



TATHASTU
Institute Of Civil Services

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TATHASTU
Institute Of Civil Services

 9560300770  www.tathastuics.com  support@tathastuics.com

**HEAD OFFICE: 53/1, UPPER GROUND FLOOR, BADA BAZAR ROAD,
OLD RAJINDER NAGAR, NEW DELHI-110060**



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MODI TO HOLD BILATERAL TALKS AT ASEAN – INDIA SUMMIT

Modi to hold bilateral talks with leaders at ASEAN-India summit

Relations with ASEAN a central pillar of Act East Policy and Indo-Pacific vision, says External Affairs Ministry announcing the PM’s two-day visit

Kallol Bhattacharjee
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Laos on Thursday and Friday to attend the 21st ASEAN-India and the 19th East Asia Summits.

The annual events are crucial as they are being held against the backdrop of fast developments in Myanmar where ethnic armed organisations are battling the military junta of the country, creating hurdles for regional connectivity and security plans.

“India is marking a decade of the Act East Policy this year. Relations with ASEAN are a central pillar of the Act East Policy and our Indo-Pacific vision,” the Ministry of External Affairs said on Thursday announcing the visit.

Mr. Modi will reach the Laotian capital Vientiane on Thursday and will hold bilateral meetings with leaders of the ASEAN countries after attending the ASEAN-India summit in the afternoon.



Major meet: The ASEAN summit is crucial as it comes at a time when India’s neighbour Myanmar is going through a crisis. AFP

Laos is the current chair of ASEAN and Mr. Modi will be travelling at the invitation of his Laotian counterpart, Sonexay Siphandone.

Maritime issues

The ASEAN summit, which began on October 6, is significant as it is being held against the backdrop of heightened tension between the Philippines and China over maritime issues in the South China Sea and the crisis in Myanmar where the ethnic groups are scoring big victories against the military force of

the junta. Apart from the regional leaders, Laos will host Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese.

The events in Laos will be the first diplomatic engagement by the new Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba, who took charge on October 1. During his stay in Vientiane, Mr. Modi will witness the Lao adaptation of the Ramayana.

The ancient Indian classic is celebrated as *Phra Lak Phra Lam (Phra Lakshman Phra Ram)* and it is one of the several adaptations of the classic in Southeast Asia.

- ❖ **Prelims:** Current events of national and international importance.
- ❖ **Mains:** Bilateral, Regional, and Global Groupings and Agreements involving India and/or affecting India’s interests.





ASEAN Overview:

- ❖ The **Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)** is a regional grouping.
- ❖ Promotes **economic** and **security cooperation** among 10 member nations.
- ❖ Members: **Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam**
 - Formed on **8 August 1967** in Bangkok, Thailand.
- ❖ **Founding members:** Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand
 - ASEAN Secretariat located in **Jakarta, Indonesia**.
- ❖ **Key Statistics:**
 - Population: **662 million** (as of 2022).
 - Combined GDP: **\$3.2 trillion** (2022).



Institutional Mechanism of ASEAN

- ❖ **ASEAN Summit:** Meets **annually** to discuss regional issues and set policy directions.
- ❖ **ASEAN Coordinating Council (ACC):** Oversees **implementation** of ASEAN agreements and decisions.
- ❖ **ASEAN Secretariat:** Supports and **facilitates** ASEAN's activities.
- ❖ **ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF):** Platform for **dialogue and cooperation** on political and security issues among member countries and their partners.
- ❖ **Decision Making:** Based on **consultation and consensus**.

How Did ASEAN Originate and Evolve?





ASEAN led forums:

❖ ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF):

- Established in 1994, the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) is 27 member grouping which provides a platform for security dialogue and develop cooperative measures to enhance peace and security in the Indo-Pacific region.
- The ARF is chaired by the ASEAN Chair of that year.

❖ East Asia Summit:

- It is a premier Leaders-led forum held annually, started in 2005 with Kuala Lumpur Declaration, for dialogue and cooperation on issues of common interest to promote peace, stability, and economic prosperity in East Asia.
- **Priority Areas:** There are 6 priority areas of regional cooperation within the framework of the EAS which are a) Environment and Energy b) Education c) Finance d) Global Health Issues and Pandemic Diseases e) Natural Disaster Management and f) ASEAN Connectivity.
- EAS comprises of 18 participating countries, including the ten ASEAN Member States, Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, and the Republic of Korea.
- The United States and Russian Federation joined at the 6th East Asia Summit in Bali in 2011.

- ❖ **ASEAN Plus Three:** The group started in 1997 brings together ASEAN's ten members, China, Japan, and South Korea.

Strengths of ASEAN as a Regional Grouping:

- ❖ **Regional Stability:** Promotes peace and stability via **TAC** and **ARF**.

❖ Economic Growth:

- Population: **630 million** (2021).
- **Dynamic market** for trade and investment.
- **4th largest exporter** globally.

- ❖ **Cultural Diversity:** Rich in **languages, cultures, and religions**.

- ❖ **Strategic Location:** Key hub for **global trade routes** (e.g., **Strait of Malacca**).

