

# 9 PM Current Affairs Monthly Compilation

For UPSC CSE mains examination



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**Features :**

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

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## Myanmar faces conflict and suffering without solution

**Source:** The post Myanmar faces conflict and suffering without solution has been created, based on the article “Four years on, Myanmar and its continuing nightmare” published in “The Hindu” on 1st February 2025

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

**Context:** The article discusses Myanmar’s ongoing crisis since the 2021 military coup. Armed conflict continues, displacing millions. ASEAN and the UN failed to mediate. China’s influence has grown. Elections seem unlikely to bring peace. Myanmar’s people suffer while leaders refuse dialogue.

For detailed information on **On The Myanmar Crisis** read [Article1](#), [Article2](#)

### What is the current situation in Myanmar?

1. **Ongoing Conflict:** Armed battles continue across Myanmar between the military, ethnic armed organizations (EAOs), and people’s defense forces (PDFs).
2. **High Casualties and Arrests:** The military has arrested **28,405 people**, with **21,683 still detained**. It has killed **6,224 people**, while **2,900 deaths** remain unverified.
3. **Mass Displacement:** Over **3.3 million people** are internally displaced due to violence.
4. **Failed Elections:** The military’s attempts to hold elections have failed. Half of the country is beyond its control.

### Who are fighting in Myanmar?

1. **Myanmar’s Military (Junta):** The military seized power in a coup on February 1, 2021, overturning the 2020 election results. It uses force to suppress opposition.
2. **Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAOs):** These groups control parts of Myanmar, especially near borders. They have long resisted military rule.
3. **People’s Defense Forces (PDFs):** Civilian groups formed after the coup to fight the military. They operate across the country, including in central regions.
4. **National Unity Government (NUG):** An unrecognized government coordinating resistance.

### What role is ASEAN playing?

1. ASEAN was given the responsibility to mediate Myanmar’s crisis after the 2021 coup.
2. It introduced the Five-Point Consensus (5PC) to stop violence and start dialogue.
3. The plan failed because both the military and resistance groups rejected negotiations.
4. ASEAN foreign ministers advised Myanmar’s military to focus on dialogue instead of elections.
5. The military ignored ASEAN’s advice and continued violent suppression.
6. Elections under current conditions will not represent the people, as half the country is outside military control.

7. ASEAN's mediation remains ineffective, leaving Myanmar in deep crisis.

### How are Myanmar's Neighbors Responding?

1. **China's Influence is Growing:** Since the coup, China has expanded its role in Myanmar. It remains the most powerful external player.
2. **Border Areas Under Rebel Control:** Myanmar's borders with India and Bangladesh are controlled by Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAOs). The government has lost authority there.
3. **India-Bangladesh Issues:** Relations between India and Bangladesh are strained. This prevents coordinated action.
4. **Thailand's Limitations:** As an ASEAN member and neighbor, Thailand is well-placed to help but lacks sufficient influence.
5. **Lack of Regional Consensus:** Due to mistrust, neighbors have not formed a unified strategy to resolve Myanmar's crisis.

### What is the future for Myanmar?

Myanmar's people cannot rely on outside help. If leaders continue fighting instead of negotiating, the suffering will continue. Without dialogue, the conflict will not end, and civilians will keep paying the price.

### Question for practice:

Examine the role of ASEAN in mediating Myanmar's crisis and the reasons for its failure.

## Trump's Policies Impact India's Economy and Workers

**Source:** The post Trump's Policies Impact India's Economy and Workers has been created, based on the article "A note for New Delhi on dealing with 'Trumperica'" published in "The Hindu" on 1st February 2025

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

**Context:** The article discusses the impact of Donald Trump's policies on India. It covers immigration crackdowns, trade tariffs, and AI developments. It highlights risks for Indian workers, businesses, and diplomacy. India must adjust policies to handle these economic and geopolitical changes effectively.

For detailed information on **Trump's Re-election and India US Relations** [read this article here](#)

### How Will Trump's Immigration Policies Affect India?

1. **Strict Immigration Rules:** Trump has ordered border security, visa restrictions, and mass deportations.
2. **High Number of Undocumented Indians:** 7.25 lakh undocumented Indians live in the U.S.; 18,000 face deportation.
3. **Loss of Remittances:** Deportation will reduce remittances and increase unemployment in India.
4. **Trade Penalties Risk:** Trump forced Colombia to accept deportees by threatening 25% tariffs; India could face similar pressure.



5. **H-1B Visa Restrictions:** Trump removed spousal work rights and opposed birthright citizenship, affecting skilled Indian workers.

### How Will Trump's Trade Policies Impact India?

1. Trump's "**America First Trade Policy**" prioritizes U.S. industries.
2. India lost its **Generalized System of Preferences (GSP)** benefits under Trump's first term.
3. The U.S. forced India to **stop oil imports** from Iran and Venezuela.
4. Trump's **10% tariff on China** may shift global trade dynamics.
5. U.S. withdrawal from global agreements may **reduce economic cooperation** with India.

### What Is Trump's Strategy Toward China?

1. Trump proposed a lower tariff of 10% on China, which is significantly less than his previous threat of 60%.
2. He invited China's President Xi Jinping to the U.S. inauguration, signaling a possible shift towards more favorable relations.
3. The softer approach contradicts his previous harsh stance on China, including reversing the TikTok ban.
4. His approach hints at a revival of the U.S.-China "G-2" concept, which would impact India's position in U.S.-China tensions, previously beneficial for India's economic strategy.

