

# 9 PM Current Affairs Weekly Compilation

For UPSC CSE mains examination



सत्यमेव जयते

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**Features :**

Arranged as per syllabus Topics  
Most complete coverage of major  
News Papers editorials

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## India's Health Policies Need Better Primary Care

**Source:** The post India's Health Policies Need Better Primary Care has been created, based on the article “**From insurance-driven private health care to equity**” published in “**The Hindu**” on 17th March 2025

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper2- Governance-Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health

**Context:** The article discusses India's health policies and budget. It highlights how Ayushman Bharat focuses on hospital care but neglects primary health care. It warns against over-reliance on private insurance and suggests investing in community health services to reduce costs and improve accessibility.

For detailed information on Public Health Sector [read this article here](#)

**How does Ayushman Bharat impact health care in India?**

1. **Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY)** helps reduce **out-of-pocket expenditure (OOPE)** by covering hospitalisation, surgeries, and procedures.
2. However, it **focuses on tertiary care** while **neglecting primary health care (PHC)**, which is essential for cost-effective health care.
3. PHC reduces long-term costs and prevents diseases, but **AB-PMJAY shifts attention away from preventive and community-based health care**, increasing reliance on private hospitals.
4. This contradicts the **Bhore Committee's vision** of a **pyramid-shaped health system**, with PHC as the foundation tapering to secondary and tertiary care.

**How is the health budget allocated, and what are its challenges?**

1. The **2025 Budget allocates ₹9,406 crore** to AB-PMJAY, which is **₹2,000 crore more than the previous year**.
2. The total health budget includes **₹95,957.87 crore for the Department of Health and Family Welfare** and **₹3,900.69 crore for the Department of Health Research**.
3. The **National Health Mission (NHM)**, which supports **grassroot health care**, receives a **declining share**, indicating the government's reduced focus on universal health care.
4. The Budget prioritises **medical digital infrastructure and medical education expansion** rather than strengthening **primary health care**.

**How does the increase in foreign direct investment (FDI) affect health care?**

1. The **government increased the FDI cap in the insurance sector from 74% to 100%**, following a previous increase from **49% to 74% in 2021**.
2. The goal is to **increase insurance penetration**, especially in **rural areas**, and support the vision of “**Insurance for All**” by 2047.
3. The **Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI)** expects more capital and expanded coverage.
4. However, **informal workers and marginalised urban populations** may struggle with **insurance literacy and access to insurance benefits**.
5. **Without strict regulations, private insurance could lead to rising OOPE due to inflated medical costs and uncovered consumables.**

**What are the risks of relying on private insurance for health care?**

1. The **U.S. model** of private insurance-driven health care has led to **high treatment costs, inequalities, and limited access** for uninsured individuals.
2. **Claim denials and corporate control over health care** have sparked public criticism.
3. India risks **similar issues** if it **relies too much on private insurance** without strong government oversight.
4. **ASHA workers and grassroots health-care providers** may not receive sufficient coverage under current insurance models.

**What can India learn from global health care models?**

1. **Thailand** provides **universal health coverage** using **tax revenue** and **strong public health investments**.
2. **Costa Rica's system** mandates insurance (Caja Costarricense de Seguro Social) while **prioritising PHC and community-based services**.
3. These models show that **public investment in PHC reduces long-term health costs** and ensures better access to care.

4. India needs to **reassess its priorities**, ensuring health policies focus on **preventive and community-based health care** instead of **tertiary private care**.
5. The government must **implement safeguards** to prevent **private insurance from inflating costs** and ensure that **UHC (Universal Health Coverage)** remains a reality, not just a slogan.

**Question for practice:**

Examine how India's reliance on private insurance impacts health care accessibility and affordability.

**India faces challenges in public health education**

**Source:** The post India faces challenges in public health education has been created, based on the article "**The challenges of public health education in India**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 17th March 2025

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper2-Governance-Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health

**Context:** The article discusses challenges in India's public health education and job market. It highlights job shortages, poor training quality, and lack of regulation. It suggests creating more public health jobs, improving training, and setting quality standards to strengthen India's health system.

**How has the U.S. decision to cut global health aid affected India?**

1. The **U.S. withdrew from the WHO** and reduced **USAID funding**, impacting many low- and middle-income countries.
2. **India was largely unaffected** because international aid makes up just **1% of its total health expenditure**.
3. However, this decision **reduced funding for public health development** in India.
4. It also **shrunk job opportunities** for **MPH graduates** and public health professionals.

**How has public health education evolved in India?**

1. **Public health education** in India dates back to the **colonial era**.
2. The **All India Institute of Hygiene and Public Health, Kolkata** was established in **1932**.
3. Preventive and social medicine, now called **community medicine**, became part of medical education.
4. Earlier, **most students pursued MPH abroad** due to the lack of institutions in India.
5. The number of MPH institutions **grew from just one in 2000 to over 100 today**.
6. The **National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) (2005)** increased demand for public health roles.
7. However, after an initial rise, **government recruitment slowed down**, making jobs scarce.

**What challenges do public health graduates face?**

1. **Mismatch between supply and demand** – many MPH graduates, but **few job openings**.
2. Entry-level jobs (e.g., **research/programme assistants**) attract a **large number of applicants**, making competition tough.
3. The **private sector favors hospital and business management graduates** over public health professionals.
4. **Public sector job opportunities are shrinking**, limiting options for graduates.
5. **Research and development (R&D) jobs depend on foreign grants**, but **India is no longer a priority country** for global funders.
6. The **development sector is underfunded**, and the situation is worsening due to the **U.S. funding cuts**.

**Why is the quality of public health education a concern?**

1. **MPH courses lack mandatory regulation** from bodies like **NMC or UGC**.
2. **No uniform curriculum or quality standards** despite the Health Ministry's model course framework.
3. **Public health schools compete for students**, often lowering admission standards.
4. Many students **join without clear knowledge or passion for the field**.
5. **Public health faculty lack proper training and real-world experience**.
6. Some **large and populous states like Bihar, Jharkhand, and Assam have few or no MPH institutions**.

**What steps can improve public health jobs and education?**

1. Create **public health jobs in primary care, state, and national health systems**.
2. Develop a **dedicated public health workforce** at the state level.
3. Set up a **regulatory body under NMC or UGC** to improve education standards.
4. Ensure **practical learning** is integrated into all public health programs.
5. Expand **public health institutions in states with low availability** of courses.
6. India must strengthen its **own health development funding** instead of depending on global aid.

**Question for practice:**

Examine the challenges faced by public health graduates in India and their impact on employment opportunities.

**Starlink faces challenges launching satellite internet in India**

**Source:** The post Starlink faces challenges launching satellite internet in India has been created, based on the article “What is Elon Musk’s Starlink all about?” published in “The Hindu” on 17th March 2025

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper3-Awareness in the fields of IT, Space, Computers, robotics, nano-technology, bio-technology

**Context:** The article discusses Bharti Airtel and Reliance Jio's partnership with SpaceX's Starlink to introduce satellite internet in India. Starlink uses low-earth orbit satellites for internet access. It faces challenges in India, such as licensing, security clearances, and spectrum allocation. Pricing and availability details are still uncertain.

For detailed information on **Satellite Internet: Working, Advantages and Challenges** [read this article here](#)

**What is Starlink and how does it work?**

1. Starlink is a satellite internet service by SpaceX.
2. It uses over **7,000 low-earth orbit satellites** to provide internet.
3. Users need a **ground terminal** to connect.
4. Speeds are around **100 Mbps**, but latency is higher than wired broadband.
5. It works best in remote areas where fiber or 5G is unavailable.

For detailed information on **Space internet (Starlink project)** [read this article here](#)

**Why is Starlink important for India?**

1. It is **not very useful in cities** where 5G and broadband are strong.
2. It is **helpful for rural and remote areas** with poor internet access.
3. It can provide **instant connectivity** without the need for extensive infrastructure.

**How much does Starlink cost?**

1. A **residential kit** costs **\$149** in the U.S. (₹17,000–₹40,000 in India, including taxes).
  2. A **portable "roaming" kit** costs **\$349**.
  3. Monthly plans in the U.S. range from **\$120 to \$165**.
  4. In Bhutan, prices are **₹4,200–₹8,400** per month, which may be similar in India.
- A **"mobile priority" plan** costs **₹21,000 per month** for premium users.

