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RISE OF QUICK COMMERCE

- Quick commerce, or Q-commerce, is a type of e-commerce that delivers orders in a very short time, often within an hour. It's also known as "on-demand delivery".

How Quick Commerce Functions

- **Rapid Delivery System**
 - Q-commerce ensures ultra-fast delivery (10–20 minutes) by leveraging a network of dark stores and distribution centers.
 - These warehouses, dedicated solely to online orders, are strategically placed near consumers to enable faster deliveries.
- **Data-Driven Customization**
 - Unlike traditional retail, Q-commerce platforms use mobile apps to collect and analyze customer data.
 - This feedback loop helps in personalizing the shopping experience, optimizing inventory management, and predicting product demand based on seasonal trends or demographic shifts.
- **Some Q-commerce companies in India**
 - Blinkit, Zepto, Swiggy InstaMart, BigBasket Now, Flipkart Minutes, Dunzo Daily, Amazon Fresh, and M-Now (Myntra).

Benefits of Quick Commerce for Brands

- **Enhanced Brand Awareness**
 - Quick commerce helps retailers increase brand visibility due to its widespread adoption and growing consumer base.
- **Availability of Low-Cost Workforce**
 - The sector benefits from an easily employable workforce, particularly from specific age and economic groups, improving operational efficiency.
- **Supply-Side Advantages**

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- Q-commerce platforms offer cost-effective distribution, eliminating the need for individual brands to invest in expensive storage solutions, such as freezers for chilled products.
- **Rapid Market Growth**
 - The Indian quick commerce market, currently valued at \$3.34 billion, is projected to reach \$9.95 billion by 2029, growing at a rate of 76% YoY in FY 2024.

Challenges Faced by the Quick Commerce Industry

- **Slowdown in Growth**
 - The hypergrowth of quick commerce is slowing as investors shift focus post-pandemic.
 - Companies all over the world are downsizing due to reduced capital investment.
- **Traffic and Safety Concerns**
 - Urban congestion and safety risks pose challenges. In cities like New York, authorities are considering banning 15-minute deliveries to prevent reckless driving.

Regulations and Transparency in Quick Commerce

- **Government Regulations:** India's 2023 guidelines prohibit deceptive practices by platforms, advertisers, and sellers, aiming to curb dark patterns.
- **Challenges in Enforcement:** Despite regulations, enforcement remains difficult, and new deceptive tactics continue to emerge.
- **Need for Transparency:** As quick commerce expands, clear pricing, honest advertising, and user-centric designs are essential to ensure fairness.
- **The Hidden Cost:** Without proper regulation, the convenience of rapid deliveries may come at the expense of consumer rights and ethical business practices.

The Fast Future of Q-commerce

- The COVID-19 pandemic changed consumer shopping habits, with many still preferring online shopping for convenience. With advancing technology, more eCommerce brands will adopt quick commerce, offering deliveries in minutes.

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THE INDIAN UNIVERSITY AND THE SEARCH FOR A V-C

- The **Draft University Grants Commission** (Minimum Qualifications for Appointment and Promotion of Teachers and Academic Staff in Universities and Colleges and Measures for the Maintenance of Standards in Higher Education) **Regulations, 2025**, has sparked widespread debate.
- The **primary concerns** revolve around two key aspects: **the method of appointing Vice-Chancellors (V-Cs) and the broadening of the qualifications** required for this esteemed academic position.
- These **concerns need to be analysed in light of India's evolving federal structure** and the legal precedents set by the Supreme Court.

The Most Debated Aspect of the Draft UGC Regulations, 2025: Reducing the Role of the State Executive in V-C Appointments

- The appointment of V-Cs in Indian universities has **long been a contentious issue**, primarily due to the involvement of state governments in the selection process.
- Historically, **state legislatures and executives have played a significant role** in these appointments, often using them as an extension of political influence over higher education.
- However, **a series of Supreme Court judgments have sought to reduce the role of the state executive**, ensuring that the selection process remains independent, merit-based, and free from undue political interference.
- The **Draft UGC Regulations, 2025, reflect these judicial rulings** by proposing a search-cum-selection committee structure that significantly limits state intervention.