### How Will Trump's AI Policies Impact Indian Workers?

1. Trump launched a **\$500 billion** AI project to boost U.S. technology.

#### 2. Impact on Indian workers:

- Reduced demand for migrant tech workers due to increasing automation.
- Potential job losses for mid-level engineers as AI takes over coding and other tasks.
- **Example:** Google CEO Sundar Pichai said AI generates 25% of new code.

3. India's IT sector (40% of exports) depends on U.S. demand for skilled workers.

### What Should India Do?

1. India must prepare for reduced migration opportunities and job losses.
2. Trade policies must adapt to potential U.S. tariffs and changing global partnerships.
3. The government should focus on skilling workers for AI and automation.
4. India needs to reassess its foreign policy to protect economic interests in "Trumperica."

### Question for practice:

Examine how Donald Trump's immigration and trade policies affect India.

## **NIPUN Bharat Mission improves foundational learning outcomes**

**Source:** The post NIPUN Bharat Mission improves foundational learning outcomes has been created, based on the article “**Behind NEP’s success story, the real heroes**” published in “**Indian Express**” on 1st February 2025

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

**Context:** The article highlights improvements in foundational learning in India, driven by the NIPUN Bharat Mission. It explains government efforts, funding, and teacher training. It shares success stories from states and suggests extending the program to 2030 for sustained impact.

For detailed information on **Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2024** [read this article here](#)

### **How has foundational learning improved?**

1. For the first time in years, ASER 2024 data shows positive trends in Grade III learning outcomes. More students can read and solve basic math problems.
2. In Uttar Pradesh, the percentage of Grade III students reading Grade II texts increased from 24% to 34%. The percentage of students solving subtraction problems improved from 29% to 41% between 2022 and 2024.
3. Odisha has also seen progress due to its innovative use of workbooks.

### **What is NIPUN Bharat, and how does it work?**

1. **NIPUN Bharat** (National Initiative for Proficiency in Reading with Understanding and Numeracy) was launched in **2021** to improve foundational literacy and numeracy.
2. The program **allocates Rs 500 per child** for teaching-learning materials.
3. **Rs 5,000 per teacher** is given for capacity-building workshops, and **Rs 150 per teacher** for resource materials.
4. **States receive Rs 10-20 lakh** for assessments to track learning outcomes.
5. **Rs 25 lakh to Rs 1 crore** is provided for Project Management Units at state and district levels.

For detailed information on **Union Education Minister to launch NIPUN Bharat** [read this article here](#)

### **What are some success stories?**

#### **1. Uttar Pradesh: Learning Through Songs**

- Ravi Sharma, a primary school teacher, uses songs to teach math.
- Students chant, “ek-do thaila lo, teen-chaar chalo bazaar” while learning numbers.

#### **2. Odisha: Confidence in Reading**

- Second-grader Shragatika Ghosh now reads Odia stories confidently.
- Colourful and contextualised workbooks improved foundational literacy.



### What challenges remain?

1. **Struggles with Advanced Concepts:** Many children face difficulties in higher grades after early learning gains.
2. **Gaps in Learning Readiness:** Marginalised children often start school without basic skills.
3. **Need for Long-Term Support:** NIPUN Bharat took four years to show results. Expanding it to 2030 will deepen impact.
4. **Bridging the Gap:** Extending learning support to Grades III–V and **investing in Early Childhood Education (ECE)** is essential.

### Question for practice:

Discuss the impact of the NIPUN Bharat Mission on foundational learning outcomes in India, including improvements, success stories, and remaining challenges.

## India's Economic Growth Challenges and Policy Reforms

**Source:** The post India's Economic Growth Challenges and Policy Reforms has been created, based on the article “**Donald Trump, climate change: Global threats to India's growth story**” published in “**Indian Express**” on 1st February 2025

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper3-Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilisation, of resources, growth, development.

**Context:** The article discusses India's economic growth, fiscal policies, and investment trends. It highlights slower GDP growth, inflation concerns, and private investment challenges. It stresses the need for deregulation, better capital spending, energy transition, and policy reforms to sustain long-term economic growth.

For detailed information on **India's Economic Challenges and Policy Reform Needs** read [Article1](#), [Article2](#), [Article3](#)

### How is India's GDP Growth and Global Economic Environment Changing?

1. India's **first advance GDP growth estimate** for this fiscal year is **6.4%**, lower than last year's 2. 2. Economic Survey projection of **6.5-7%**.
3. This is slightly below the pre-pandemic **decadal average of 6.6%**.
4. Nominal GDP growth is **9.7%**, lower than the **10.5%** target in the budget.
5. The **US** is growing near its trend rate of **2%** in 2025, while **China** is slowing and **Europe** is below trend.
6. **Donald Trump's tariff threats** could impact India's trade with the **US**.
7. The **World Bank** forecasts India's growth at **6.7%** next year, while the **IMF** expects **6.5%**.

### What is Driving India's Investment and What Challenges Remain?

1. Public and household investments are driving post-pandemic recovery.

2. Private corporate investments are still weak.
3. The Economic Survey notes that **India competes for investments with both emerging and advanced economies.**
4. The budget projected **17.1%** growth in **capital expenditure (capex)**, down from **28.2%** last year.
5. Capex growth is lagging due to slow spending by the Centre and states.
6. Nearly **40%** of central projects (costing over ₹150 crore) exceeded budgets and deadlines.