**What are the regulatory hurdles in India?**

1. SpaceX needs a **GMPCS license** under the **Telecommunications Act, 2023**.
2. The government requires **corporate ownership details** for approval.
3. A **security clearance** from the **Ministry of Home Affairs** is pending.
4. Ground stations in India need **lawful interception systems** for security.
5. Satellite spectrum allocation remains unclear, as telecom companies want it **auctioned**.

**When will Starlink be available in India?**

1. There is **no official launch date** due to pending approvals.
2. Regulatory delays include **spectrum allocation and security clearances**.
3. **Airtel and Jio have signed deals**, but final approvals are awaited.
4. Political and trade factors, including **U.S. pressure**, may speed up approvals.

**Question for practice:**

Examine the regulatory challenges that SpaceX's Starlink faces in launching its satellite internet services in India.

**Ambedkar drives social transformation using pragmatic force and energy**

**Source:** The post Ambedkar drives social transformation using pragmatic force and energy has been created, based on the article “What is Elon Musk’s Starlink all about?” published in “The Hindu” on 17th March 2025

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper4-Contributions of moral thinkers and philosophers from India and the world.

**Context:** The article discusses Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's philosophy through the ideas of force and energy. It highlights his engagement with John Dewey's pragmatism and its influence on his fight against caste and inequality. It explains Ambedkar's rhetorical strategies and his reconstruction of Buddhism.

**How did Ambedkar's philosophy reflect force and energy?**



1. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's ideas were driven by the principles of **force and energy**, which he applied to his fight for social justice.
2. He believed in action and change, not just theory.
3. His philosophy combined pragmatism, social reform, and intellectual rigor to challenge caste and inequality.

#### **What was Ambedkar's connection with John Dewey's pragmatism?**

1. Ambedkar studied under **John Dewey** at Columbia University.
2. He deeply engaged with Dewey's ideas, especially **pragmatism** and ethics.
3. His copies of Dewey's books had markings, showing careful reading.
4. Dewey's concept of **moral laws based on consequences** influenced Ambedkar's approach to social reform.

#### **How did Ambedkar use pragmatism to analyze caste oppression?**

1. In **Annihilation of Caste**, Ambedkar argued that caste destroys **individual agency**.
2. He saw caste as a system that denies people the freedom to make choices.
3. Inspired by **Deweyan pragmatism**, he explained how caste laws are rigid and based on outdated customs, preventing progress.

#### **How did Ambedkar use rhetoric for social reconstruction?**

1. Ambedkar used **rhetoric** (persuasive communication) to challenge caste and gender discrimination.
2. He turned the **1818 Battle of Bhima Koregaon** into a symbol of **Dalit resistance**.
3. His **1943 lecture on Ranade, Gandhi, and Jinnah** used dialectical debate to challenge dominant narratives.
4. He strategically used history and logic to empower the oppressed.

#### **How did Ambedkar redefine Buddhism through pragmatism?**

1. Ambedkar rejected traditional, **theological Buddhism** and reinterpreted it to focus on **social justice**.
2. In **The Buddha and His Dhamma**, he argued that Buddha left his palace to **prevent war**, not for enlightenment.
3. His **Navayana Buddhism** promoted **liberty, equality, and fraternity**, challenging caste and gender oppression.

#### **What was the broader impact of Ambedkar's ideas?**

1. Ambedkar's philosophy was influenced by **Buddha, Kabir, Phule**, and many others.
2. Scholars like **Sharmila Rege and Gail Omvedt** explored his role in class and gender struggles.
3. His ideas remain crucial for modern debates on **social justice, caste, and democracy**.

#### **Question for practice:**

Discuss how Dr. B.R. Ambedkar applied pragmatism to his fight against caste oppression and social justice.

### India's migration crisis needs better opportunities at home

**Source:** The post India's migration crisis needs better opportunities at home has been created, based on the article "A land where ambition grows minus an outbound ticket" published in "The Hindu" on 18th March 2025

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper1- population and associated issues, poverty and developmental issues, urbanisation, their problems and their remedies.

**Context:** The U.S. recently deported Indian migrants who entered illegally. Many were handcuffed and flown back on military aircraft, sparking outrage. Migration is not just about policy; it is about human lives. While it has shaped economies and societies, stricter global policies now make it harder.

#### Reasons for Rising Migration

**1. Success of Indian Migrants in the IT Industry:** India has the world's largest emigrant population, with many achieving global success. Leaders like Sundar Pichai (Google) and Satya Nadella (Microsoft) exemplify India's influence in the IT sector. While migration has driven economic growth, increasing global restrictions now pose challenges for aspiring professionals seeking opportunities abroad.

**2. The Paradox of India's Growth and Outmigration:** Remittances exceeded \$120 billion in 2023, highlighting India's reliance on migration. Despite economic growth, youth unemployment, declining agricultural incomes, and limited career opportunities continue to drive people abroad. Even prosperous states like Gujarat and Punjab face significant outmigration. While India celebrates global success stories, it struggles to provide dignified work and stability at home.

**3. The Exploitative Industry of Illegal Migration:** Smuggling networks prey on desperation, convincing even middle-class families to risk everything for migration. The **Gujarati family that froze to death at the Canada-U.S. border in 2022** highlights the dangers. Some deported individuals had paid ₹1 crore for illegal routes, raising questions about why people with such resources still seek uncertain futures abroad.

**4. The Harsh Reality of the American Dream:** For many migrants, the American Dream is an illusion. An estimated 7,25,000 undocumented Indians live in the U.S., often in precarious jobs with constant fear of deportation. The Biden administration deported 1,100 Indians last year, and 1,70,000 Indian migrants have been detained since 2020 while attempting to cross illegally. The recent deportations—conducted with shackles and military transport—have drawn criticism, echoing similar protests by Colombia and Mexico against such treatment of their citizens.

#### Key Issues

**1. Rise of Smuggling Networks:** The lack of domestic opportunities fuels illegal migration, creating a dangerous cycle.

**2. Human Rights Concerns in Deportation:** Deportation should be an administrative process, not a punitive spectacle.

**3. Disillusionment with Migration:** Many migrants end up in exploitative jobs, challenging the idea of foreign prosperity.

#### Way Forward

**1. Creating More Domestic Opportunities:** India must invest in **education, infrastructure, and entrepreneurship** to ensure migration remains a choice, not a necessity.

**2. Combating Smuggling Networks:** Stronger enforcement and public awareness can deter illegal migration.

**3. Ensuring Dignified Deportation Processes:** India must demand fair treatment for its citizens abroad.

**4. Building India as an Economic Magnet:** Instead of exporting talent, India should create an environment where ambition flourishes domestically.

#### Conclusion

Illegal migration stems from deeper structural challenges. While it must be addressed, the response should **ensure dignity and focus on long-term economic solutions** rather than reactionary deportation debates. India must work towards **a future where people stay by choice, not out of necessity**.

#### Question for practice:

Examine the key reasons behind India's migration crisis and the challenges faced by Indian migrants abroad.

### India's engagement with the Taliban and its impact

**Source:** The post India's engagement with the Taliban and its impact has been created, based on the article "**New Delhi's perilous recalibration with the Taliban**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 18th March 2025

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper2- International Relations-India and its neighbourhood- relations.

**Context:** India is moving toward formal engagement with the Taliban, with reports that the Modi government may allow the regime to appoint an envoy in New Delhi. This follows a high-level meeting between India's Foreign Secretary and the Taliban's 'Foreign Minister' in Dubai. The move reflects India's strategic interests despite concerns over human rights violations.

For detailed information on **India strengthens ties with Taliban amidst challenges** [read this article here](#)

#### India's Evolving Relationship with the Taliban

- 1. Reopening of the Indian Embassy in Kabul (June 2022):** Marked India's re-engagement with Afghanistan.
- 2. Humanitarian Aid & Economic Cooperation:** India has provided food and medical aid while exploring trade opportunities.
- 3. Political Engagement:** The January 2024 meeting in Dubai was the first official high-level dialogue, indicating India's willingness to deepen ties.

#### Geopolitical Motivations for India's Engagement

- 1. Countering China's Influence:** China was the first country to accept a Taliban envoy in 2023. Beijing is funding key infrastructure projects in Afghanistan and is considering including the country in its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). If India does not engage, it risks being left behind.
- 2. Weakening Pakistan's Influence:** Pakistan-Taliban relations have worsened, giving India an opportunity to build strategic ties in Afghanistan. The Taliban is increasingly distancing itself from Islamabad and is engaging with other regional powers, including Russia and several Central Asian states.
- 3. Strategic Access to Central Asia:** Afghanistan serves as a critical gateway to Central Asia, a region rich in energy resources and vital to India's economic and security interests. Strengthening ties with Kabul could significantly enhance India's regional connectivity.

