, persecution, torture, violence, and rape.
  - Property destruction under their leadership.

**Role of Hamas Leader Mohammed Diab Ibrahim Al-Masri:** Accused of orchestrating **October 7 Hamas attacks**, including mass killings and kidnappings.

### Impact of ICC Warrants

- **Enforcement:** ICC relies on **member states** to arrest the accused.
  - Example: If Netanyahu visits an ICC member country, it is obligated to extradite him to The Hague.
- **Geopolitical Implications:**
  - Countries like **Germany, France**, and the **UK** (ICC members and Israeli allies) face diplomatic dilemmas.
- **Palestinian Victory:** The warrant boosts **international pressure** on Israel.

### Conclusion:

The ICC's warrants signify a major development in holding leaders accountable for **war crimes**. While enforcement faces challenges, the move highlights the **international community's commitment** to addressing crimes against humanity, regardless of political stature.

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## Significant Archaeological Discovery Unearthed in Kerala

**Context:** A remarkable archaeological discovery has been made in Kanhirapoil, a region located in the Madikkai grama panchayat of Kasaragod district, Kerala. This discovery offers new insights into the prehistoric culture and artistic traditions of the area.

**Details of the Discovery****1. Rock Carvings Unearthed**

- A set of rock carvings was uncovered on private property in Kanhirapoil, revealing 24 pairs of footprints and an intricately etched human figure, surrounded by four circular pits.

**2. Age and Significance of the Carvings**

- Experts date the carvings back to the Megalithic period, approximately 2,000 years ago. These were created using iron tools, highlighting the advanced skills of the region's early inhabitants.

**3. Symbolism of the Footprints**

- The footprints, ranging from 6 to 10 inches in size, suggest representations of both adults and children. They are all oriented westward, symbolizing spiritual significance. While experts believe these may represent the souls of the deceased, local folklore suggests they belong to a goddess.

**4. Artistic Style**

- The carvings are similar to prehistoric rock art found in Avalakki Pera in Udupi district, Karnataka, and other locations in north Kerala, indicating a shared artistic tradition across the region.

**5. Cultural and Historical Context**

- This discovery offers valuable insights into the artistic and cultural practices of the region's prehistoric inhabitants, shedding light on their rituals and symbolism.

**6. Regional Significance**

- Similar artefacts and carvings have been found in other parts of north Kerala, including Erikulam Valiyapara, Cheemeni Ariyittapara, Ettukudukka, and the famous Edakkal Caves in Wayanad. These finds point to a shared cultural heritage across prehistoric Kerala.

**7. Implications for Further Research**

- This discovery underscores the historical importance of the region, highlighting the need for further archaeological exploration to uncover more about Kerala's ancient past.

**Conclusion:**

The findings at Kanhirapoil offer a fascinating glimpse into Kerala's prehistoric past, emphasizing the artistic expressions and cultural traditions of its early inhabitants. This discovery invites further investigation into the region's rich history, promising exciting revelations about the ancient civilizations that once thrived there.



## 6 State of the World's Children Report 2024

**Context:** The UNICEF State of the World's Children Report 2024 offers a comprehensive analysis of child survival, development, and protection across the globe. This vital report assesses the future of childhood amid rapid changes and challenges.

**Findings and Key Highlights:**

- Global Snapshot of Children's Well-being:** The report provides **vital statistics** on child survival, development, and protection, highlighting the challenges faced by children worldwide and examining future indicators that will affect their lives.
- Three Megatrends Shaping Children's Futures**
  - Demographic Transitions: Migration and population shifts** may offer opportunities but also present significant risks, such as **exploitation** and **separation from families**.
  - Climate and Environmental Crises:** Pollution, extreme weather, and environmental degradation are harming children's **development**—especially their **brains, lungs, and immune systems**.
  - Frontier Technologies:** Emerging technologies will reshape how future generations learn, work, and communicate. Their development and governance will significantly impact children's **well-being** in the years to come.
- Three Future Scenarios for Children:** The report presents potential scenarios for children's futures based on varying rates of progress and decision-maker actions:
  - Business-as-usual trendlines:** By 2050, child populations in low-income and lower-middle-income countries will significantly increase, exacerbating existing challenges.
  - Accelerated Development:** Children in regions facing **conflict** and **climate change** will experience harsher conditions, including exposure to prolonged **violence** and extreme **heatwaves**.
  - Delayed Development:** With ongoing **gender inequality**, 1.1 billion children will live in **societies where gender discrimination** remains a significant barrier to their progress.

**UNICEF's Role and Vision:**

UNICEF is a **United Nations agency** dedicated to improving the lives of children worldwide. It operates in over **190 countries and territories**, focusing on ensuring every child has the opportunity to **survive, thrive, and fulfill their potential**. Key areas of focus include:

- **Education, health, and nutrition** services
- Protection from **violence** and **abuse**
- Safeguarding children against **climate change** and **disease**

UNICEF is also the world's largest provider of **vaccines** and manages the world's **largest humanitarian warehouse**.

**Children: The Agents of Change for a Better Future**

UNICEF emphasizes that **children and young people** are not just recipients of aid, but **powerful agents of change**. Their fresh perspectives and ideas will play a crucial role in shaping a **better, more sustainable future** for all.