#### **How Can India Improve Manufacturing and Trade?**

1. India needs a **clear, long-term tariff policy** for inputs, intermediates, and final products.
2. A **stable tariff regime** will boost investment, especially in manufacturing.
3. The Economic Survey stresses the need for **deregulation** to unlock **domestic-led growth.**

#### **What are the Inflation and Energy Transition Challenges?**

1. Inflation is expected to moderate next year.
2. **Crisil forecasts 4.4% retail inflation**, assuming a **normal monsoon** and crude oil at **\$75 per barrel.**
3. **Food inflation remains high (8.4% in December 2024)**, delaying interest rate cuts.
4. India must strengthen **food processing, climate-resilient crops, and cold storage** to control food inflation.
5. India faces an **energy transition challenge**, as **industry and infrastructure sectors** are carbon-intensive.
6. India **depends on imports** for **solar energy components** like polysilicon, ingots, and wafers.
7. A **strategic policy shift** is needed to build domestic capacity.

#### **What Reforms are Needed for Growth and Fiscal Stability?**

1. India must ease regulatory hurdles in **labour laws, land acquisition, taxation, and dispute resolution.**
2. The **PM Gati Shakti** plan improved logistics; a similar approach can accelerate broader reforms.
3. High **nominal GDP growth (14.2% between 2022-24)** helped fiscal consolidation.
4. This fiscal year, **nominal GDP grew only 9.7%**, below budget expectations.
5. Fiscal consolidation should be **gradual** to maintain economic momentum.

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

Examine the factors affecting India's GDP growth and the policy measures needed to sustain long-term economic growth.

## AI is transforming genomics and healthcare

**Source:** The post AI is transforming genomics and healthcare has been created, based on the article “**The various challenges associated with AI-driven genetic testing**” published in “**The Hindu**” on 3rd February 2025

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper3-Science and Technology- developments and their applications and effects in everyday life.

**Context:** The article discusses how AI is improving genomics by analyzing large genetic data quickly. It highlights advancements in cancer research and personalized healthcare. It also warns about ethical concerns, inaccurate predictions, and data security risks, citing past breaches in genetic testing companies.

For detailed information on **Generative AI (Artificial Intelligence): Benefits and Challenges** [read this article here](#)

### How Has AI Transformed Genomics?

1. **Faster Genetic Analysis:** AI speeds up genetic data processing, allowing researchers to analyze vast amounts of information quickly.
2. **Discovery of Junk DNA's Role:** In March 2024, Johns Hopkins University researchers used AI to analyze 1,200 types of junk DNA and found links to tumors.
3. **Personalized Healthcare:** Gene Box uses AI to predict genetic predispositions and provide personalized recommendations based on scientific research.
4. **Enhanced Cancer Research:** AI helps detect genetic patterns in tumors, improving diagnostics and treatment options.
5. **Improved Genetic Testing:** AI-driven models continuously update with new research, ensuring more accurate genetic insights.

### What Are the Challenges in Genetic Predictions?

1. **Genetics is Only a Partial Factor:** Genetics influences only 30% of traits like academic success or career outcomes. This makes genetic predictions unreliable for such complex traits.
2. **Uncertain Diagnostic Value:** Some genetic variations fall into a "grey zone of significance," meaning their impact is unclear. Family members may also need testing to confirm results.
3. **Risk vs. Certainty:** About 80 genes are linked to Alzheimer's, but carrying these genes does not guarantee developing the disease. Conversely, someone without these genes may still develop it.
4. **Unexpected Findings:** Genetic tests may reveal health risks a person was not looking for, raising ethical concerns, especially in cases like mental health conditions.

### What Is the Future of AI in Genomics?

1. The future of AI in genomics looks promising. AI speeds up genetic data analysis, as seen in Johns Hopkins University's research on "junk DNA" and cancer. Startups like Gene Box use AI to predict genetic risks and personalize healthcare.

2. However, challenges remain. Genetic tests cannot guarantee diseases like Alzheimer's, and security risks exist, as seen in 23andMe's 2023 data breach affecting 6.9 million users.

3. Despite risks, AI-driven genomics is attracting investment due to its potential for personalized medicine.

#### Question for practice:

Examine how AI has transformed genomics and the challenges associated with genetic predictions.

### Fossil fuel subsidies reshape global energy usage

**Source:** The post Fossil fuel subsidies reshape global energy usage has been created, based on the article "How much in subsidies do fossil fuels receive?" published in "The Hindu" on 3rd February 2025

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

**Context:** The article explains fossil fuel subsidies and their impact. In 2022, explicit subsidies were \$1.5 trillion, mostly for consumers. Some countries, especially oil producers, give large subsidies. The total, including hidden costs like pollution, reaches \$7 trillion. Reducing subsidies requires better policies.

For detailed information on **Energy Transition: Challenges and Solutions** [read this article here](#)

#### What are fossil fuel subsidies?

1. Fossil fuel subsidies make these fuels cheaper. Governments provide money to producers or consumers. Producers get funds to lower extraction costs. Consumers get funds to buy fuel at a lower price.
2. In 2022, explicit subsidies for fossil fuels were **\$1.5 trillion**. This amount equals the GDP of **Russia or Australia**.
3. **80%** of these subsidies went to consumers, while **20%** went to production.