#### Security Risks & Challenges

- 1. Terrorism Threats from Afghanistan:** The Islamic State (IS) is expanding its influence in Afghanistan, targeting both the Taliban and foreign entities. Major attacks include the **assassination of Taliban leader Khalil Ur-Rahman Haqqani (December 2023)**, **threats against the Chinese embassy (2023)**, and the **Moscow terror attack (March 2024)**, which killed 140 people.



**2. Taliban's Links to Terror Groups:** The Taliban has been accused of supporting **Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)**, which has escalated attacks in Pakistan. In **February 2024**, the TTP carried out **147 attacks**, killing **180 soldiers**. Pakistan retaliated with **airstrikes on terror camps inside Afghanistan**.

**3. India's Own Terrorism Concerns:** IS has previously targeted India, including a **December 2023 attack on the Indian consulate in Jalalabad**. A **2023 UN report warned that IS is recruiting operatives** for large-scale attacks in India. Strengthening ties with the Taliban without securing counter-terrorism assurances could put India at greater risk.

**4. De Facto Recognition of the Taliban:** Accepting a Taliban envoy would imply **recognition of the regime**, a stance most countries refuse to take. The **UN has condemned Taliban policies as "gender apartheid"** due to severe restrictions on women's rights. Aligning with a globally isolated regime could damage India's international reputation.

### Way Forward for India

#### 1. Demanding Counter-Terrorism Commitments:

- India must ensure that the Taliban actively counters IS and severs ties with terror groups like the TTP.
- Afghanistan should not become a safe haven for anti-India terror groups.

#### 2. Balancing Engagement with Caution:

- India must weigh economic and strategic benefits against security risks.
- It should avoid full recognition of the Taliban while keeping diplomatic channels open.

#### 3. Learning from China & Pakistan's Mistakes:

- China's investments in Afghanistan have made it a target of IS attacks.
- Pakistan's past support for the Taliban has backfired, leading to increased terror attacks on its own soil.
- India should engage cautiously, ensuring its interests are protected.

#### Question for practice:

Examine the geopolitical and security implications of India's growing engagement with the Taliban.

### Challenges faced by migrant workers and ways to improve welfare access

**Source:** The post Challenges faced by migrant workers and ways to improve welfare access has been created, based on the article **"The barriers faced by construction workers"** published in **"The Hindu"** on 18th March 2025

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper3-Infrastructures

**Context:** India's construction sector contributes about 9% to the national GDP and is projected to reach \$1.4 trillion by 2025. However, concerns over labour shortages have emerged, with some attributing this to welfare schemes discouraging relocation. This overlooks deeper structural challenges faced by construction workers, especially migrants.

#### Current Status of India's construction sector

1. Around **3 crore workers** are expected to be employed in the construction sector by **2030**.
2. The Building and Other Construction Workers (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1996 (BOCW Act), provides welfare provisions, but access remains difficult.

3. **5.65 crore workers** are registered with State construction boards, which have collected around **₹70,000 crore** in welfare cess.

4. A **2023 Parliamentary Standing Committee report** found that **75% of the collected cess remains unutilized** due to fragmented databases and administrative hurdles.

### **Challenges Faced by migrant workers in India's construction sector**

#### **1. Documentation Barriers:**

- Many workers **lack permanent addresses**, making it difficult to obtain birth certificates, residence proof, and other essential documents.
- The requirement for an **employment certificate proving 90 days of work** creates obstacles. While some States allow self-certification or trade union verification, most rely on employer-issued certificates, which contractors often refuse to provide.

#### **2. Delayed and Inaccessible Welfare Benefits:**

- Workers affected by **seasonal employment disruptions**, such as **heat waves** or **pollution-related construction bans**, struggle to access financial aid.
- The **lack of a digital public infrastructure** delays **direct benefit transfers** and creates **administrative challenges** during crises.

#### **3. Inter-State Welfare Inaccessibility:**

- Migrant workers registered in one State **cannot access benefits in another** due to **non-interoperable systems**.
- For example, a worker registered with the **Haryana BOCW Board** loses access upon relocating to Delhi, leading to **welfare discontinuity**.

#### **Way forward**

**1. National Labour Identification System:** A system **similar to One Nation One Ration Card**, linking BOCW registrations to UAN on e-Shram, would enable **inter-State portability** of welfare benefits.

**2. Digitized Welfare Access:** A **central digital platform** with Aadhaar-based verification and **real-time tracking** can improve accessibility. **Standardized workflows** would reduce administrative delays and improve transparency.

#### **3. Simplified Documentation and Registration:**

- **Alternative proofs** should be accepted to ease the verification process.
- **On-site registration camps** at construction sites can reduce dependence on employer-issued certificates.

#### **3. Skill Development and Workplace Improvements:**

- **Industry-specific skilling programs** can help address labour shortages and improve productivity.
- **Safe and dignified work environments** are necessary to retain workers and enhance efficiency.

#### **Conclusion**

Labour shortages in the construction sector cannot be resolved without addressing systemic barriers to welfare access. **Ensuring inter-State benefit portability, simplifying registration processes, and improving workplace conditions** will help build a stable, skilled, and resilient workforce.

#### **Question for practice:**

Discuss the structural challenges faced by migrant workers in India's construction sector and suggest measures to improve their welfare access and job stability.

## Challenges and Solutions for Hindi as Rajbhasha

**Source:** The post Challenges and Solutions for Hindi as Rajbhasha has been created, based on the article “Yogendra Yadav writes: We need Hindi as a lokbhasha, not a rajbhasha” published in “Indian Express” on 18th March 2025

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper

**Context:** The debate on Hindi's *Rajbhasha* role is back. It highlights its failure over 75 years to unite India's diverse languages. Despite official status, Hindi hasn't empowered itself or bridged linguistic divides. Meanwhile, English's dominance continues, sidelining Hindi and other languages. This raises concerns about linguistic fairness.

For detailed information on **Hindi as a Common Language** [read this article here](#)

### Challenges in Hindi's *Rajbhasha* Role

- 1. Lack of Integration:** Hindi is spoken by 42% of India's population. Yet, its *Rajbhasha* status hasn't united different linguistic groups. Instead, it has caused resentment among non-Hindi speakers due to perceived imposition.
- 2. Tokenism in Promotion:** The use of Hindi on official signs and in government communications often feels superficial. It fails to integrate the language effectively into everyday life or governance.
- 3. Cultural Division:** Hindi seems disconnected from other Indian languages. This weakens rather than strengthens national unity.
- 4. Educational Inefficacy:** Surveys like ASER show that Hindi-speaking students in rural areas struggle with basic literacy in their own language. This indicates a failure in educational policy for Hindi.
- 5. Elite Disconnection:** The Hindi-speaking elite prefer English for media and communication. This cultural shift away from Hindi undermines its status and influence.

### Way Forward

- 1. Equal Status for All Scheduled Languages:** Give all 22 languages in the Eighth Schedule equal official status. Remove special preference for Hindi.
- 2. From Hindi Diwas to Bhasha Diwas:** Change September 14 from Hindi Diwas to Bhasha Diwas. This day should celebrate all Indian languages.
- 3. Ending Government Promotion of Hindi:** Stop government efforts to impose Hindi. Let states and voluntary initiatives promote it. Cinema and sports have naturally expanded Hindi's influence more than state efforts.
- 4. A National Language Mission:** Focus this mission on all Indian languages. It should develop educational and literary resources in each language, including unscheduled ones.
- 5. Primary Education in Mother Tongue:** Ensure primary education in a child's mother tongue. This is vital for early linguistic and cultural development.
- 6. Building Linguistic Resources:** Create and translate textbooks, children's books, and scientific materials in all Indian languages. This supports academic growth and intellectual development across linguistic backgrounds.
- 7. Encouraging Linguistic Exchange:** Let Hindi embrace influences from other Indian languages. This promotes a diverse linguistic culture rather than a purified, isolated version.

### Conclusion

Hindi's *Rajbhasha* status has mostly been symbolic. It has not countered English's dominance or promoted true linguistic unity. A shift in policy is crucial to uplift all Indian languages and achieve real linguistic equity.