New Selection Structure Under the 2025 Regulations

- The Draft UGC Regulations, 2025, propose **that the search-cum-selection committee should be composed of highly qualified individuals** with substantial academic leadership experience.
- The recommended composition includes:

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- A nominee of the Chancellor of the university (often the Governor in state universities).
 - A nominee of the executive body of the university (e.g., the Senate or Board of Governors).
 - A nominee of the UGC.
- Notably absent from this list are representatives from the state executive, a **clear departure from previous practices where state governments could appoint their nominees** to these committees.
 - The **intention behind this restructuring is to ensure academic independence**, preventing politically motivated appointments that could compromise the quality and integrity of higher education institutions.

The Way Forward: Avoiding a Confrontational Approach

- A **complete exclusion of state governments** from the V-C selection process could lead to **political and legal conflicts**.
- States might resist implementing the new regulations, leading to **prolonged disputes** that could hinder university governance.
- Instead of creating a **collision course** between the judiciary and state governments, it is essential to find a **cooperative approach** that respects both judicial mandates and state interests.

Conclusion

- The **Draft UGC Regulations, 2025**, mark a significant shift in the governance of higher education, reinforcing the principle of independent and merit-based Vice-Chancellor appointments.
- While the **Supreme Court has established clear legal precedents against state executive involvement**, state governments have **legitimate concerns** regarding their role in shaping higher education institutions that they fund and manage.
- The challenge lies in **striking a balance**, ensuring that universities remain free from political interference while also recognizing the state's stake in higher education.

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RISING CONSUMER CREDIT IN INDIA: A GROWING CONCERN

Financial Stability Report (FSR) 2024 released by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has called attention to the question of household finances and consumption loans.

Increasing Household Debt: A Cause for Concern

- The **RBI's Financial Stability Report (FSR) 2024** has highlighted an alarming rise in household debt, which has increased from **36.6% of GDP in June 2021 to 42.9% in June 2024**.
- While India's household debt remains lower than most emerging economies, the rising debt-to-GDP ratio signals potential macroeconomic weaknesses.
- Debt is typically taken to acquire assets such as homes and vehicles. However, recent data indicates that Indian households are borrowing more for consumption rather than for asset creation.
- This shift raises concerns about the financial health of lower-income groups and the long-term impact on economic stability.

The Shift in Borrowing Trends:

- The RBI report presents a mixed picture regarding consumer credit.
- A significant proportion of new loans is being taken by **healthy, prime borrowers**, reducing the share of sub-prime borrowing.
- Rising per capita debt is mainly observed among **super-prime borrowers**, who are using loans for asset creation rather than discretionary spending.
 - Super-prime borrowers, who exhibit the best creditworthiness, are followed by prime borrowers who, while still considered good credit risks, are one step below the top tier.
- Borrowing for consumption purposes, however, has increased, particularly among lower-income groups.
- While these trends indicate a maturing credit market, the growing reliance on loans for consumption raises concerns about the sustainability of household finances.

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Consumption Loans: A Red Flag for Financial Stability

- A worrying trend in the report is the increasing share of loans taken for consumption rather than investment in assets like housing or education. The data reveals that:
 - **64% of loans taken by super-prime borrowers** are directed towards asset creation.
 - **Nearly half of the loans taken by sub-prime borrowers** are being used for consumption.
 - Lower-income households (earning below ₹5 lakh annually) rely heavily on unsecured credit such as **credit card debt and personal loans** for daily expenses.
- This trend suggests that many households may be borrowing to meet essential expenses rather than for wealth accumulation.
- In addition, rising delinquency rates in **personal loans and credit card debt** indicate increasing financial stress among lower-income groups.

The Multiplier Effect of Rising Debt:

- The impact of household debt on economic growth depends on how it affects consumption patterns.
 - Households with lower incomes generally have a higher **income multiplier**, meaning they spend a larger portion of their income on goods and services.
 - However, if they are burdened with debt repayments, their disposable income shrinks, reducing overall consumption and slowing down economic growth.
 - Several key questions arise:
 - Are households borrowing more due to **income insecurity** post-pandemic?
 - Are financial innovations, such as **BNPL (Buy Now, Pay Later)** schemes, encouraging excessive borrowing?
 - Will this rising debt reduce the effectiveness of future **macroeconomic policy measures**, such as tax cuts or interest rate adjustments?
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INDIA-MAURITIUS RELATIONS - A STRATEGIC AND HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

- India and Mauritius share a **deep-rooted relationship**, influenced by historical, cultural, and strategic ties. Mauritius is one of the closest nations to India.
- There are numerous connections between Delhi and Port Louis (capital of Mauritius), including the fact that **around 70% of the island's 1.3 million residents are of Indian descent**.