#### Why did fossil fuel subsidies increase in 2022?

In 2022, energy prices spiked due to **Russia's invasion of Ukraine**. Gas prices increased by **400%**. Governments helped people by putting price caps on energy. This increased subsidies, but they decreased again in 2023.

#### Which countries give the most subsidies?

Large fossil fuel producers give the highest subsidies. In 2021:

- **Saudi Arabia, Turkmenistan, Libya, and Algeria** gave over **\$500 per person**.
- **India** gave only **\$3 per person**, down from **\$9 in 2015**.
- **Europe, North and South America, and East Asia** gave less than **\$100 per person**.
- **Africa and South Asia** gave less than **\$20 per person**.

#### Why do some sources say fossil fuel subsidies are \$7 trillion?

1. The **\$7 trillion** figure includes both **explicit and implicit** subsidies.

2. **Explicit subsidies (18%)**: Includes consumer subsidies (14%) and producer subsidies (4%).

3. **Implicit subsidies (77%)**: These are hidden costs from fossil fuel use. **Air pollution (30%)**: Causes health problems, **Climate change (30%)**: Increases global warming, **Road use impacts (17%)**: Includes traffic congestion and accidents.

### How can governments reduce fossil fuel subsidies?

1. Governments can take different steps:

- **Reduce direct subsidies** to producers and consumers.
- **Introduce carbon or pollution taxes** to reflect the true cost of emissions.
- **Implement road taxes or congestion pricing** to manage transport emissions.

2. Reducing subsidies is difficult without **cheap and clean energy alternatives**. Removing them suddenly can lead to **fuel poverty** in some countries.

### Question for practice:

Discuss what fossil fuel subsidies are and why they increased in 2022.

## Budget Boosts Agriculture but Structural Issues Persist

**Source:** The post Budget Boosts Agriculture but Structural Issues Persist has been created, based on the article “Ashok Gulati, Raya Das on Budget 2025: Stopping short of the farm” published in “Indian Express” on 3rd February 2025

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper3-Government Budgeting and Agriculture

**Context:** The article discusses the Union Budget 2025-26's impact on agriculture. It highlights key initiatives like credit expansion, crop diversification, and climate-resilient seeds. However, it notes funding gaps, structural issues, and the need for market reforms to improve productivity and farmer incomes.

For detailed information on **Union Budget 2025-2026 Highlights** [read this article here](#)

### What are the Key Agricultural Initiatives in the Union Budget 2025-26?

1. **Focus on 100 districts** to boost agricultural productivity, promote sustainable farming, and support crop diversification.
2. **Kisan Credit Card limit increased** from ₹3 lakh to ₹5 lakh, improving access to credit for farmers.
3. **Pulses Mission launched** to achieve self-sufficiency in **tur, moong, and urad**, reducing import dependence.
4. **Makhana Board set up in Bihar** to support farmers engaged in makhana cultivation.
5. **Agriculture budget increased** by 4% to **₹1.49 trillion**, but inflation may reduce its real impact.
6. **PM-Kisan allocation remains ₹60,000 crore**, unchanged since 2019, reducing its real value.



7. **109 climate-resilient seed varieties released** for 32 crops, but **agri-R&D spending remains below 0.5% of agri-GDP**.

8. **₹500 crore allocated for Fruits and Vegetables Mission**, but higher investment is needed.

9. **Agriculture Infrastructure Fund increased** from ₹600 crore to ₹900 crore to improve storage and logistics.

#### What Structural Issues Remain Unaddressed?

1. **Low Agricultural Budget Growth:** The agriculture budget increased **only by 4%**, which may be ineffective if **inflation remains 4-5%**. PM-Kisan's **₹60,000 crore allocation** has not increased since 2019, reducing its real value.

2. **Declining Farm Incomes:** Agriculture's **share in GDP is 17.7%**, but **46.1% of the workforce** depends on it. **Farm wages remain low** as the workforce in agriculture has increased from **42.5% (2018-19) to 46.1% (FY24)**.

3. **Weak R&D Investment:** India spends **less than 0.5% of agri-GDP on R&D**, far below the **1% needed**. Without proper research and extension, new climate-resilient seeds may not boost farm incomes.

4. **Limited Crop Diversification:** MSP-based policies still **favor rice and wheat**, limiting pulses, oilseeds, and horticulture growth.

5. **High Post-Harvest Losses:** India **loses 8.1% of fruits and 7.3% of vegetables**, costing **₹1.53 trillion annually**. The **₹900 crore Agriculture Infrastructure Fund** may help, but large gaps remain.

6. **Import Dependence:** India imports **pulses, oilseeds, cotton, and maize**, increasing vulnerability. Expanding pulses in **rice-fallow areas** and incentivizing private investment could help.

7. **Market Inefficiencies:** Farmers receive **only 30% of consumer spending** on fruits and vegetables due to weak supply chains. **e-NAM integration with ONDC** could help, but logistics remain a challenge.

#### Conclusion

The budget makes incremental changes but lacks a **bold strategy**. It still relies on subsidies instead of investment-driven growth. **Private-sector participation, better market access, and technology adoption** are necessary to make Indian agriculture more resilient and globally competitive.

#### Question for practice:

Discuss the key agricultural initiatives in the Union Budget 2025-26 and the structural issues that remain unaddressed.