❖ Diplomatic Engagement:

- Strong ties with major powers like the **U.S., China, and Japan**.
- Free trade agreements (FTAs) with **India, Japan, China, South Korea**.

Opportunities ASEAN Provides for India:

- ❖ **Potential Market:** **3rd largest** global market, offering export opportunities for India.

- ❖ **Indo-Pacific Strategy:** ASEAN is central to India's "**Act East**" and "**Indo-Pacific**" policies.

- ❖ **Countering China:** Strengthening ASEAN ties to **balance China's influence**.

- ❖ **North-East Connectivity:** ASEAN connectivity can boost India's **northeastern** economic development.

- ❖ **Rule-Based Order:** ASEAN promotes **rules-based** security in the Indo-Pacific, important for regional stability.





Areas of Cooperation Between India and ASEAN

- ❖ **Annual Summit:** Regular **summits** to discuss mutual interests.
- ❖ **Trade and Investment:**
 - ASEAN is India's **4th largest trading partner**.
 - **FTA** between India and ASEAN enhances economic ties.
 - **\$110.4 billion** in total trade (2021-22).
- ❖ **Regional Connectivity:**
 - Projects like the **India-Myanmar-Thailand (IMT) Highway**.
 - **Kaladan Multimodal Transit Project**.
- ❖ **Defense & Security:**
 - Joint military exercises, including **ASEAN-India Maritime Exercise**.
 - India's **SAGAR** vision emphasizes ASEAN in Indo-Pacific security.
- ❖ **Socio-Cultural Cooperation:**
 - **People-to-people** exchanges, including **student programs** and **diplomat training**.
- ❖ **Education & Research:**
 - **ASEAN-India Centre** at RIS promotes research on relations.
 - **Delhi Dialogue**, a forum for discussing ASEAN-India ties.
- ❖ **Funding:**
 - Financial assistance from **ASEAN-India Cooperation Fund** and others.

Significance of ASEAN for India:

Diplomatic and Economic Importance: ASEAN is crucial for India both economically and in terms of security, requiring close diplomatic relations.

Regional Connectivity: Stronger connectivity with ASEAN nations boosts India's presence in Southeast Asia and the Indo-Pacific region.

Focus on Northeast India: **Connectivity** projects with ASEAN keep India's northeastern states at the center, driving their economic growth and development.

Counterbalance to China: Strengthening trade ties with ASEAN can help India counter China's influence in the region while fostering its own economic growth.

Indo-Pacific Security: ASEAN holds a central role in the rules-based security framework of the Indo-Pacific, vital for India's maritime security and trade.

Collaborating Against Security Threats: Collaboration with ASEAN helps India combat insurgency in the Northeast, tackle terrorism, and address issues like tax evasion.



CHALLENGES in INDIA-ASEAN Relations.

- 1.) Geopolitical Concerns → complex regional environment US China conflict India - China
- 2.) Geostategic Challenges → number states embroiled in territorial disputes eg South China Sea → makes difficult for India to engage without taking sides while promoting regional stability.
- 3.) Economic Concerns → India's withdrawal from RCEP. growing trade imbalances. slow connectivity projects eg

Progress on India-My-Thai Trilateral Highway. slow compared to BRI.

- focus on Emerging areas
- Digitalisation
 - Health
 - Space
 - Manufacturing

Way forward

Redressal of Geopolitical Concerns.

India should strongly support ASEAN's role in regional security. — more defence cooper.

Semiconductor Diplomacy.
* Singapore & Malaysia should be extended to other states

Accelerated Infrastructure Develop.

expedite projects → Trilateral highway → Kaladan Multi-modal pjt.

Enhanced Trade Agreements
to address imbalances & reduce non-tariff barriers.



UPSC PYQ 2018

Q.1 Consider the following countries (2018)

1. Australia
2. Canada
3. China
4. India
5. Japan
6. USA

Which of the above are among the 'free-trade partners' of ASEAN?

- (a) 1, 2, 4 and 5
- (b) 3, 4, 5 and 6
- (c) 1, 3, 4 and 5
- (d) 2, 3, 4 and 6

Solution

Answer: C

- ❖ It has free trade agreements (FTAs) with a number of countries like **India, Japan, New Zealand, China, South Korea**, etc.

UPSC PYQ 2016

Q.2 The term 'Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership' often appears in the news in the context of the affairs of a group of countries known as (2016)

- (a) G20
- (b) ASEAN
- (c) SCO
- (d) SAARC

Solution

Answer - B

- ❖ RCEP is a free trade agreement (FTA) among the ten member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Australia, China, Japan, New Zealand, and South Korea. It was signed on November 15, 2020, after eight years of negotiations, and is currently the world's largest trade agreement by population and GDP.





TRIO WINS CHEMISTRY NOBEL FOR WORK ON PROTEIN DESIGN AND PREDICTION OF STRUCTURES

Trio wins Chemistry Nobel for work on protein design and prediction of structures

Vasudevan Mukunth
CHENNAI

The 2024 Nobel Prize for Chemistry was shared by David Baker “for computational protein design” along with Demis Hassabis and John Jumper “for protein structure prediction,” the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences announced on Wednesday.