### Question for practice:

Examine how the *Rajbhasha* status of Hindi has impacted linguistic unity and equity in India.

### How the Gig Economy Exploits Urban Workers

**Source:** The post How the Gig Economy Exploits Urban Workers has been created, based on the article “**The dystopian side of Insta-commerce**” published in “**The Hindu**” on 19th March 2025

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper2- Governance-mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections.

**Context:** In urban areas, daily wage laborers gather in labor markets, waiting for work. Contractors (thekedaars) exploit their desperation by bargaining for the lowest wages. The gig economy has extended this exploitation through digital platforms, where workers compete for jobs in a system designed to maximize profits for aggregators while stripping workers of rights and security.

For detailed information on **Gig Economy in India and the Issues faced by Gig Workers** [read this article here](#)  
**How the Labour Market is Being Exploited**

1. **Auction-Based Hiring in Traditional Labour Markets:** In urban areas, daily wage laborers gather at labor chowks, hoping for work. Contractors bargain for the lowest wages in an **auction-like system**, where workers **compete against each other**, and the lowest bidder gets hired, leaving them powerless.

2. **Gig Economy Replicating Exploitation** – Digital platforms function as virtual thekedaars, eliminating direct employer responsibility. Workers must accept **low pay, no benefits, and poor working conditions** to stay employed. For example, **Insta Maids offers house help for just ₹49 an hour**, devaluing domestic work.

3. **Algorithm-Driven Labour Control** – Platforms use **hidden algorithms** to set wages, control job distribution, and manipulate incentives. Workers have no say in pricing or conditions. They are **forced to accept jobs instantly**, similar to traditional labor chowks but with **greater opacity and reduced bargaining power**.

4. **Absence of Worker Rights** – Gig workers lack **social security, protection from arbitrary termination, and grievance redress mechanisms**. Rajasthan passed a gig worker law to address these issues, but the government has stalled its implementation.

5. **Corporate Influence and Government Inaction:** NASSCOM and CII oppose laws that recognize gig workers as employees. Karnataka has put the proposed gig worker law in cold storage under corporate pressure.

#### Initiatives taken to Overcome Labour Market Exploitation

1. **Legislative Efforts:** Rajasthan passed a law to protect gig workers by ensuring social security, data access, and grievance redress. However, it remains unimplemented due to government inaction.

2. **State Promises:** The Congress-led governments in Karnataka and Telangana drafted progressive laws for gig workers, but corporate lobbying stalled them.

3. **Worker Protests:** Gig workers are resisting exploitation with slogans like “*We want rights, not ratings!*” and “*We are humans, not slaves!*”

#### Way Forward

1. **Enforce Legal Frameworks:** The government must implement the laws already passed and introduce stronger protections for gig workers.

2. **Transparency and Data Access:** Workers should have access to their data and earnings breakdown to prevent exploitation.

3. **Worker Representation:** Establish tripartite boards where workers, employers, and the government can negotiate fair working conditions.

4. **Public Awareness:** Consumers must be made aware of the exploitation behind these services and push for ethical labor practices.

**Question for practice:**



Examine how the gig economy has replicated and intensified labor market exploitation through digital platforms, reducing worker rights and bargaining power.

### Public sector reliance on consultancy firms raises accountability concerns

**Source:** The post Public sector reliance on consultancy firms raises accountability concerns has been created, based on the article “BSNL has been dialling the wrong consultant” published in “The Hindu” on 19th March 2025

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper2- Governance-Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability.

**Context:** In May 2024, reports surfaced that Boston Consulting Group (BCG) was hired to assist in Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited's (BSNL) revival strategy for ₹132 crore. BCG's recommendations, including workforce reduction, triggered widespread debate. This case highlights the growing reliance of public sector enterprises on external consultancy firms, raising concerns about accountability, governance, and effectiveness.

### Reasons for Growing Dependence on Consultancy Firms

- 1. Lack of Internal Expertise:** Public sector enterprises often lack in-house capabilities for complex challenges. BSNL hired BCG for ₹132 crore to develop a revival plan, highlighting its dependence on external expertise for strategic restructuring.
- 2. Objectivity and Impartiality:** Consultants provide unbiased advice, free from internal influences. Their fresh perspective helps in strategic decision-making, as seen in BSNL's case, where BCG offers neutral planning insights.
- 3. Resource Allocation:** Outsourcing to consultants allows businesses to focus on core functions. BSNL relies on BCG's strategy while government agencies handle regulatory matters, preventing internal teams from being overburdened.
- 4. Access to Best Practices:** Consultancy firms work across industries and share proven strategies. BCG, with its global experience, brings tested solutions, helping BSNL implement innovative and effective restructuring approaches.

### Impacts of Growing Dependence on Consultancy Firms

- 1. High Costs with No Accountability:** Governments pay massive fees (e.g., France: €1 billion in 2021, Australia: A\$21 billion in 2021-22) while consultancies bear no responsibility for failures. In BSNL's case, BCG was paid ₹132 crore but is not accountable for results.
- 2. Erosion of State Capacity:** Dependence on consultants weakens internal expertise. Public officials do not gain the skills needed for future projects, creating long-term reliance.
- 3. Conflicts of Interest:** Consultancies serve multiple clients, including competitors and regulators, which can lead to biased recommendations.
- 4. Mismatch with Public Sector Goals:** Cost-cutting measures may harm essential services. For instance, aggressive restructuring in BSNL could reduce telecom access in rural India, undermining its public service role.
- 5. Parallel Bureaucracy:** Consultants influence policymaking without democratic oversight, weakening institutional legitimacy.

### Way Forward

- 1. Invest in Internal Capabilities:** Strengthening in-house expertise by recruiting and training talent.
- 2. Reduce Dependency on Consultants:** Develop long-term strategic autonomy to minimize reliance on external expertise.



3. **Ensure Knowledge Transfer:** Policies should mandate that consultancies transfer skills to public sector employees.
4. **Enhance Accountability:** Introduce mechanisms to hold consultancy firms responsible for the impact of their recommendations.
5. **Align Strategies with Public Interest:** Ensure that public sector enterprises retain their social responsibility while pursuing efficiency.

**Question for practice**

Examine the reasons behind the growing dependence of public sector enterprises on consultancy firms and its impact on governance and accountability.

**Women vote more but lack real political power in India**

**Source:** The post Women vote more but lack real political power in India has been created, based on the article “What factors influence women’s political participation?” published in “The Hindu” on 19th March 2025

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper2- Polity- voting pattern

**Context:** Women’s voter turnout in India has increased significantly since 2010, but their overall political engagement remains low. Despite political parties targeting them through welfare schemes, women are still viewed as beneficiaries rather than active agents. Rajeshwari Deshpande’s study analyzes National Election Studies (NES) data to assess whether women’s rising turnout translates into real political power.

For detailed information on Political Empowerment of Women [read this article here](#)

**The Paradox of Women’s Political Participation in India**

1. **Influential Leaders but Low Political Engagement:** India has produced strong women leaders, yet most women remain politically underrepresented.
2. **Delayed Gender Gap Reduction:** While many countries saw rising female political participation in the 1990s, India experienced this shift only in the 2010s.
3. **Homogenization of Women Voters:** Parties treat women as a single bloc, ignoring caste, class, and regional differences.
4. **Recognition Without Real Agency:** Women voters are seen as welfare beneficiaries rather than independent decision-makers.
5. **Complex and Contradictory Participation:** Despite high turnout, political agency remains limited. Women’s support for Trump (2016) and India’s 1990s riots shows their engagement is shaped by broader influences.

**Factors Influencing Women’s Voter Turnout**

1. **Increased Voter Registration Efforts** – The Election Commission has actively worked to improve women’s voter registration, contributing to higher turnout. However, the proportion of registered female voters remains lower than male voters.
2. **Self-Empowerment Hypothesis** – Rising literacy rates and employment opportunities have empowered women to vote independently. Yet, women’s workforce participation remains low, challenging this argument.
3. **Welfare Schemes and Targeted Policies** – Political parties have introduced schemes like *Ujjwala*, *PM Awas Yojana*, and *Ladli Behna* to attract women voters. These programs played a key role in BJP’s 2019 and Madhya Pradesh victories.
4. **Impact of Male Migration** – Large-scale male migration in economically backward states has led to increased voter turnout among women.

**5. Caste, Class, and Regional Identities** – Women's voting behavior is shaped by social identities rather than gender alone. In Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and West Bengal, regional politics influence their choices more than national trends.

