MAINS MATRIX- Integrate Your Knowledge, Ace the Exam

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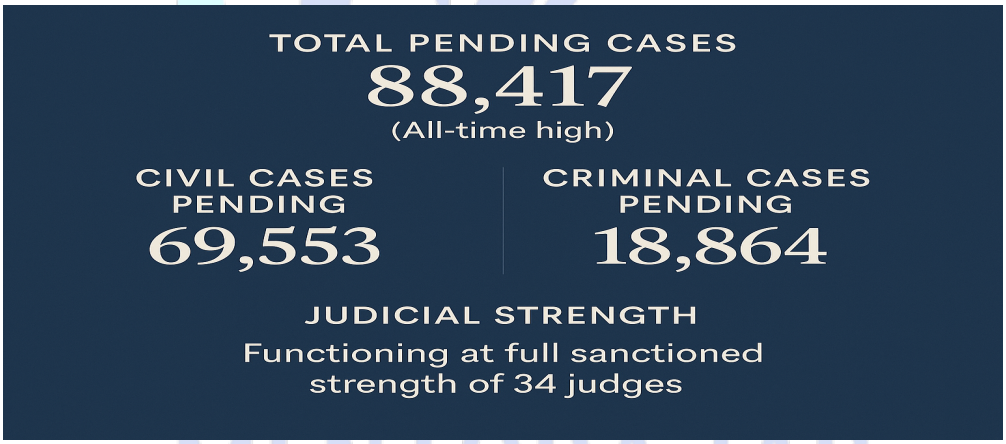
1.Pendency continues to plague SC as case backlog hits all-time high

Source: National Judicial Data Grid

Key Summary & Current Status



August 2024 Performance

- **Cases Instituted (Filed):** 7,080
- **Cases Disposed:** 5,667
- **Disposal Rate (for August):** 80-84% of cases filed (resulting in a net increase in backlog).

2025 Annual Data (Year-to-Date)

- **Cases Filed:** 52,630
- **Cases Disposed:** 46,309

- **Disposal Rate (Annual):** 88%

Context & Efforts to Reduce Backlog

- **Summer Recess Initiative:** Chief Justice B.R. Gavai renamed the summer holidays (May 23 to July) as "partial working days."
- **Action Taken:** 21 Benches sat during this period, with the CJI and five senior-most judges presiding, hearing and disposing of cases.
- **Leadership Changes:** The year 2025 has seen two Chief Justices of India, with a third (Justice Surya Kant) expected to be sworn in late November.
- **Historical Context:** Pendency has been a perennial issue since the pandemic, especially since 2023. The previous peak was over 82,000 cases in the corresponding period of 2024.

Systemic Challenges & Statements

- **Vacancy Management:** Successive Chief Justices (Chandrachud, Khanna, Gavai) have kept judicial vacancies in the Supreme Court to a minimum.
- **Collegium Resolutions:** A November 2023 resolution highlighted the "huge workload" and stated the court "cannot afford even one vacancy" due to "ever mounting pendency." It emphasized the necessity of "full working judge-strength leaving no vacancy at any point of time."
- **Government Cooperation:** Recent months have seen the government approve collegium recommendations for appointments without delay (often within 48 hours). Despite this, the backlog continues to rise.

2. Motivations Behind Gen Z Protests in Nepal

The recent wave of protests led by Gen Z in Nepal was sparked by a specific government action acting as a catalyst for a wide range of deep-seated frustrations.

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1. The Immediate Trigger: Social Media Ban & Free Speech Crackdown

The government's move to block major social media platforms was widely perceived as blatant censorship and an attempt to silence dissent and limit freedom of expression. Furthermore, these platforms are vital for the economic livelihood of many young

Nepalis (content creators, influencers, small businesses), making the ban a direct threat to their income.

2. The Core Grievance: Systemic Corruption and Nepotism

Protesters expressed deep anger over the perceived misuse of public office for private gain by political elites. This fury was amplified by the "Nepo Kids" phenomenon, where the lavish lifestyles of politicians' children flaunted on social media became a powerful symbol of inequality and unearned privilege.

3. The Central Demands: Accountability and Political Reform

The movement demanded concrete actions—not just promises—including independent investigations into corruption, high-level resignations, and systemic government reforms. This stems from a strong belief in a culture of impunity, where corruption scandals are frequently discussed but rarely resolved.

4. The Underlying Cause: Economic Frustration and Lack of Opportunity

Many young people face a future with a severe lack of quality job opportunities locally. The prevalent need to seek employment abroad serves as a constant reminder of the state's failure to provide for its youth.