Heiner Linke, chair of the Nobel Committee for Chemistry, said the award honoured research that connected the sequence of amino acids that make up a protein and the protein’s structure.

Mr. Baker led a team that in 2003 designed a new protein using bespoke software methods. They and others have since refined these methods to be able to point the way to ‘designer’ proteins intended for specific applications.

Johan Åqvist, a former chair of the chemistry Nobel Committee, called the variety of proteins developed by Mr. Baker et al. to be “absolutely mind-blowing” and that “it seems that you can almost construct any type of protein with this technology”.

Mr. Hassabis and Mr. Jumper received the other half of the prize for their hand in developing an artificial intelligence model called AlphaFold 2 that could predict the structures of millions of proteins. Human scientists had done that for only around 1.7 lakh proteins



Glory moment: (From left) David Baker, John Jumper and Demis Hassabis, the recipients of Nobel Prize for Chemistry, 2024. AP



With skillful use of artificial intelligence, Demis Hassabis and John Jumper made it possible to predict the complex structure of essentially any known protein in nature

HEINER LINKE
chair of the Nobel Committee

until then, although the structures and patterns therein were used to train AlphaFold.

“Four years ago in 2020, Demis Hassabis and John Jumper managed to crack the code. With skillful use of artificial intelligence, they made it possible to predict the complex structure of essentially any known protein in nature,” Mr. Linke said.

Unusual pattern

The Nobel Prize for Mr. Hassabis and Mr. Jumper comes relatively quickly after the corresponding

work, around four to six years. There is usually a gap of a few decades between the work and the prize because the former does not immediately prove to be of “greatest benefit to humankind” – a criterion for winning.

For example, John Goodenough shared the 2019 chemistry prize for his work on lithium-ion batteries in 1970s. John Nash, Jr. won part of the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences in 1994 for work he had done in the 1950s.

The chemistry prize this year also continues a relatively new tradition in this category of the prize going to non-chemists – although 1981 chemistry laureate Roald Hoffmann has interpreted this to be a mark of chemistry’s “far and influential reach”, especially in biochemistry and molecular biology.

Mr. Baker works at the University of Washington in Seattle and Mr. Hassabis and Mr. Jumper work at Google DeepMind in London.





2024 Nobel Prize for Chemistry:

- ❖ The 2024 Nobel Prize for chemistry was jointly awarded to David Baker for his research in the field of computational protein design and to Demis Hassabis and John M. Jumper for their work in protein structure prediction.



Why are proteins important?

- ❖ The chemistry prize concerns two areas in the field of protein research: design and structure.
- ❖ All life (as we know it) requires proteins and all proteins are made of amino acids. While there are many types of amino acids in nature, only 20 of them in different combinations make up all the proteins in the human body and in most life forms.
- ❖ Amino acids are found in tissues — like muscles, skin, and hair — that provide structural support, serve as catalysts for biochemical reactions, transport molecules like oxygen across biological membranes, control muscle contraction which lets us move and walk, and make our heart beat, and regulate cell communication that allow different functions to occur efficiently.

What did Jumper and Hassabis do?

- ❖ **Protein Structure and Function:** Proteins are made from 20 amino acids linked in a long chain. These chains fold into specific 3D shapes, which determine the protein's function.
- ❖ **Christian Anfinsen's Discovery:** In the 1960s, scientist Christian Anfinsen showed that a protein always folds into the same shape, and this shape is determined by its sequence of amino acids. This led to the idea that knowing the amino acid sequence could allow scientists to predict a protein's structure.
- ❖ **Hassabis and AlphaFold:** Demis Hassabis, co-founder of DeepMind, entered the field of protein structure prediction using AI. In 2018, his team developed AlphaFold, an AI model that predicted protein structures with about 60% accuracy. While promising, it wasn't perfect.
- ❖ **Jumper's Contribution:** John Jumper joined DeepMind and helped improve AlphaFold significantly, leading to a major breakthrough in accurately predicting protein structures.

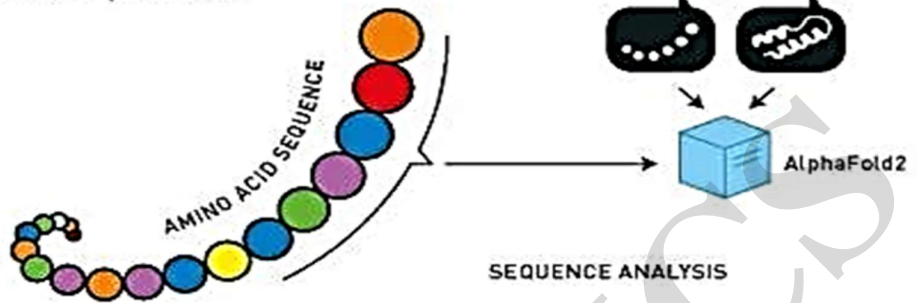


How does AlphaFold2 work?

As part of AlphaFold2's development, the AI model has been trained on all the known amino acid sequences and determined protein structures.