### Supreme Court urges law for domestic workers

**Source:** The post Supreme Court urges law for domestic workers has been created, based on the article "**India needs a law to protect domestic workers' rights**" published in "**Indian Express**" on 3rd February 2025

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



**Context:** The article discusses the Supreme Court's directive to the Union government to consider a law for domestic workers. It highlights their low wages, job insecurity, and lack of social security. It stresses the need for legal protection, fair wages, and better working conditions.

For detailed information on **Domestic Workers in India: Status and Issues** [read this article here](#)

### What is the Supreme Court view on Domestic Workers?

1. The Supreme Court directed the Union government to examine the need for a law for domestic workers.
2. It ordered an inter-ministerial committee to consider a legal framework for their rights.
3. The Court noted that domestic workers lack legal protection and are excluded from laws like the Minimum Wages Act and the Equal Remuneration Act.
4. It highlighted that wages vary even within the same locality.
5. It stressed the need for a national law applicable to all states.

### What Problems Do Domestic Workers Face?

1. **Low Wages:** Their wages are not fixed. The same work may have different wages even in the same area.
2. **Unfair Working Conditions:** They are often forced to do extra work without pay.
3. **No Social Security:** They lack pensions, insurance, or job security.
4. **Harassment and Mistreatment:** Many face abuse and humiliation from employers. These cases rarely reach the media.
5. **Lack of Recognition:** Society views their work as unskilled. Their work is undervalued.

### Why Is a National Law Needed?

1. **State-Level Disparities:** Some states like Kerala and Delhi have regulations, but there is no uniform law.
2. **Enforcement Challenge:** Employers do not register workers, making proof of employment difficult.
3. **Judicial Interventions:** Courts have directed documentation and registration of placement agencies, but these efforts have had little impact.

### Has India Taken International Steps?

India has **not ratified ILO Convention 189**, which protects domestic workers' rights. This convention recognizes domestic work as decent work. Many countries have ratified it, but India has not.

### What Are the Challenges in Implementing a Law?

- **Employer Resistance:** Many employers may refuse to register workers.
- **Proof of Employment:** Workers may struggle to provide proof.
- **Enforcement Issues:** Even if a law exists, ensuring compliance will be difficult.

## Conclusion

The government's response to the Supreme Court's directive is crucial. The committee's report will be key in shaping policies. The law must consider the concerns of domestic worker unions. It must also address local and regional issues.

## Question for practice:

Evaluate the need for a national law to protect the rights of domestic workers in India.

## India Must Create Jobs for a Better Future

**Source:** The post India Must Create Jobs for a Better Future has been created, based on the article "The kind of jobs needed for the 'Viksit Bharat' goal" published in "The Hindu" on 4th February 2025

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper3- Economy-growth, development and employment.

**Context:** The article discusses three types of jobs India must create for long-term growth: **climate-resilient jobs** to tackle climate change, **AI-resilient jobs** to adapt to automation, and **aspiration-centric jobs** to meet youth aspirations and boost rural employment.

For detailed information on **Contrasting trends in job growth and unemployment** [read this article here](#)

## How Can India Create Climate-Resilient Jobs?

1. **Climate Impact:** India lost **\$159 billion in 2021** due to climate change and may face **\$1 trillion adaptation costs by 2030** (RBI).

2. India can create climate-resilient jobs by focusing on sustainable development and leveraging technology to address environmental challenges. Here's how:

- **E-Rickshaws in Villages:** Deploy three to four state-subsidized e-rickshaws in each of India's 600,000 villages, creating approximately two million jobs, particularly for women drivers, enhancing mobility and reducing carbon emissions.
- **Biogas Plants:** Promote private investments in compressed biogas plants to meet the ambitious target of setting up 5,000 plants by FY23-24; currently, only 82 have been established.
- **Renewable Energy Jobs:** Accelerate the goal of achieving 500GW of non-fossil energy capacity, focusing on decentralized and rooftop solar installations, which are seven times more labor-intensive than traditional energy sources, potentially creating over one million jobs (as noted by CEEW).

## Why Should India Focus on AI-Resilient Jobs?

1. **High Automation Potential:** AI has the potential to automate 50% of jobs in India within the next decade, as per McKinsey.

2. **Impact on IT and Business Services:** IT and business services, which are vital for India's exports, comprising over 70% of service exports, face challenges from automation.

3. **Examples of AI Impact:** Software like metaGPT and AI systems writing 25% of Google's code show the increasing capabilities of AI, leading to layoffs.

4. **Need for Human-Centric Jobs:** Jobs emphasizing human creativity and interaction, such as in education and healthcare, are less likely to be replaced by AI.

5. **Government Support:** Increased budgeting for education and health could address shortages and leverage India's human resources effectively.

For detailed information on **Preparing India's Workforce for Technological Job Changes** [read this article here](#)

### How Can India Create Jobs That Match Youth Aspirations?

1. **Addressing Educational Gaps:** Rural youth face low confidence due to poor foundational education. Improving education, especially in English and digital skills, is essential.

2. **Creating Aspirational Jobs:** Develop jobs that are attractive and match the dynamic aspirations of youth influenced by digital media and their socio-economic backgrounds.

3. **Infrastructure Development:** Build 70,000 integrated pack-houses, addressing a 95% infrastructure gap, which will create over two million jobs.

4. **Promoting Local Manufacturing:** Boost productivity in high import/export-share items and support local manufacturing of agri-inputs like soybean and sunflower, vital for rural processing industries.