5. The Amplifier: Digital Connectivity and Raised Expectations

As digital natives, Gen Z is acutely aware of global norms regarding governance and rights. They compare Nepal's situation to these standards, which fuels frustration. Social media also allows for the rapid, viral exposure of corruption and inequality, helping to unite people around shared grievances.

6. The Demographics: Youthful Population Disillusioned with Old Politics

A large portion of Nepal's population is young, yet they feel completely excluded from power and decision-making. They perceive established political parties as stagnant, corrupt, and led by recycled leaders who have failed to deliver progress for decades, creating a desire for new, untainted leadership.

7. The Escalator: Government Repression and Heavy-Handed Response

The use of police and army force, including curfews and arrests, significantly escalated tensions rather than quelling them. Blocking the very platforms used to organize was seen as an aggressive act of repression that validated the protesters' concerns about authoritarian tendencies.

In summary, the protests were a powerful outburst from a digitally-connected, economically anxious, and politically disillusioned generation. A direct attack on their

digital freedom of speech ignited a broader movement demanding accountability, an end to systemic corruption, and meaningful political change.

3.How serious is the global plastic pollution crisis?

The Scale and Severity of the Crisis

- **Production & Consumption:**
    - Plastic production doubled from 2000 to 2019, reaching **450 million tonnes** annually.
    - In 2020 alone, **500 million tonnes** of plastic were produced or used.
- **Waste Generation:**
    - Annual plastic waste reached **353 million tonnes**.
    - Nearly two-thirds of plastic waste has a lifespan of **less than five years**.
    - Sources: 40% packaging, 12% consumer goods, 11% clothing and textiles.
- **Projection:** If current trends continue, global plastic waste could almost **triple by 2060**, reaching **1.2 billion tonnes**.
- **Environmental Leakage:**
    - Only **9%** of plastic waste is recycled.
    - **19%** is incinerated.
    - **50%** ends up in landfills.
    - **22%** evades waste management, ending up in dumpsters, being burned in pits, or polluting terrestrial and aquatic environments.

Key Impacts and Why It's a Grave Problem

1. **Pervasive Pollution:** Plastics break into micro- and nano-plastics, contaminating every part of the planet, from Mount Everest to the deep ocean.
2. **Ocean Threat:**
    - **11 million tonnes** of plastic enter the ocean each year.
    - An estimated **200 million tonnes** already pollute marine environments.

    - At current rates, there could be **more plastic than fish** in the ocean by mid-century.
3. **Climate Change:** Plastics account for **3.4%** of global greenhouse gas emissions.
    - Projection: Plastic production, use, and disposal could use up **19%** of the total global carbon budget by 2040.

Proposed Remedies and Solutions

1. International Cooperation & Policy:

- All UN member states have agreed to a **legally binding international agreement** to end plastic pollution.
- This is critical for achieving UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on climate, oceans, and ecosystems.
- UNEP's goal: Reduce plastic waste by **80% within two decades**.

2. Government & Producer Action:

- **Limit production** and eliminate unnecessary items, especially single-use plastics, within existing legal frameworks.
- Implement economic instruments:
    - **Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)** schemes.
    - **Landfill taxes** and **incineration taxes** to incentivize recycling.
    - **Deposit-refund systems** and **pay-as-you-throw** systems.
- **Improve Waste Management:**
    - Build profitable markets for recycled plastics (only 6% of production is currently recycled).
    - Invest in and improve recycling technologies.

3. Individual & Societal Role:

- Individuals must adopt **greener alternatives** that were used in the past.
- The media has a significant role in **shaping public awareness**.

The Gist / Summary

- **Problem:** Plastic pollution is a severe global crisis that impacts ecosystems, sustainable development, and human health through runaway production and waste.
- **Solution:** Addressing it requires **urgent international action**, **improved recycling**, **limiting production** of unnecessary plastics, and **responsible behavior** by individuals and governments.

How to use

General Studies Paper II (GS-II) - Governance, Constitution, Polity, Social Justice & International Relations

- **International Relations:** The **intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on Plastic Pollution** and the move towards a **legally binding international agreement** is a classic example of global governance and multilateralism. You can use this in questions on:
    - "Challenges and successes of global environmental agreements."
    - "Role of UN agencies (like UNEP) in global governance."
- **Governance:** The solutions mentioned (EPR, taxation policies) are tools of **good governance**. You can use this to illustrate how government policies can be designed to incentivize positive behavior and disincentivize pollution.