1. DATA ENTRY AND DATABASE SEARCHES

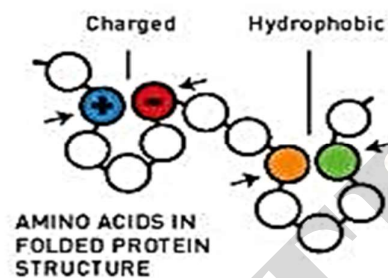
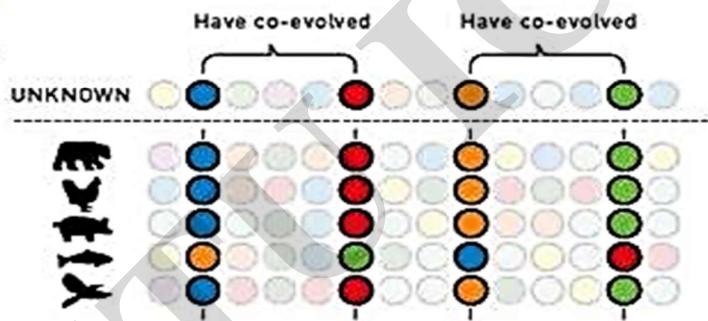
An amino acid sequence with unknown structure is fed into AlphaFold2, which searches databases for similar amino acid sequences and protein structures.



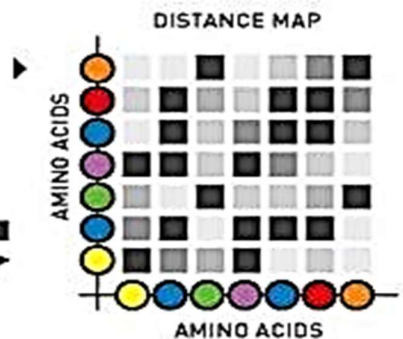
2. SEQUENCE ANALYSIS

The AI model aligns all the similar amino acid sequences – often from different species – and investigates which parts have been preserved during evolution.

In the next step, AlphaFold2 explores which amino acids could interact with each other in the three-dimensional protein structure. Interacting amino acids co-evolve. If one is charged, the other has the opposite charge, so they are attracted to each other. If one is replaced by a water-repellent [hydrophobic] amino acid, the other also becomes hydrophobic.

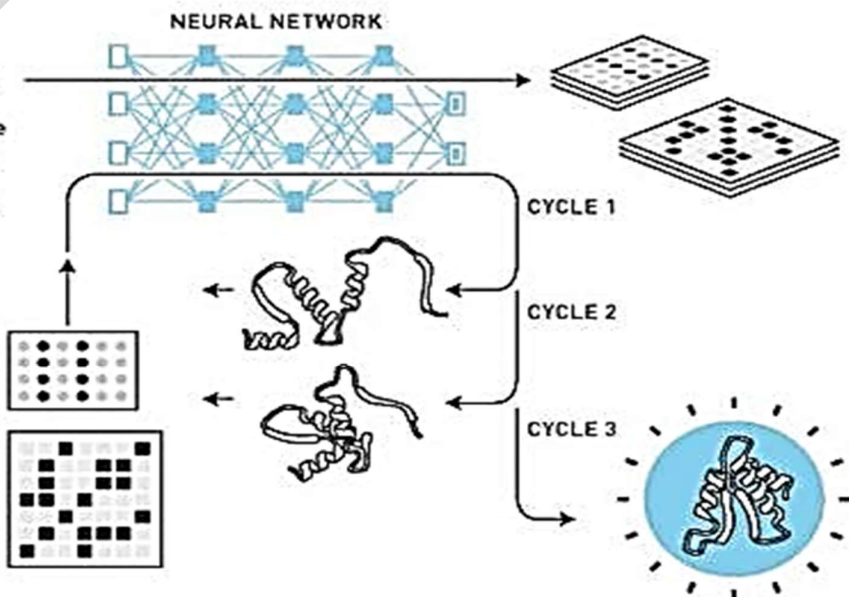


Using this analysis, AlphaFold2 produces a distance map that estimates how close amino acids are to each other in the structure.