### Women's Support for Different Political Parties

- 1. Congress's Gender Advantage** – Congress has historically received more female than male votes, except in 2014 when its support declined.
- 2. BJP's Narrowing Gender Gap** – BJP has historically had fewer female voters, but the gap reduced from over 20% to 7% in 2024 due to targeted outreach.
- 3. Influence of Welfare Schemes** – BJP's female support base has grown, mainly from welfare beneficiaries.
- 4. Decline of Left Parties** – Left parties once had a gender advantage, but their influence has weakened.
- 5. Regional Variations** – In some non-BJP states, more women than men voted BJP, while in others, women supported opposition parties.

### Conclusion

Women's voter turnout has increased, but their overall political engagement remains weak. Social identities, not gender alone, shape their voting behavior. While BJP has reduced its gender gap, a distinct women's political constituency has not yet formed in India.

### Question for practice:

Examine whether the increasing voter turnout among women in India has translated into real political power and independent political agency.

### India must strengthen its Indian Ocean strategy

**Source:** The post India must strengthen its Indian Ocean strategy has been created, based on the article "The ocean front" published in "Indian Express" on 19th March 2025

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper2-Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

**Context:** India has not fully recognized the Indian Ocean's strategic importance beyond the Navy. The region lacks strong security institutions due to diversity and self-interest. The rise of the Indo-Pacific concept has further diverted attention from IOR-focused initiatives. This article highlights the need to strengthen India's maritime strategy.

For detailed information on India's Growing Influence in the Indian Ocean [read this article here](#)

### India's Approach to the Indian Ocean Region (IOR)

- 1. Strategic Importance:** The Indian Ocean is crucial for India, unlike for other nations where it is just another oceanic area.
- 2. Institutional Efforts:** India participates in IORA, BIMSTEC, IPOI, CSC, and IONS, but these efforts lack momentum. Since 2016, the Indian Ocean Conference (IOC) has gained traction in advancing SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region).
- 3. Security and Stability:** At the 8th IOC (Muscat, 2024), S. Jaishankar highlighted security concerns, including Middle East instability, Houthi threats, and South China Sea tensions. He stressed the importance of respecting agreements for stability.
- 4. Maritime Diplomacy:** The Indian Navy plays a key role in foreign policy. It has led humanitarian efforts, including the 2004 tsunami response and multiple evacuation operations.
- 5. Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA):** India shares real-time maritime surveillance with Seychelles, Mauritius, Maldives, and Sri Lanka, assisting in securing their exclusive economic zones.

### Challenges in Building an Indian Ocean Identity

- 1. Lack of Strong Institutions:** Unlike other regions, the IOR has no effective security framework due to national self-interest and diversity.

2. **Failure of Regional Organizations:** IORA, SAARC, BIMSTEC, IPOI, and CSC have failed to gain traction. Only the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) has made progress.
3. **Competition from the Indo-Pacific Concept:** The US-led Indo-Pacific strategy has diverted attention from an IOR-focused approach.
4. **Weak Coordination:** Delays in MoD-MEA coordination slow maritime security and humanitarian responses.
5. **Limited Use of Military Power:** India's reluctance to use military power in foreign policy has weakened its strategic influence in the region.

#### Way Forward

1. **Strengthen Regional Institutions:** India should actively lead IOR organizations like IORA and BIMSTEC, ensuring sustained engagement.
2. **Expand Maritime Diplomacy:** The Navy should play a larger role, moving beyond disaster relief to strategic influence.
3. **Improve Crisis Response:** A fully funded security and HADR program should include amphibious heavy-lift capability and hospital ships.
4. **Enhance Maritime Coordination:** MoD and MEA must improve coordination for timely security and humanitarian actions.
5. **Develop a National Maritime Strategy:** A whole-of-government approach should integrate maritime diplomacy into India's foreign policy.

#### Question for practice:

Discuss the challenges India faces in building a strong strategic identity in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) and the steps it can take to strengthen its maritime strategy.

### Strengthening TDSAT for data protection dispute resolution

**Source:** The post Strengthening TDSAT for data protection dispute resolution has been created, based on the article "**Telecom tribunal reforms to handle data protection pleas**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 20th March 2025

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper2- Governance-Statutory, regulatory and various quasi-judicial bodies.

**Context:** In January 2025, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) released the draft **Digital Personal Data Protection Rules, 2025** under the **Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023**. One of the major concerns regarding the draft rules is the **government's control over appointments** to the **Data Protection Board (DPB)**, which could compromise its independence. Another issue is the **feasibility of the dispute resolution mechanism**, as appeals from the DPB will be handled by the **Telecom Disputes Settlement and Appellate Tribunal (TDSAT)**. The article highlights key institutional reforms needed to equip the TDSAT for this role.

#### About TDSAT

1. Telecom Disputes Settlement & Appellate Tribunal (TDSAT) was established in **2000** by the **Government of India** under the **Telecom Regulatory Authority of India Act, 1997** (TRAI Act)
2. **Objective:** To adjudicate disputes and hear appeals related to telecom, broadcasting, and information technology services in India.

For detailed information on TDSAT [read this article here](#)

#### Evolution of the Appellate Mechanism

1. The **Justice B.N. Srikrishna Committee (2018)** recommended establishing a **separate tribunal** for data protection disputes, recognizing the need for **specialized adjudication**.
2. In line with this, the **2018 Personal Data Protection Bill** proposed setting up a **dedicated tribunal**.
3. However, the **2022 draft Bill** shifted appeals to **High Courts**, possibly to ensure stronger judicial oversight.

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4. The final **2023 Act** designated **TDSAT** as the appellate body, raising concerns about **its lack of data protection expertise and existing backlog**.

#### Key Issues with TDSAT

1. **Lack of Data Protection Expertise:** TDSAT members are required to have expertise in **technology, telecom, industry, commerce, or administration** (Section 14C, TRAI Act, 1997), but **not in data protection**. Data protection issues, like **consent, storage, and unauthorized use of data**, are distinct from telecom matters.
2. **Heavy Case Backlog:** As of **February 2025**, **3,448 cases are pending**. Additional cases under the **Telecommunications Act, 2023**, and **Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023**, will further burden TDSAT.
3. **Judicial Member Shortage:** In **January 2025**, TDSAT had **only one technical member** on its sole bench, lacking a **judicial member**, which the **Supreme Court recommends for tribunals**.
4. **Weak Digital Infrastructure:** Digital appeals are mandated, but **TDSAT's website is inefficient**. The **Legal Cases Management System's** impact is unclear (TRAI Annual Report, 2023).
5. **Lack of Transparency:** TDSAT does not publish **detailed annual reports on appeals, decisions, and case categories**.

#### Needed Reforms

1. **Appoint a Data Protection Expert in TDSAT:** Amend **Section 14C of the TRAI Act, 1997** to include **data protection expertise** in member qualifications. This is necessary as **data protection cases** differ from telecom disputes.
2. **Increase TDSAT's Capacity:** **3,448 cases were pending (Feb 2020–Feb 2025)**. The **Telecommunications Act, 2023** will add more cases. Expand **benches and budget** to meet the **six-month deadline**.
3. **Upgrade Digital Infrastructure:** The **Legal Cases Management System's impact is unclear**. Improve **website navigation, case tracking, and digital filings**.
4. **Ensure Transparency:** Publish **annual reports** detailing **appeals, outcomes, and case types** (telecom, broadcasting, data protection).

#### Question for practice:

Examine the key institutional reforms needed to equip the Telecom Disputes Settlement and Appellate Tribunal (TDSAT) for handling data protection appeals under the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023.

### India's Extradition Challenges and Anti-Torture Law Absence

**Source:** The post India's Extradition Challenges and Anti-Torture Law Absence has been created, based on the article "**Torture shadows India's justice system**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 20th March 2025

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper2- Governance- criminal Justice system

**Context:** The King's Bench Division of the High Court of Justice in London recently denied India's extradition request for Sanjay Bhandari, citing the risk of custodial torture. Similarly, in the U.S., Tahawwur Rana has appealed to the Supreme Court against his extradition, using similar arguments. These cases highlight India's failure to enact an anti-torture law, impacting its international reputation and legal credibility.

#### Extradition Cases and the Issue of Torture

1. **Sanjay Bhandari**, wanted in India for **tax evasion and money laundering**, successfully defended against extradition in the U.K. due to concerns over custodial torture in Indian prisons.