5. **Public-Private Partnerships (PPP):** Facilitate large-scale business opportunities through PPPs, especially in rural areas, to provide sustainable employment and reduce dependency on government jobs.

### What Should the Government Do?

1. Tax relief may **temporarily** boost urban demand, but **long-term reforms** are needed.

2. The government should focus on **climate-resilient, AI-resilient, and aspiration-driven** jobs.

3. These efforts will help achieve the vision of **Viksit Bharat** (Developed India).

### Question for practice:

**Examine** how India can create climate-resilient, AI-resilient, and aspiration-driven jobs to ensure long-term economic growth and sustainable employment.

### India's efforts to develop its maritime sector

**Source:** The post India's efforts to develop its maritime sector has been created, based on the article "**Some wind behind the sails of India's shipping industry**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 4th February 2025.

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

**Context:** The article discusses India's efforts to develop its maritime sector through the Sagarmala program. Despite investments in ports, Indian shipping remains weak due to financial, regulatory, and tax challenges. Recent budget measures help, but more reforms are needed for real progress.

For detailed information on **India's Maritime Atmnirbharta** [read this article here](#)

### How is the government developing the maritime sector?

1. The government has focused on improving the maritime sector through the **Sagarmala program**. 2. As of **September 2024**, the program included **839 projects** requiring **₹5.8 lakh crore** by 2035.

- **241 projects** (₹1.22 lakh crore) are completed.
  - **234 projects** (₹1.8 lakh crore) are under implementation.
  - **364 projects** (₹2.78 lakh crore) are in development.
3. The investment distribution is:
- **₹2.91 lakh crore** (50%) for port modernization.
  - **₹2.06 lakh crore** (35%) for port connectivity.
  - **₹55.8 thousand crore** (10%) for port-led industrialization.
  - **5%** for coastal community development and inland water transport.

#### **How has India's economy and trade grown?**

1. India's **GDP** increased from **₹1.53 trillion (2016-17)** to **₹2.72 trillion (2022-23)**, with a **7% annual growth rate**.
2. It is projected to reach **\$5 trillion by 2027** and **\$7 trillion by 2030**.
3. India's **EXIM trade** rose from **\$66 billion (2016-17)** to **\$116 billion (2022)**, growing **12.83% annually**.
4. The goal is **\$2 trillion exports by 2030**.

#### **Why is the Indian shipping sector not growing?**

1. Despite high investments, the Indian shipping sector remains stagnant.
  - **Cargo handled at major ports** increased only **14.26% (2016-2021)**, with **2.85% annual growth**.
  - **Number of vessels handled** decreased **5.93%**, from **21,655 (2016-17)** to **20,371 (2020-21)**.
  - **Indian-registered ships** increased by **16.77%**, from **1,313 (2016-17)** to **1,526 (2024)**.
  - **Gross tonnage** increased **17.44%** in the same period.
2. India's **global ranking in ship ownership** fell from **17 to 19**.
3. The fleet is aging, with the average vessel age **improving from 26 years (2022-23) to 21 years (2024)** due to the addition of **34 younger vessels**.

#### **What challenges does Indian shipping face?**

1. **Lack of capital and high borrowing costs**.
2. **Short loan tenures and rigid collateral rules**.
3. **Unfavorable taxation**, making foreign ships more competitive.

4. **High costs for training seafarers and higher port charges.**
5. **Limited shipbuilding capacity, high steel costs, and customs duties on spare parts.**
6. **Foreign-flag vessels** benefit from **low taxes and lenient regulations**, making Indian ships uncompetitive.

**What reforms have been announced?**

The **Union Budget 2025** introduced several measures:

1. **₹25,000 crore Maritime Development Fund (MDF)** (government will contribute 49%).
2. **Infrastructure status** for large vessels.
3. **Shipbuilding clusters** and **financial aid for shipbuilding.**
4. **10-year exemption on customs duty** for shipbuilding spare parts.
5. **Credit incentives for shipbreaking.**
6. **Tonnage tax extension to inland vessels.**

**What needs to be done?**

1. **MDF funding is unclear** (whether it will be available in one year or multiple years).
2. **More investment is needed** for ship replacement and green shipping technologies.
3. **Fix Tax Disparities:** **5% IGST on Indian-flagged ships** should be removed. **TDS on seafarers' salaries** should be eliminated.
4. **Enhance Competitiveness:** Reduce **borrowing costs**, provide **long-term financing (7-10 years)**, and ease **loan collateral rules.**
5. **Improve Infrastructure:** Expand **shipyards** and modernize **existing ports** under **Sagarmala.**

**Question for practice:**

Examine the key challenges hindering the growth of the Indian shipping sector despite significant investments and policy reforms.

**Labour Laws Must Include Mental Health Protection**

**Source:** The post Labour Laws Must Include Mental Health Protection has been created, based on the article “**Eliminating elitism in mental health**” published in “**The Hindu**” on 4th February 2025

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

**Context:** The article discusses the need to include mental health protections for blue-collar workers in India's labour laws. It highlights gaps in existing laws, challenges workers face, and suggests policy changes to ensure their well-being, including employer responsibility and better awareness programs.