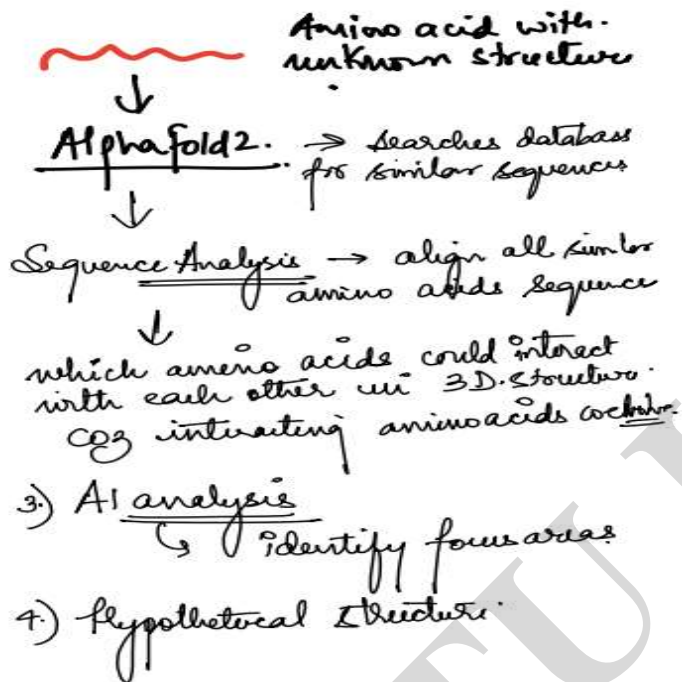
3. AI ANALYSIS

Using an iterative process, AlphaFold2 refines the sequence analysis and distance map. The AI model uses neural networks called transformers, which have a great capacity to identify important elements to focus on. Data about other protein structures – if they were found in step 1 – is also utilised.

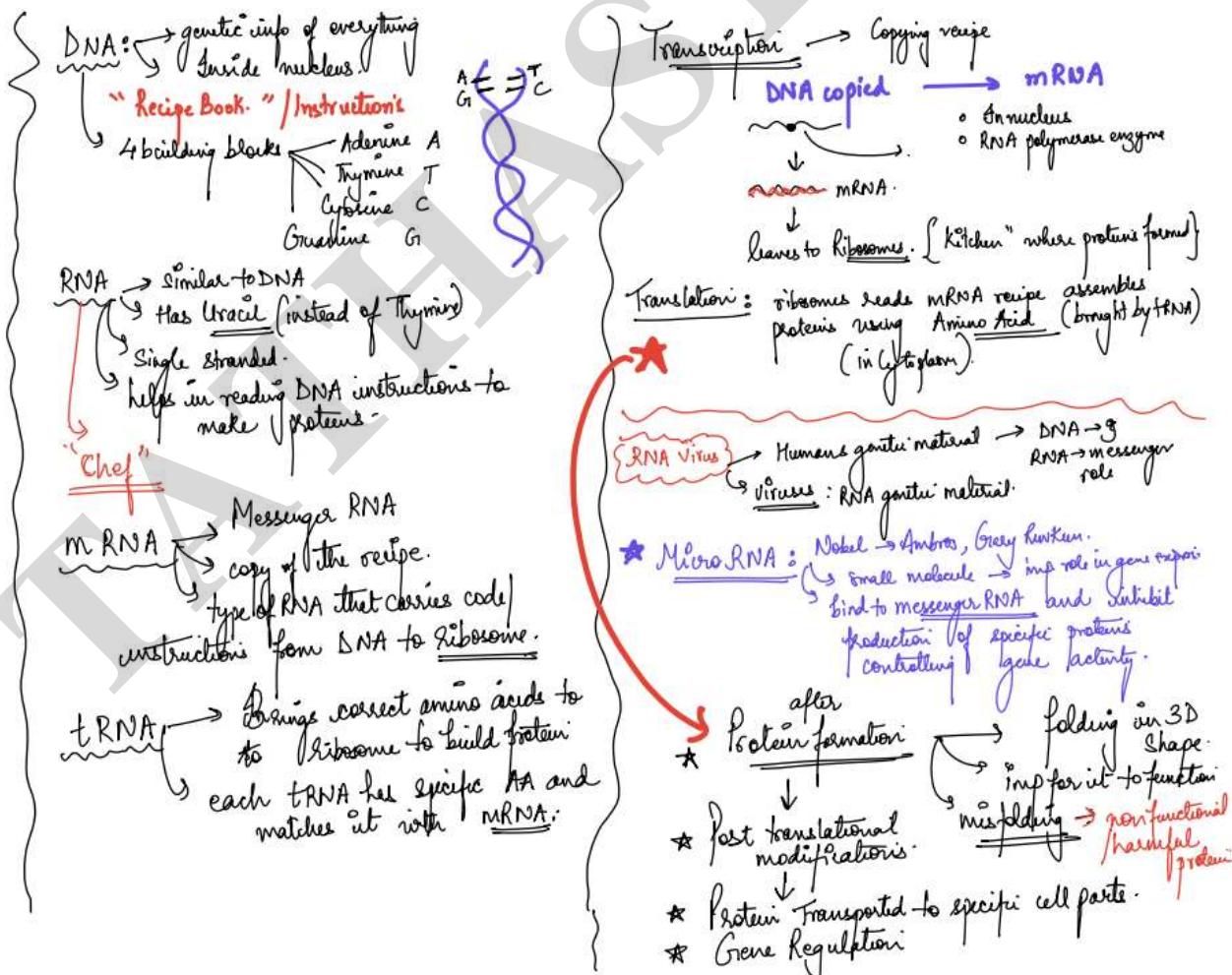


4. HYPOTHETICAL STRUCTURE

AlphaFold2 puts together a puzzle of all the amino acids and tests pathways to produce a hypothetical protein structure. This is re-run through step 3. After three cycles, AlphaFold2 arrives at a particular structure. The AI model calculates the probability that different parts of this structure correspond to reality.