2. **Tahawwur Rana**, accused of **involvement in the 26/11 Mumbai attacks**, has used the U.K. judgment to challenge his extradition in the U.S.
3. Several other fugitives have used similar arguments, revealing a legal gap that weakens India's ability to prosecute criminals.

#### **India's International and Constitutional Obligations**

1. **International Treaties:** India played a key role in **UN General Assembly's Resolution 32/64** against torture but has not ratified the **United Nations Convention Against Torture (UNCAT)**.
2. **Human Rights Commitments:** India has ratified the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)** and the **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1976)**.
3. **Constitutional Mandates:** Articles **51(c)** and **253** mandate respect for international treaties.
4. **Judicial Interpretations:** Supreme Court rulings (e.g., **D.K. Basu (1997)**, **Puttaswamy (2017)**) uphold protection against torture as part of **Article 21** (Right to Life and Dignity).

#### **Judicial and Legislative Inaction**

1. A **Select Committee of the Rajya Sabha (2010)** and the **Law Commission (273rd Report, 2017)** recommended an anti-torture law.
2. The **National Human Rights Commission (NHRC)** has also advocated for standalone legislation against torture.
3. The **Supreme Court**, despite recognizing custodial torture as unconstitutional, has not pushed the government to enact an anti-torture law (Ashwani Kumar case, 2019).
4. The failure to legislate goes against principles of legal certainty and judicial responsibility, as recognized by international judicial bodies.

For detailed information on **India's baby step to prevent custodial tortures** [read this article here](#)

#### **Implications of the Absence of an Anti-Torture Law**

1. **Weakens Extradition Requests:** India's failure to address torture weakens its legal system and affects its ability to bring fugitives to justice.
2. **Harms Democracy's Soft Power:** The **Guantanamo Bay case** showed how torture damages a democracy's global standing and soft power.
3. **Damages India's Global Image:** India's failure to enact an anti-torture law undermines its credibility as a democracy and places it alongside countries that do not uphold human rights, such as Sudan and Angola.
4. Inaction on torture laws reflects the **failure of Indian politics** to prioritize fundamental human rights.

#### **Conclusion**

The extradition rulings expose India's weak legal framework on custodial torture, affecting its credibility in international courts. To uphold its democratic values, India must ratify UNCAT and enact a strong anti-torture law. Otherwise, its position as a moral leader and defender of human rights will remain compromised.

#### **Question for practice:**

Evaluate how the absence of an anti-torture law in India impacts its extradition requests and international legal credibility.

#### **Challenges in reporting subsidies and fiscal transparency**

**Source:** The post Challenges in reporting subsidies and fiscal transparency has been created, based on the article "**Fiscal subsidies should be easy to monitor at every level**" published in "**Live Mint**" on 20th March 2025

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper2-Polity-Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes;

**Context:** Election campaigns in India continue to focus heavily on freebies, cash transfers, and subsidies despite fiscal constraints and rising opportunity costs. This makes transparency in subsidy spending crucial. However, the



lack of high-quality, timely data on state subsidy expenditures hampers accountability and prevents differentiation between necessary welfare measures and politically motivated giveaways. The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) has repeatedly stressed the need for clear classification, but major challenges persist in India's subsidy reporting.

For detailed information on **Subsidy Rationalization in Indian States** [read this article here](#)

### Key Challenges in Subsidy Reporting

**1. Definitional Ambiguity:** There is no standard definition of 'subsidy,' leading to inconsistent reporting. For example, Tamil Nadu's *Vidiyal Payanam* scheme (free bus rides for women) is classified as a subsidy, while a similar scheme in Punjab is not. Odisha is the only state consistently reporting implicit subsidies since 2009-10. This lack of uniformity leads to misclassification and opacity.

**2. Off-Budget Financing:** States often use off-budget mechanisms to fund subsidies, concealing actual liabilities. Andhra Pradesh reported a subsidy expenditure of just 0.5% of its Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) in 2022-23, but its real burden was much higher due to liabilities incurred by state enterprises managing food and power subsidies. This practice distorts fiscal sustainability and transparency.

**3. Deferred Payments:** India's cash-based accounting system enables states to defer subsidy payments, shifting financial burdens to future budgets. A key example is the power sector, where unpaid subsidy reimbursements across states amounted to ₹74,000 crore between 2009-10 and 2020-21, with ₹27,000 crore cleared in the next two years. This practice masks the true cost of subsidies and complicates financial planning.

### Impact on Fiscal Governance

- 1. Lack of Fiscal Transparency:** Different welfare schemes are reported inconsistently, making financial comparisons unreliable.
- 2. Hidden Debt Risks:** Off-budget financing masks actual liabilities, increasing debt risks.
- 3. Distorted Fiscal Data:** Deferred payments create fiscal imbalances, making long-term planning difficult.
- 4. Non-Compliance with Global Standards:** These challenges prevent India from meeting G20 Data Gaps Initiative requirements, limiting fiscal credibility.

### Emerging Reforms in Fiscal Transparency

The central government has taken steps to improve fiscal reporting:

- 1. Since 2019-20, the Centre has published off-budget borrowings,** enhancing fiscal transparency.
- 2. In 2023-24, a consolidated document on state borrowings was released,** providing better insights into liabilities.
- 3. The Centre has discontinued off-budget financing,** using bond issuances instead of direct cash subsidies.

### Way Forward

India needs a standardized, technology-driven, and internationally accepted subsidy reporting system. Odisha's approach to implicit subsidy reporting and the Centre's fiscal reforms provide useful models. A transparent subsidy framework will improve fiscal discipline, ensure efficient public spending, and enhance public trust in government finances. Given increasing fiscal pressures and public scrutiny, this shift is now essential.

### Question for practice:

Discuss the key challenges in subsidy reporting in India and their impact on fiscal governance.

## CCI's Action Against Meta Exposes India's Digital Challenges

**Source:** The post CCI's Action Against Meta Exposes India's Digital Challenges has been created, based on the article "The challenge of policing digital giants" published in "The Hindu" on 21st March 2025

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper2- Governance-Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

**Context:** On November 18, 2024, the Competition Commission of India (CCI) fined Meta ₹213.14 crore and banned WhatsApp from sharing user data for five years. This action followed concerns over WhatsApp's 2021 privacy policy, which allegedly abused Meta's dominant market position in India's digital ecosystem.

For detailed information on **Committee Report on Digital Competition Law** [read this article here](#)

### The importance of data in the 21st century

1. **Foundational Role in Dominance:** Data drives market power in digital economies by refining algorithms and enabling targeted advertising.
2. **Unlimited Utility:** Unlike traditional resources, data can be continuously reused and analyzed, enhancing product offerings and consumer engagement.
3. **Data-driven Network Effects:** More users generate more data, which in turn increases a platform's value, as seen with Meta's use of WhatsApp data.
4. **Barrier to Competition:** Large data sets create high entry barriers for new competitors, consolidating market dominance for companies like Google and Meta.

### Reason for penalising meta in 2024 by CCI

1. **Privacy Policy Abuse:** Meta's subsidiary, WhatsApp, introduced a privacy policy in 2021 that forced users to share data with Meta platforms like Facebook and Instagram, under a "take-it-or-leave-it" condition.
2. **Dominant Market Position:** The policy exploited WhatsApp's dominant position in the Over-The-Top (OTT) messaging and online advertising markets.
3. **Harming Competition:** This mandatory data-sharing allowed Meta to strengthen its market power unfairly, thus limiting competition from other messaging platforms.
4. **Fine and Initial Ban:** Meta was fined ₹213.14 crore and initially banned from data sharing for five years, demonstrating the CCI's stance against unfair market practices.
5. **NCLAT's Intervention:** In January 2025, the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) stayed the penalty and the ban, requiring Meta to deposit 50% of the fine.

### Global Regulatory Actions

1. **U.S. Actions:** The U.S. Subcommittee on Antitrust highlighted the need to reform antitrust laws against tech giants. Meta faces antitrust litigation over its acquisitions of Instagram and WhatsApp.
2. **EU Regulations:** The Bundeskartellamt found Meta guilty of abusing its dominant position by merging user data without consent, violating EU competition law and GDPR.
3. **Australian Measures:** Australia is taking steps to regulate digital platforms to curb their market dominance.
4. **Google in Europe:** Google was fined over €8 billion in the EU for anti-competitive practices in mobile operating systems and app markets.
5. **Indian Enforcement:** Google was fined ₹1,337.76 crore by India's Competition Commission for mandating the pre-installation of its apps on Android devices

### Limitations in India's Legal Framework

1. **Lack of Specific Provisions:** The Competition Act, 2002, does not address data monopolies directly.
2. **Data-Driven Dominance:** Traditional competition law, focusing on price-based dominance, fails to regulate markets where data is the primary source of power.
3. **Coordination Gaps:** The Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023, although addressing consent and data use, lacks explicit coordination mechanisms with the CCI, limiting effective regulation.