For detailed information on **Issues with Mental Health and Mental Healthcare in India** [read this article here](#)

### Why Should Mental Health Be Included in Labour Laws?

1. Mental health is important for workers, especially blue-collar workers.
2. In 2024, the Economic Survey recognized mental health as an important factor for development.
3. It reported that **10.6% of Indian adults** suffer from mental disorders.
4. The **treatment gap is between 70% and 92%** (National Mental Health Survey, 2015-16).
5. The **WHO** identified job insecurity, poor working conditions, and excessive workloads as key mental health risks. These risks mainly affect blue-collar workers.

### What Are the Gaps in Existing Labour Laws?

#### 1. No Recognition of Mental Health in OSHWC, 2020

- The **Occupational Safety, Health, and Working Conditions Code (OSHWC), 2020** focuses only on **physical safety**.
- **Section 6(1)(d)** mentions a safe work environment but does not clearly include mental health.
- **Sections 23 and 24** define health only as **physical well-being**.

#### 2. Mental Health Not Covered Under CSC, 2020

- **Section 2(28) and the third schedule** of the **Code on Social Security (CSC), 2020** do not list mental health conditions as occupational diseases.
- Workers must prove a **direct link between mental illness and work**, making claims difficult.
- The **Bombay High Court (1953)** ruled that if work contributes to illness, it should be covered, but this is not reflected in the law.

#### 3. Unequal Mental Health Support

- **White-collar employees** have structured mental health programs (**Infosys' HALE, Wipro's Mitra, and TCS' Employee Assistance Program**).
- **Blue-collar workers** lack similar protections and **do not benefit from corporate mental health policies**.
- **Government's Tele Manas initiative** exists but **many workers are unaware of it or hesitant to use it**.

### What Can Be Done to Improve Mental Health Support for Workers?

1. **Enact a Mental Health Law** – Labour laws should protect both physical and mental health (**OSHWC, 2020** ignores mental well-being).
2. **Expand Occupational Disease List** – **CSC, 2020** should include work-related mental illnesses to reduce legal hurdles (**Bombay High Court, 1953** recognized mental stress as an occupational risk).



**3. Employer Responsibility** – Employers should provide mental health support like **Infosys' HALE Program, Wipro's Mitra, and TCS' Employee Assistance Program.**

**4. Regulate Long Work Hours** – CEOs promote **70–90-hour workweeks**, affecting worker well-being.

**5. Increase Awareness** – Employers must inform workers about **Tele Manas.**

**6. Recognize Blue-Collar Workers** – Include them in mental health policies.

**Question for practice:**

Examine the challenges blue-collar workers face due to the lack of mental health protections in India's labour laws and suggest possible solutions.

**Election Commission is Losing Its Neutrality in India**

**Source:** The post Election Commission is Losing Its Neutrality in India has been created, based on the article **"Yogendra Yadav writes: As CEC Rajiv Kumar retires, his legacy casts a dark cloud"** published in **"Indian Express"** on 4th February 2025

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper2-Appointment to various Constitutional posts, powers, functions and responsibilities of various Constitutional Bodies.

**Context:** The article criticizes the Election Commission of India for losing neutrality and favoring the ruling party. It discusses past phases of the ECI's independence and decline. It urges the Supreme Court to ensure a fair process for appointing the next Chief Election Commissioner.

For detailed information on **Changes to the process of selecting election commissioner** [read this article here](#)

**How Has the Election Commission of India Lost Its Neutrality?**

**1. Biased Handling of Delhi Elections:**

- The ECI assured that the Budget would not impact the Delhi elections.
- However, BJP promoted tax exemptions as a "gift for Delhi" in campaign ads.
- The ECI acted aggressively against AAP but ignored BJP leaders' remarks.

**2. Politically Influenced Appointments:**

- Since 2014, politically loyal bureaucrats have been appointed as election commissioners.
- Ashok Lavasa was sidelined and later sent to the Asian Development Bank.
- Arun Goel resigned abruptly and was appointed Ambassador.

**3. Manipulation of Electoral Processes**

- **Assam delimitation:** Electoral boundaries were redrawn to favor BJP.
- **Surat 2024 election:** A rare uncontested election in a non-conflict area.

- **Vote transparency:** The ECI withheld turnout data and changed disclosure rules.

### What Are the Main Allegations Against the Current ECI?

1. **Delimitation in Assam:** Electoral boundaries were redrawn in a way that helped the BJP. This is a clear case of **US-style communal gerrymandering**.
2. **Surat 2024 Election:** A parliamentary election was held **uncontested** in a non-conflict area, which is rare and controversial.
3. **Vote Counting Opacity:** The ECI did not disclose **turnout data** properly and diluted transparency rules.
4. **Biased Electoral Calendar:** The **four-phase polling in Odisha** aligned with BJP's campaign priorities.
5. **Declining Public Trust:** Lokniti-CSDS surveys show a sharp fall in trust in the ECI.

### How Does India's ECI Compare to Other Countries?

- **Russia:** Under Vladimir Churov (2007-16), Russia's election body openly supported Putin.
- **Pakistan:** Elections there face vote counting manipulations and opposition disqualifications.
- **India:** While not as extreme, India's ECI shows signs of bias and erosion of trust.

### Conclusion

The Supreme Court must ensure an independent appointment process for the next CEC. If the current government continues to control appointments, democracy in India may suffer further.

### Question for practice:

Discuss how the Election Commission of India has lost its neutrality and the impact of its actions on democratic processes.