SOME BASICS





What did Baker do?

- ❖ **Rosetta Software:** David Baker developed Rosetta, a software for predicting protein structures, which performed well in the CASP competition in 1998.
- ❖ **Creating New Proteins:** Baker's team used Rosetta in reverse to design new proteins by inputting a desired protein structure and generating the corresponding amino acid sequence. This allowed scientists to create entirely new proteins in the lab, opening possibilities for various applications.

Why is their work important?

1. **Understanding Life and Disease:** The ability to predict and visualize protein structures helps scientists understand how life works at the molecular level, including why certain diseases develop.
2. **Applications:** This knowledge also helps in tackling important challenges, such as understanding antibiotic resistance and even designing microbes that can decompose plastic.



CARBON BORDER ADJUSTMENT MECHANISM

EU's CBAM, deforestation norms unilateral, arbitrary: FM

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Thursday called out the European Union's initiatives such as the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) and Deforestation rules as 'unilateral' and 'arbitrary' measures that will hurt countries like India and stifle economic growth as well as green energy transition goals.

Terming the CBAM plan a trade barrier, Ms. Sitharaman said more such challenges are likely to be thrown up by the developed countries, posing unforeseeable risks for countries like India that



Nirmala Sitharaman

are working towards their 'net zero' commitments to cope with climate change.

'Not helpful to India'

"There can be many [measures like this] but they are unilateral, and not helpful for countries like India," she said at the Financial Times Energy Transition Summit. Asked if India

may take up these issues in parleys related to the Free Trade Agreement with the EU, the Minister said, "I am sure it won't be escalated to the level of hurting the FTA talks as the trade act is an important component of wanting better trade relations, but our concerns will definitely be voiced. We have voiced this several times, and we will be doing it again."

Ms. Sitharaman also asserted that the Haryana Assembly poll outcomes, where the BJP emerged with a majority, should dispel any perceptions that the present central government is weaker "inspite of coming back to power for the third time".

- ❖ **For Prelims:** EU, Carbon Trade, Carbon Emission, ETS, Green Energy, Decarbonization.
- ❖ **For Mains:** Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism and its Implication on India.

- ❖ It is a **European Union (EU) tariff on carbon-intensive products.**
- ❖ Part of the EU's plan to cut greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030, compared to 1990 levels.
- ❖ **Purpose:** To put a fair price on the carbon emitted during the production of carbon intensive goods that are entering the EU and to encourage cleaner industrial production in non-EU countries.
- ❖ By confirming that a price has been paid for the embedded carbon emissions generated in the production of certain goods imported into the EU, the CBAM will ensure the carbon price of imports is equivalent to the carbon price of domestic production, and that the EU's climate objectives are not undermined.
- ❖ If implemented as planned, **EU importers will have to buy carbon certificates** corresponding to the carbon price that would have been paid in the EU if the goods had been produced locally.
- ❖ The price of the certificates would be calculated according to the auction prices in the EU carbon credit market.



MENTAL HEALTH IN INDIA'S MATERIAL WORLD

The theme of World Mental Health Day (October 10) this year is about 'prioritising mental health in the workplace'. The critical link between mental health and work is examined in three articles on the Editorial and Opinion pages – two in the print edition and one in the online edition

Mental health in India's material world

In July this year, the case of a 26-year-old woman executive working for a multinational consulting firm, ending her life due to immense work pressures moved the spotlight to an important issue that concerns millions of working Indians. In September, a 38-year-old software engineer with 15 years of experience in a Chennai-based firm, ended his life. He was on medication for depression caused by work stress. Despite their "successful" careers, the loss of these lives underscores a growing mental health crisis in India, where success is often equated with relentless productivity and material wealth. These events reveal the struggles many face such as battling depression, anxiety, and a lack of purpose even as they put up a facade of success and contentment.

India is currently witnessing a surge in mental health disorders. According to *The Lancet* Psychiatry Commission, over 197 million people suffer from conditions such as depression, anxiety and substance abuse. Economic growth has created new opportunities, but it has also intensified societal pressures and personal expectations. As India's developmental aspirations rise, mental well-being is often overlooked, fuelling a crisis driven by materialism and a growing disconnect from community and self-awareness.

At the core of this crisis are existential questions that have guided human thought since the times of Socrates and Aristotle such as: Who am I? What is the purpose of my life? How should I live? Socrates said, "The unexamined life is not worth living", highlighting the need for self-reflection. Aristotle linked the good life to eudaimonia – flourishing through virtuous living. Today, these essential inquiries are overshadowed by the pursuit of efficiency, productivity and material wealth. As India embraces consumerism, this focus on affluence distances individuals from deeper self-reflection, exacerbating the mental health crisis.