How to Integrate this Information for Answers:

- **Use Data as Force Multipliers:** Don't just say "plastic production is high." Say "Plastic production has doubled since 2000, reaching **450 million tonnes** annually, yet only **9% is recycled**," This adds immense weight to your argument.
- **Quote Key Initiatives:** Instead of saying "a global agreement," specify "the **legally binding international agreement** being developed by the **intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on Plastic Pollution**." This shows precision and knowledge.
- **Use Specific Policy Names:** Instead of "economic tools," use the exact terms: **Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR), landfill taxes, deposit-refund schemes**. This is the language the UPSC expects.
- **Link to SDGs:** Always mention that tackling plastic pollution is crucial for achieving **UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, specifically SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), SDG 13 (Climate Action), SDG 14 (Life Below Water), and SDG 15 (Life on Land).

GS-3 (Technology, Economic Development, Bio-diversity, Environment, Security and Disaster Management)

The article is a direct source for the **Environment** section of GS-III, providing specific data and concepts.

- **Biodiversity & Environment:**
    - **Pollution & Degradation:** The core of the article. Provides stark **data points** on production (450 MT), waste (353 MT), recycling (only 9%), and leakage (22%).
    - **Threat to Ecosystems:** Details the impact on marine life (11 MT/year entering oceans) and the pervasive nature of microplastics.
    - **Conservation:** The proposed global and national solutions are directly linked to conserving aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems.
- **Disaster Management:**
    - **Anthropogenic Risk:** Plastic pollution can be framed as **a slow-onset, human-made environmental disaster, clogging rivers (**flood risk), affecting soil health, and harming wildlife.
- **Science & Technology:**
    - **Technology as a Solution:** The article explicitly calls for investment in **improved recycling technologies** and creating markets for recycled products to address the low global recycling rate (6%).
- **Economic Development:**
    - **Challenge to Sustainable Development:** The linear plastic economy (take-make-dispose) is a model that opposes sustainable development.
    - **Policy Tools for Sustainable Economy:** Solutions like **EPR** and **taxes** are economic instruments to align market forces with environmental goals, a key aspect of green economics.

4.India must invest more in accelerating diversification of food production: FAO Chief Economist

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Key Findings on India's Food Affordability

- **Current Situation (2024): 40.4%** of India's population (approximately **60 crore people**) are unable to afford a healthy diet.

- **Previous Assessment (2021):** This is a significant improvement from the 2023 FAO report, which found **74.1%** of the population could not afford a healthy diet in 2021.
- **Note on Data:** The Chief Economist attributes this change to an **improved methodology** but confirms there has been a "significant improvement." He stresses that 40.4% is still "too high."

FAO's Recommendations for India

1. **Accelerate Diversification of Food Production:**
    - **Shift Focus:** Move from primarily producing cereals to cultivating **high-value commodities**.
    - **Key Candidates:** Promote the production of **pulses** (nutritious, protein-rich, and culturally consistent) and **fruits and vegetables**.
    - **Overall Goal:** This shift is crucial to improving access to diverse, healthy diets.
2. **Continue and Accelerate Transformation:**
    - India's size and population give it a **crucial role** in achieving the global Sustainable Development Goal of **zero hunger by 2030**.
    - The Green Revolution's role is acknowledged, but the need now is to **"do more"** to ensure access to healthy diets today and in the future.

How to use in Mains

General Studies Paper II (GS-II) - Governance, Social Justice

- **Social Justice:** The data on 40.4% of Indians unable to afford a healthy diet is a stark indicator of **inequality** and a failure to provide **food and nutritional security**, which is a core component of social justice.
- **Governance:** The FAO's recommendations highlight the role of government policy in steering agricultural production. This can be used to discuss:
    - **Policy Intervention:** How government subsidies (e.g., for cereals) have created distortions and the need for policy to incentivize diversification (e.g., towards pulses, fruits, vegetables).

- **Implementation of SDGs:** India's progress and challenges in achieving **Sustainable Development Goal 2 (Zero Hunger)**. The statistic shows both improvement and the long road ahead.

For GS Paper III (Technology, Economic Development, Bio-diversity, Environment, Security and Disaster Management)

This article provides critical data and policy prescriptions for the **Agriculture** and **Food Security** sections of GS-III.