Historical and Geopolitical Significance of Mauritius:

- Mauritius has a **colonial history** involving Portuguese, Dutch, French, and British powers.
- Gained independence from Britain in **1968**; however, colonial disputes persisted over the **Chagos archipelago**
- **The recent UK-Mauritius agreement on Chagos** has significant legal, geopolitical, and humanitarian implications.

India's Strategic Engagement in the Western Indian Ocean:

- **Modi's 2015 visit** marked India's recognition of the renewed geopolitical importance of the region.
- **India's SAGAR** (Security and Growth for All in the Region) doctrine highlights the strategic relevance of the Indian Ocean.
- **Growing influence of multiple global players** like China, Russia, Europe, and Gulf countries in the region **necessitates proactive Indian engagement**.

Chagos Archipelago Dispute and Its Resolution:

- **Britain separated Chagos** (into the "British Indian Ocean Territory") **from Mauritius** before independence, leasing Diego Garcia to the US for a military base.
- **Mauritius led a global campaign** to reclaim sovereignty, backed by a 2019 International Court of Justice (ICJ) advisory opinion.

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- The recent **UK-Mauritius agreement** affirms Mauritius's sovereignty, allows a 99-year lease extension for the US base, and ensures India's regional security concerns against China's expansion.

The Role of Mauritius in Global Geopolitics:

- Historically called the "**Star and Key of the Indian Ocean**," Mauritius has been a critical hub for **maritime trade and global interactions**.
- **Its importance fluctuated** with the Suez Canal's opening and Cold War geopolitics but has resurged due to China's strategic interests.
- **China has engaged Mauritius** through infrastructure projects, economic investments, and diplomatic outreach.

India's Maritime and Security Cooperation with Mauritius:

- India is constructing logistics infrastructure on **Agaléga Island**, reinforcing its **maritime security**
- Mauritius serves as a crucial point in **countering China's expanding influence** in the Indian Ocean.
- India's diplomatic efforts have positioned it as **a reliable strategic partner**, not merely a nation with shared ethnic ties.

Emerging Geopolitical Contours in the Western Indian Ocean:

- **China, Russia, Iran, Turkey, and Gulf nations** are increasing their presence in the region.
- **Europe** is seeking to reassert influence in the Indian Ocean.
- Mauritius has **balanced its global partnerships** while maintaining **strategic autonomy**.

Conclusion:

- PM Modi's visit to Mauritius signifies India's commitment to strengthening strategic ties.
- The Indo-Mauritian partnership extends beyond historical and cultural ties, **playing a pivotal role in India's maritime security and regional stability**.
- **As global power dynamics shift**, India's role in the Western Indian Ocean will remain crucial in **countering China's influence and securing its maritime interests**.

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H1N1 VIRUS | SWINE FLU



- **Swine Influenza (swine flu)** is a respiratory disease of pigs caused by **type A influenza** viruses that causes regular outbreaks in pigs. People do not normally get swine flu, but human infections can and do happen.
- **First case in India:** The first confirmed case of H1N1 in India was reported in **May 2009**. Since then, the virus has caused several outbreaks, with significant case numbers recorded in 2021, 2022, 2023 and now more recently.

Transmission: Flu viruses are spread from person to person mainly through coughing or sneezing. Sometimes people may become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose.

Symptoms:

- The symptoms of swine flu in people are similar to the symptoms of regular human flu and include **fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue**.
- Some people have reported **diarrhea and vomiting** associated with swine flu. In the past, severe illness (pneumonia and respiratory failure) and deaths have been reported with swine flu infection in people.

Treatment: There is **no vaccine available** right now to protect against swine flu. There are everyday actions that can help prevent the spread of germs that cause respiratory illnesses like influenza.