Rising stress and anxiety

India is grappling with a mental health epidemic, with millions suffering from disorders such as depression and anxiety. The relentless pressures of urban living, financial instability, and fierce competition are significant contributors. Even those who achieve material success often find that wealth and status do not deliver true well-being. Instead, many feel isolated and disconnected from their communities, experiencing a profound sense of purposelessness. While material wealth provides temporary comfort, it fails to meet deeper emotional and psychological needs. The growing focus on consumerism, particularly in urban areas, has fostered a culture where luxury and



Soumyajit Bhar

Assistant Professor and Assistant Dean (Admissions and Outreach) at the School of Liberal Studies, BML Munjal University



Kalpita Bhar Paul

Assistant Professor of Philosophy at the School of Liberal Studies, BML Munjal University

India is facing a mental health epidemic, with urban living, financial instability and fierce competition as significant contributors

conspicuous goods define status. This leads to feelings of inadequacy, stress and social comparison. As Ernest Becker noted, much of human behaviour is driven by the fear of impermanence and insignificance. People chase material wealth for social validation, hoping it will bring lasting happiness, but this pursuit neglects self-awareness. The endless quest for affluence disconnects individuals from the essential elements of a meaningful life – self-awareness, purpose, and meaningful relationships – trapping them in a cycle of dissatisfaction.

To break this cycle, we must rethink what constitutes a good life. Current political and economic priorities reinforce the belief that wealth and consumption equate to happiness. This mindset shapes societal norms, encouraging consumption-driven choices that further entrench the mental health crisis.

Collective action, community as solutions

To address this crisis, we must shift focus from individual success to collective well-being. Studies show that strong social connections, supportive communities, and meaningful work are critical to mental health. However, work-life balance and legal protection are increasingly under threat. The socio-political climate in India, where young individuals desperately strive for a consumeristic "good life", has led to proposals such as extended work hours. For instance, the Karnataka Shops and Commercial Establishments (Amendment) Bill 2024 permits employees to work more than 12 hours a day, up to 125 hours in three months. Amid rapid urbanisation and personal achievement, it is essential to remind ourselves of the deeper meaning and purpose in life that can be found through community, joy, and friendship.

Examples from other countries offer lessons. In Brazil, community gardens have helped residents reconnect by sharing responsibilities and fostering a sense of belonging. Similar initiatives in India could counteract the isolation fostered by urban living and consumerism, bringing people together to create stronger social bonds.

Improving mental health requires embracing community-oriented living that challenges the individualised lifestyle promoted by consumer culture. Modern consumerism equates freedom with personal consumption, weakening social bonds that traditionally held communities together. In contrast, community living fosters a sustainable alternative – shared responsibility, collective purpose, and mutual support create an environment that nurtures emotional and psychological well-being. In community settings,

people share resources and experiences, reducing the pressure to compete for individual success. This strengthens social support networks and reintroduces the value of interdependence, where well-being is measured by relationships and contributions to the group rather than personal wealth. Unlike the isolation and comparison promoted by consumer culture, community living fosters empathy, mindfulness, and human connection, providing fulfilment through shared experiences. These environments offer a sense of belonging, purpose, and security, all of which are crucial for reducing stress and mental health issues.

Consumer choice and liberty

A significant contributor to India's mental health crisis is the reduction of freedom to consumer choice. As India's middle class expands, many equate their ability to buy goods with personal freedom and success. However, this perspective prioritises material wealth over deeper values such as equality and fraternity. The result is a society where happiness is measured by buying power, leading to an endless cycle of consumption that does little to improve long-term mental health.

By reducing freedom to consumer choice, individuals feel growing inadequacy, unable to meet rising standards of success. In contrast, prioritising connection, community, and equity provides a healthier foundation for both personal well-being and societal progress.

Addressing India's mental health crisis requires rethinking what it means to live a good life. We must challenge the materialistic notion of success and refocus on mental, emotional, and social well-being. The solution lies in adopting alternative pathways that prioritise community and collective action over individual wealth accumulation.

Programmes that promote mindfulness, social-emotional learning, community living, and mental health awareness are essential for creating a culture that values mental well-being. Additionally, social policies that reduce inequality and provide mental health support are crucial to address the crisis.

A truly good life is not about how much we can buy or achieve, but about how we relate to ourselves, our communities, and our environment. By prioritising community, equity, and mental well-being, we can build a healthier, more connected society where people feel supported and valued. Only by addressing the root causes of the mental health crisis can we pave the way for a more meaningful and fulfilling future for all.

MENTAL HEALTH
IN FOCUS

Context:

- ❖ The theme of **World Mental Health Day (October 10)** this year is 'prioritizing mental health in the workplace'.

Notes: World Mental Health Day was established on **10th October, 1992** by the **World Federation for Mental Health**





Mental Health:

- ❖ Mental health refers to a **person's emotional, psychological, and social well-being**, encompassing their overall mental and emotional state.
- ❖ It involves a person's ability to cope with **stress, manage their emotions**, maintain healthy relationships, work productively, and make rational decisions.
- ❖ Mental health is an integral part of overall health and well-being, **just as important as physical health**.

Status of Mental Health in India:

- ❖ **Lack of Access to Care Services:** Over 80% of people in India do not access mental health care due to various reasons like lack of awareness, stigma, and high costs (National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro-Sciences data).
- ❖ **Economic Impact:** The economic loss due to mental health conditions between 2012-2030 is estimated at USD 1.03 trillion (WHO).