- **Food Security:**
  - **Data Point:** The core finding that **40.4% of Indians (approx. 60 crore)** cannot afford a healthy diet is a crucial indicator of the gap between **food security** (availability of calories) and **nutritional security** (access to diverse, nutritious food).
  - **Challenge:** Highlights the problem of **"hidden hunger"**—micronutrient deficiencies despite calorie sufficiency.
- **Agricultural Issues:**
  - **Policy Distortion:** The interview implicitly critiques India's cereal-centric policy (rooted in the Green Revolution), which has led to:
    - **Low Diversification:** Over-emphasis on wheat and rice at the expense of more nutritious crops.
    - **Resource Misuse:** Contributing to water stress and soil degradation in states like Punjab and Haryana.
  - **Recommended Shift:** The FAO's main prescription is to **diversify production towards high-value, nutrient-dense commodities** like **pulses, fruits, and vegetables**.
- **Issues of Buffer Stocks & Food Security:**
  - The need to move beyond a focus on cereal stockpiling and towards ensuring affordable access to a wider variety of foods, as mandated by the **National Food Security Act (NFSA)**.
- **Public Distribution System (PDS):**
  - The data underscores a limitation of the current PDS, which primarily provides cereals. It strengthens the argument for diversifying the PDS basket to include pulses and oils to improve nutritional outcomes.
- **Technology:**

- Diversification requires investment in **technology and infrastructure** for post-harvest management, cold chains, and processing for perishables like fruits and vegetables.

5.Positioning India in an Unruly World

By M.K. Narayanan (Former Director, Intelligence Bureau; Former NSA; Former Governor of West Bengal)

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1. Context

- Based on a *Foreign Affairs* article: *India's Great Power Delusions—How New Delhi's Grand Strategy Thwarts Its Grand Ambitions* (July/August 2025).
- Key point of criticism:
  - India has "delusions of grandeur" about becoming a great power.
  - Lacks substance to back it up.
  - Positioned unfavorably compared to U.S. and China.

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2. India–China Comparison

- Both India & China: Civilisational powers with distinct development models.
- U.S. sees them primarily through the lens of **competition/conflict**.
- Recent events (e.g., Tanjin SCO Summit) highlight:
  - India, China, and Russia seen as a bloc by the West.
  - U.S. struggles to grasp eastern perspectives.

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3. India's Trajectory

- **Transformation:**
  - From famine-afflicted nation at Independence → self-sufficient agricultural economy → modern power.
  - No parallel in modern history.

- **Strengths:**
    - Early democratic foundations.
    - Emphasis on inclusive growth.
    - Unique development philosophy (neither fully capitalist nor communist).
- **Limitations:**
    - India not seeking conflict but wary of being forced into alignment.
    - Not dependent on U.S. support in future conflicts.

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4. Western Perceptions

- U.S. often misunderstands India's civilisational depth.
- Cold War precedent: India maintained independent stance (Non-Aligned Movement, Indo-Soviet Treaty).
- West tends to underestimate India's potential.

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5. Technological Superiority

- **Current Reality:**
    - U.S. leads in technological innovation ("empire of the mind").
    - However, contradictions in U.S. policies weaken its global influence.
- **India's Advantage:**
    - Strong digital growth.
    - Emerging as a key player in AI, digital economy, and new technologies.
    - India's demographic dividend fuels innovation.

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6. Key Challenges

- Managing contradictory relationships:
    - With U.S. (strategic partner but cautious of U.S. pressure).
    - With China (competition + cooperation).
    - With Russia (energy dependence).

- Positioning amidst blocs (U.S.-led West vs. China–Russia axis).

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7. Author's Argument

- India's rise is **new but strong**, rooted in its civilisational resilience and independent policy stance.
- West must **rethink outdated assumptions**:
    - Stop viewing India only as a pawn in great power rivalry.
    - Recognise India's intrinsic growth and potential.
- India will not be a "follower" but a **shaper of the new world order**.

How to use

For GS Paper II (Governance, Constitution, Polity, Social Justice & International Relations)

This article is a direct commentary on India's foreign policy, making it highly relevant for the **International Relations** section.

- **India and its Neighborhood/World:** The entire piece analyzes India's positioning in the context of US-China rivalry and a shifting global order.
    - **Strategic Autonomy:** The author defends India's independent foreign policy stance, rooted in its history (Non-Aligned Movement, Indo-Soviet Treaty) and civilisational depth. This is a counter to Western critiques of India having "delusions of grandeur."
    - **Bilateral Relations:** Provides a framework to analyze India's complex and "contradictory" relationships:
        - **With the US:** A strategic partnership, but one where India is "wary of being forced into alignment" and asserts its independence.
        - **With China:** A mix of competition (implied border tensions) and cooperation (within forums like SCO).
        - **With Russia:** A continued relationship based on historical ties and practical needs like "energy dependence."
    - **West's Perception:** Highlights a key challenge: the West often "misunderstands India's civilisational depth" and tends to "underestimate India's potential," viewing it only through the lens of countering China.