4. **Outdated Definitions:** Terms such as "market power" and "dominant position" need updates to better represent digital economy dynamics.

5. **Need for Modern Regulations:** Current laws do not include necessary provisions for interoperability and the separation of integrated services, which are essential to prevent monopolistic behaviors.

#### Way Forward

1. India can learn from the EU's **Digital Markets Act (DMA)** and **GDPR**, which work together to handle both **competition** and **data concerns**.

2. The **Economic Survey 2024-25** highlights the role of **AI and digital transformation**, making regulatory reform more urgent.

3. India needs **forward-looking laws** to manage the growing power of tech giants and ensure **fair digital growth**.

#### Question for practice:

Evaluate the effectiveness of India's current legal framework in managing data-driven market power, as illustrated by the CCI's 2024 action against Meta.

### US Shift From Multilateralism Impacts Global Order and India's Role

**Source:** The post US Shift From Multilateralism Impacts Global Order and India's Role has been created, based on the article "**The assault on multilateralism and international law**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 21st March 2025

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper2-International Relations-Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests.

**Context:** The Trump administration's "America First" policy has initiated a series of withdrawals from major international organizations and agreements, including the World Health Organization, the UN Human Rights Council, and the Paris Climate Agreement. This shift is part of a broader move away from multilateralism, highlighted by proposed legislation like the DEFUND Act which aims to sever U.S. ties with the United Nations.

#### Change in US approach, toward international legal institution

1. The U.S. has **moved from supporting to opposing** international legal institutions under the Trump administration.

2. It **imposed sanctions on the International Criminal Court (ICC)**, claiming it targeted the U.S. and Israel unfairly.

3. This shift is in contrast to the U.S.'s **earlier role in creating the Nuremberg Trials** after World War II to ensure accountability for war crimes.

4. The executive order **challenges the ICC's mission** to punish genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity.

5. These actions mark a **clear break from multilateral legal cooperation**, weakening global efforts to uphold international law and justice.

#### Potential Consequences of Change in US approach

1. **Undermining of Multilateral Institutions:** Withdrawal from institutions such as the WHO, UNHRC, and the Paris Agreement erodes the legitimacy and effectiveness of global governance frameworks developed after World War II.

2. **Economic Instability:** The administration's protectionist policies, including aggressive tariffs, echo the Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act of the 1930s, which worsened the Great Depression. Such economic nationalism threatens to disrupt global trade and long-standing multilateral trading systems like the WTO.

3. **Legal and Human Rights Implications:** The sanctions against the ICC weaken international mechanisms for ensuring accountability for atrocities, undermining the very legal principles the U.S. once championed through the Nuremberg Trials.

#### Opportunities created for other nations like India

1. **Global Leadership Opportunity:** The U.S.'s retreat from multilateralism provides space for countries like India to take on leadership roles in shaping global cooperation.

2. **Influencing Global Governance:** During the G-20 Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Johannesburg (February 2025), External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar reinforced the call for inclusive and law-based solutions to global challenges.
3. **Push for UNSC Reform:** The shifting global order presents India with a timely opportunity to push forward its longstanding demand for reforms in the United Nations Security Council.

**Question for practice:**

Examine how the Trump administration's shift away from multilateralism has impacted global legal institutions and created opportunities for countries like India.

**Habitual Offender Laws and Their Impact in India**

**Source:** The post Habitual Offender Laws and Their Impact in India has been created, based on the article "How do habitual offender laws discriminate?" published in "The Hindu" on 21st March 2025

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper2- Governance-mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections.

**Context:** The Supreme Court of India recently questioned the constitutionality of "habitual offender" laws, citing their misuse against denotified tribes. Despite this, the Union government revealed in March 2025 that such laws still exist in 14 States and Union Territories, prompting fresh debate on their relevance.

**Historical Background of Habitual Offender Laws**

1. **Colonial Roots:** The practice of criminalizing certain communities in India began with British Regulation XXII in 1793, allowing detention of tribes based solely on suspicion.
2. **Legal Developments:** This led to the Indian Penal Code (1860) and the Criminal Procedure Code (1861), which facilitated the registration of "dacoits and thugs."
3. **Institutionalization:** The Criminal Tribes Act (CTA) of 1871 labeled specific tribes as criminal, affecting numerous communities.
4. **Post-Independence Changes:** Following the 1949-50 Criminal Tribes Act Enquiry Committee's recommendations, the CTA was repealed in 1952.
5. **State Laws:** States then introduced habitual offender laws that shifted focus to individuals' convictions but continued to harbor biases against denotified tribes.

**Nature and Use of the Habitual Offender Laws**

1. **Definition and Impact:** Defined by past criminal convictions, these laws include crimes such as dacoity, earning from prostitution, and lurking, perpetuating stigma against denotified tribes.
2. **Bias and Misuse:** Often equating former "criminal tribes" with habitual offenders, these laws enable police and societal discrimination, highlighted by the death of Budhan Sabar in 1998.

**Current Status of HO Laws in States**

1. **Repeals and Non-Use:** Haryana has repealed its law; Punjab and Odisha report no recent use.
2. **Continued Application:** Gujarat and Goa defend the law, citing non-malicious intent and lack of denotified tribes, respectively.
3. **Alternative Legislation:** Uttar Pradesh has incorporated habitual offender provisions into its Goondas Act.
4. According to 2022 National Crime Records Bureau data, **Delhi** has the highest proportion of convicts classified as habitual offenders at 21.5%.

**Committee Observations and Recommendations**

Several committees and commissions have studied the impact of HO laws:

1. **Criminal Tribes Act Enquiry Committee (1949–50):** Recommended repealing the CTA and called for a new law not based on caste or birth.
2. **Lokur Committee (1965):** Described DNTs as having "anti-social heritage," reinforcing stigma.
3. **B.S. Renke Commission (2008):** Highlighted the negative effects of HO laws on DNT, NT, and SNT communities.



4. **Virginus Xaxa Committee (2014):** Noted that the stigma of criminality still persists because CTA was replaced by similar HO laws.
5. **Bhiku Ramji Idate Commission (2017):** Traced the colonial origins of these laws and criticised their continued misuse.

### Supreme Court's Observations

In October 2024, the Supreme Court, while hearing a case on caste-based discrimination in prisons, observed that HO laws have been used to unfairly target DNTs. It declared such classification “constitutionally suspect” and urged States to reconsider their continuation.

### Conclusion

Despite long-standing concerns and critical observations from both the judiciary and various committees, habitual offender laws remain in force across several Indian states. This ongoing issue underscores the urgent need for legal reform to eliminate systemic bias against denotified and nomadic tribes.

### Question for practice

Examine how habitual offender laws have evolved over time and their multifaceted impact on denotified tribes in India.

## India's Parliament needs a stronger role in budgeting

**Source:** The post India's Parliament needs a stronger role in budgeting has been created, based on the article “India's marginalised Parliament in budgetary affairs” published in “The Hindu” on 22nd March 2025

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper2-Polity-Parliament and State legislatures—structure, functioning, conduct of business, powers & privileges and issues arising out of these.

**Context:** The article examines India's Parliament's limited role in shaping the budget. It compares this with other democracies where legislatures significantly influence economic policy. The article emphasizes reforms needed to boost parliamentary involvement in budgeting.

For detailed information on **Declining Role of Parliament in Ensuring Accountability of Executive** [read this article here](#)

### Parliamentary Influence on Budgets Globally:

1. **Historical Struggle:** Historically, legislatures fought hard to control public finances to prevent executive overreach.
2. **British Example:** In the 19th century, British Parliament gained significant financial control.
3. **Active Role Today:** Today, some parliaments actively draft and modify budget proposals, ensuring thorough scrutiny.
4. **Limited Role in Some Cases:** Others play a limited role, merely approving budgets without detailed oversight.
5. **Committee-Based Scrutiny:** Certain legislatures have specialized committees for in-depth budget discussions, while others rely on centralized finance committees.
6. **Positive Outcomes:** Across democracies, higher parliamentary engagement and budget transparency lead to better social outcomes and economic stability. Examples include active legislative roles in budget processes in countries like the U.S., Australia, Canada, and the U.K.