Key Points of Article

❖ Mental Health Crisis in India

- **Prevalence:** Over 197 million people suffer from mental health disorders like depression and anxiety.
- **Societal Disconnect:** Rising materialism and consumerism have created a disconnect from self-awareness, leading to purposelessness.
- **Existential Questions:** Issues like identity and purpose are often overshadowed by productivity and wealth accumulation.

❖ Role of Consumerism

- **Pursuit of Affluence:** A consumer-driven society fosters stress, inadequacy, and a sense of insignificance, failing to meet deeper emotional needs.
- **Trap of Material Wealth:** Chasing material wealth for social validation neglects self-awareness and meaningful relationships, fueling dissatisfaction.

❖ Breaking the Cycle

- **Need for Redefining Success:** Society must shift away from equating happiness with wealth and consumption and instead focus on well-being and meaningful living.
- **Collective Action and Community Solutions:** Strong social connections, community living, and meaningful work are essential to mental health.
- **Examples of Collective Living:** Initiatives like community gardens in Brazil help reconnect people and foster a sense of belonging.

❖ Impact of Individualized Lifestyle

- **Weakening of Social Bonds:** Modern consumerism undermines traditional community ties, leading to isolation and weakening mental well-being.





- **Value of Community Living:** Shared responsibility and collective purpose in community settings foster empathy, mindfulness, and connection.

Key Points of Article

❖ Consumer Choice and Liberty

- **Consumerism and Mental Health:** Measuring freedom and success by consumption leads to a cycle of dissatisfaction and mental health decline.
- **Alternative Pathways:** Prioritizing community, connection, and equity offers a healthier foundation for personal and societal well-being.

❖ Solutions for Addressing the Crisis

- **Programs and Policies:** Mindfulness, social-emotional learning, and mental health awareness programs are essential.
- **Social Policies:** Reducing inequality and providing mental health support are crucial for tackling the crisis.

❖ Redefining a Good Life

- **Focus on Well-being:** A truly fulfilling life is about meaningful relationships, community connections, and mental health, not wealth accumulation.
- **Building a Healthier Society:** Prioritizing equity, community, and mental well-being is key to creating a supportive and valued society.

Issues Surrounding Mental Health in India:

- ❖ **Limited Accessibility to Mental Healthcare:** Shortage of mental health professionals, especially in rural areas, leading to unequal access to services.
- ❖ **Stigma and Lack of Awareness:** Mental health issues are stigmatized, and there's a lack of understanding, making individuals reluctant to seek help.
- ❖ **Vulnerability of Adolescents:** Adolescents face unique mental health challenges, including academic pressure, body image issues, and societal expectations. The prevalence of severe mental illness among Indian adolescents is 7.3%.
- ❖ **Gender Disparities:** Women face higher rates of depression, anxiety, and domestic violence, and often have limited autonomy in seeking help.
 - In 2021, 50% of suicides in India were committed by housewives (NCRB report).
- ❖ **Economic Factors:** Poverty and inequality intensify mental health issues due to financial stress and limited access to education and healthcare.
- ❖ **Online and Social Media Influences:** Cyberbullying, social comparison, and misinformation on social media are negatively affecting mental health.
- ❖ **Aging Population and Geriatric Mental Health:** India's aging population needs more mental health support due to loneliness, depression, and dementia among the elderly.





Government Initiatives Related to Mental Health

- National Mental Health Programme (NMHP)
- Ayushman Bharat – Health and Wellness Centres (AB-HWC)
- National Tele Mental Health Programme
- Kiran Helpline
- Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram
- Yuva Spandana Yojana (Karnataka)

Way Forward:

❖ Shift to a Convergent Model of Mental Health:

- Move beyond the medical model to a holistic one, considering factors affecting well-being throughout life.
- Example: The 'Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child' model in the U.S. considers nutrition, physical activity, and emotional health for children's well-being.

❖ Increase Mental Healthcare Infrastructure:

- Build more clinics and facilities, especially in rural areas.
- Train more mental health professionals and promote telemedicine services to improve accessibility.

❖ Integration with Primary Healthcare:

- Incorporate mental health services into primary care for early detection and treatment.
- Train primary care providers to manage common mental health issues.

❖ Mental Health Education:

- Introduce mental health education in school curricula to promote early awareness and reduce stigma.

❖ Mental Health Insurance Coverage:

Expand mental health insurance coverage and ensure parity with other health services to make care more affordable and accessible

UPSC PYQ 2023:

Q.4 Why suicide among young women is increasing in Indian society? (2023)





Intro: → NCRB data: Women suicide rate ↑ (15-29 years)
"suicide" → intentional act of taking one's life.

Factors → Educational pressure
→ social norms + expectations
→ Unemployment, economic dependence.
→ Domestic violence / abuse.
→ lack of security / autonomy.

Interventions → ?

Way forward: → multifaceted approach.
→ role of govt / policies
→ community + family support.
→ education reforms.
→ legal social reforms.

} Address root causes
+ robust support system

Keep Learning and Keep Revising!