### Current State of India's Parliamentary Involvement:

1. **Executive Dominance:** The Finance Ministry primarily drafts the budget, excluding even Cabinet Ministers from the process until its presentation in the Lok Sabha.
2. **Lack of Legislative Scrutiny:** Unlike other legislative bills, the budget proposal bypasses in-depth cabinet discussions, limiting Parliament's role to superficial scrutiny.
3. **Minimal Debate Quality:** The dominance of the executive results in fragmented debates and limited oversight in Parliament, weakening the core principles of democracy.



4. **Ceremonial Role of Rajya Sabha:** Despite its democratic credentials, the Rajya Sabha has no significant role in budget discussions, mirroring a lack of bicameral influence in budgetary matters.
5. **Passive Legislative Role:** Legislators have minimal power to amend or influence budget proposals, reducing their role to merely approving the government's financial plans.

#### **Consequences of Limited Parliamentary Role:**

1. **Ineffective Oversight:** Parliament has little role in making the budget. This leads to weak checking of government spending and policies. The executive takes decisions without proper control.
2. **Reduced Accountability:** The executive controls the budget process. Parliament cannot question or correct it. This increases the risk of misuse of public money.
3. **Democratic Deficits:** Parliament's small role weakens democracy. There is less public and legislative checking of financial decisions. This is not the case in stronger democracies.

#### **Reforms for Enhanced Parliamentary Role:**

1. **Pre-Budget Discussions:** Institutionalise a 5–7 day discussion during the monsoon session. It will help legislators assess fiscal health and suggest budget priorities. This will also improve coordination among subject committees and ensure public concerns are raised early.
2. **Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO):** Create an independent office to provide MPs with data-based analysis. Model it on the U.S. Congressional Budget Office or similar bodies in the UK, Canada, and Australia. A PBO can offer policy briefs, forecast trends, and assess the fiscal impact of government policies, boosting informed and accountable decision-making.

#### **Conclusion**

Many parliaments shape budgets actively, but India's role remains weak. The executive controls the process, limiting legislative input. This reduces transparency and accountability. Stronger parliamentary involvement, like in the U.S. or U.K., leads to better outcomes. India needs reforms to fix this imbalance.

#### **Question for practice:**

Examine the reasons for the limited role of India's Parliament in the budget-making process and suggest reforms to strengthen its involvement.

### **India plans to make IORA stronger and effective**

**Source:** The post India plans to make IORA stronger and effective has been created, based on the article “**Charting a route for IORA under India's chairship**” published in “**The Hindu**” on 22nd March 2025

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper2-Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

**Context:** India is set to chair the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) from November 2025. As the current Vice-Chair, India plans to strengthen IORA's governance. This article discusses the region's strategic significance, IORA's challenges, and the steps India can take to enhance its effectiveness and impact.

For detailed information on **India must strengthen its Indian Ocean strategy** [read this article here](#)

#### **Geostrategic Importance of the Indian Ocean Region (IOR)**

1. The Indian Ocean Region (IOR) is strategically vital, encompassing **two-thirds of the world's population**.
2. It is critical for global trade, **facilitating 75% of the world's trade and 50% of daily oil transport**.
3. The IOR generated **\$1 trillion in goods and services**, with **intra-IORA trade valued at \$800 billion in 2023**.
4. The region faces significant **challenges including political instability, environmental issues, and security threats like piracy and trafficking**.
5. These dynamics necessitate enhanced regional cooperation to address supranational problems effectively.

#### **Role of IORA**

1. IORA is one of the oldest intergovernmental organisations in the Indian Ocean Region.
2. It promotes cooperation in areas such as disaster risk management, cultural and academic exchanges.
3. It provides a platform for middle and small powers to collaborate on regional issues.
4. Dialogue partners include the U.S., European Union, and China.

### Challenges Faced by IORA

1. **Funding Constraints:** IORA's budget depends on member contributions. Most members are developing nations, except Singapore, France, and the UAE. The current budget is only a few million dollars. In comparison, the Indian Ocean Commission, with just five members, has a \$1.3 billion budget for 2020–2025. IORA's expanding agenda in maritime safety, blue economy, and innovation requires more funds.
2. **Limited Institutional Capacity:** IORA has a small Secretariat based in Mauritius with limited staff. Its operations, including data handling and policy analysis, are slow and prone to errors. There is an urgent need for digitised data systems and technological integration to improve governance and efficiency.

### India's Priorities as Upcoming Chair

1. **Enhancing Funding:** India aims to increase IORA's budget by creating new funding opportunities. IORA's budget is just a few million dollars, while the Indian Ocean Commission has \$1.3 billion for 2020–25. India plans to involve private players like shipping, oil and gas, and tourism industries.
2. **Technology Integration:** India plans to use digital tools for better data handling and faster policy analysis. The IORA Secretariat, with limited staff in Mauritius, faces slow and error-prone data work.
3. **Educational Collaboration:** India will develop maritime-ready courses with research institutions. This supports the growing marine economy. Courses like marine accounting can help build skills for blue economy jobs.

### Way forward

1. India should align its SAGAR vision with IORA's goals to strengthen regional cooperation.
2. It should leverage the strengths of IORA members—Australia in marine science, France and Singapore in marine technology, and UAE and Oman in investments.
3. Traditional marine knowledge from island nations like Sri Lanka and Mauritius should be integrated for sustainable practices.

### Question for practice:

Discuss how India can enhance the effectiveness of IORA during its upcoming chairmanship.

### Covid taught us five lessons for future

**Source:** The post Covid taught us five lessons for future has been created, based on the article “**Five years on, five lessons from Covid lockdowns**” published in “**Indian Express**” on 22nd March 2025

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper3- Disaster and disaster management.

**Context:** March 2025 marks five years since the COVID-19 pandemic was declared. The global health crisis exposed serious vulnerabilities in how the world manages large-scale disasters. As new threats loom, the article reflects on five key lessons from the pandemic to better prepare for future emergencies.

For detailed information on **7 Lessons From The Pandemic** [read this article here](#)

### Five Covid Lessons

#### 1. Global Problems Need Global Solutions

- Many disasters, like pandemics or tsunamis, transcend borders. Isolating a country is not a viable strategy. Instead, there is a need for global systems to monitor and manage risks.
- However, the pandemic weakened international cooperation. For instance, the U.S. withdrew from WHO and closed down the USAID-funded Famine Early Warning System.

- Despite these setbacks, new efforts like India's genomic dataset offer hope for stronger global collaborations, with India well-positioned to lead.

## 2. Solutions Must Be Locally Relevant

- During global emergencies, countries prioritize their own citizens. For example, during vaccine shortages, countries without local manufacturing suffered. India was better prepared due to its own vaccine production. Local conditions also matter.
- Social distancing worked in open spaces but failed in densely populated slums. In Dharavi, 50% of residents had antibodies within five months, compared to 15% in non-slum areas.
- Hence, resources like masks and ventilators should be targeted to high-prevalence areas.

## 3. Build Systems Before Disaster Strikes

- India avoided mass starvation due to its strong Public Distribution System. However, emergency cash transfers were limited to those with existing accounts like PM-KISAN or Jan Dhan.
- The lockdown could have been used to strengthen health systems. For example, a centralised oxygen database could have helped in better coordination.
- Planning and system readiness across all government levels are critical to effective disaster response.

## 4. Data Is Crucial for Governance

- During the migrant crisis, visuals showed people fleeing cities, but there was no data on how many were affected. The absence of a recent census worsens the problem.
- Globally, distrust in data grew during the pandemic, as seen in the U.S. shutting vaccine hesitancy studies. Governments need to treat data as a governance tool, not a threat.

## 5. Trust in Government Is Essential

- Emergency decisions often involve uncertainty. Successful implementation depends on public trust.
- During the lockdown, 85% in Delhi-NCR supported it just because the government said it was necessary. Even years later, nearly 80% across India agreed it was the right decision.
- Yet, global trends show that such trust is fragile and must be nurtured for unity during future crises.

## Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed global, national, and local gaps in disaster response. Learning from these five lessons—global cooperation, local relevance, preemptive planning, data-driven governance, and public trust—is crucial for future resilience.

### Question for practice:

Discuss the key lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic that can help improve future disaster preparedness and response.