## The US exit from WHO changes global health

**Source:** The post The US exit from WHO changes global health has been created, based on the article "**The U.S.'s WHO exit, a chance to reshape global health**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 5th February 2025

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper2- International Relations-Important International institutions, agencies and fora- their structure, mandate.

**Context:** The article discusses the U.S. withdrawal from WHO and its impact on global health funding. It urges Asian and African countries to step up, invest in public health expertise, and reform WHO. It sees this as an opportunity to reduce reliance on high-income countries.

For detailed information on **US withdrawal from the WHO and its potential** [read this article here](#)

### Why is the U.S.'s exit from WHO a concern?

1. **Loss of Major Funding:** The U.S. was one of the biggest contributors to WHO. Its exit will reduce both **Assessed Contributions (AC)** and **Voluntary Contributions (VC)**.

2. **Impact on WHO Programs:** U.S.-based donors may stop funding projects like **polio elimination and antimicrobial resistance**.

3. **Uncertain Future of USAID:** USAID's instability will further impact WHO funding.

4. **Global Health Inequality:** Diseases in **Asia and Africa**, like **mPox in the Democratic Republic of the Congo**, receive less attention.

5. **Weakening Global Institutions:** The book *Why Nations Fail* explains that strong institutions help countries grow. Similarly, the world needs strong global institutions. But nationalism is rising in many countries. Leaders now prioritize their own nations over global cooperation. This weakens institutions like WHO.

#### **How can the global south strengthen WHO?**

1. **Fill WHO's funding gap** – Countries in Asia and Africa must increase contributions. **BRICS** can help coordinate funding.

2. **Train more public health experts** – Countries should invest in training experts, including those specializing in diseases affecting Africa.

3. **Create regional health institutions** – New training centers in Asia and Africa will reduce dependence on experts from high-income countries.

4. **Reform WHO headquarters** – Moving WHO headquarters to regions like **Brazzaville (Congo)**, **5. Cairo, Manila, or New Delhi** will lower costs and focus efforts where needed most.

#### **Conclusion**

U.S. might rejoin WHO under a future president. Until then, it views the U.S. withdrawal as a chance for lower-income countries to lead in global health and reshape the agenda, making it less dependent on high-income nations.

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

Examine how the U.S. withdrawal from WHO impacts global health funding and the role of the Global South in strengthening WHO.

### **India and Indonesia strengthen trade and security ties**

**Source:** The post India and Indonesia strengthen trade and security ties has been created, based on the article "**India-Indonesia ties as a beacon for global relations**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 5th February 2025

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

**Context:** The article talks about Indonesia-India relations. It highlights their trade, security, and geopolitical ties. It mentions economic growth, investment potential, and defense cooperation. It also discusses global trade challenges and their role in the Indo-Pacific and BRICS.

For detailed information on **India and Indonesia strengthen ties under Prabowo** [read this article here](#)

#### **Why is Indonesia-India Relations Important?**

1. Indonesia and India have a long and strong relationship. Their partnership began in 1950 when Indonesia's first President, Sukarno, attended India's first Republic Day.
2. In 2024, Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto was the chief guest at India's 76th Republic Day.
3. This marked the fourth time an Indonesian president participated in this event, emphasizing the strong relationship between the two countries.

### How Strong is Their Trade Relationship?

India and Indonesia signed a trade agreement in 1966. However, their trade potential is still not fully used. In 2023, bilateral trade was just under **\$30 billion**. Business leaders from both countries identified five key sectors for growth:

- **Energy** – Investment in clean energy is needed.
- **Food and Agriculture** – Expanding trade in essential goods.
- **Healthcare** – Strengthening medical collaboration.
- **Manufacturing** – Boosting industrial ties.
- **Technology** – Improving digital and AI cooperation.

### What is the Trade Growth Potential?

1. India and Indonesia plan to **quadruple trade volume in 10 years**. Both economies are growing fast:
2. Indonesia's investment in India is **\$653.8 million**, while India has invested **\$1.56 billion** in Indonesia.
3. Both economies are growing rapidly: **India (6.5%)** and **Indonesia (5.1%)**, higher than the **global average (3.3%)**.
4. Stronger supply chains in **clean energy, technology, and manufacturing** can drive mutual prosperity.

### Why is Security Important in Their Relationship?

1. **Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (2018)**: India and Indonesia strengthened defense ties, enhancing maritime security in their shared waters.
2. **Maritime Security**: Both countries made significant strides in securing their sea routes, crucial for regional stability.
3. **Counterterrorism & Cybersecurity**: During President Prabowo's visit, both leaders committed to improving collaboration in these areas.
4. **Growing Military Capabilities**: As two large nations with expanding defense strength, cooperation is vital for regional security.
5. **Indo-Pacific Stability**: Their partnership helps address complex geopolitical challenges and ensures long-term prosperity.

### How Do They Fit in Global Politics?

1. Indonesia joined **BRICS in 2024**, which includes India and China. Both countries have strong relations with the **U.S. and Western nations**.

2.,However, U.S. trade policies, such as new tariffs, may create challenges. Indonesia is a major exporter of **nickel, copper, tin, and bauxite** and wants to expand trade with India and other global markets.

### What is the Future of This Partnership?

India and Indonesia have a **76-year-old relationship**. Their focus on **trade, security, and global cooperation** will strengthen their ties. Their partnership can help shape the **future of the Indo-Pacific** and contribute to a **stronger global economy**.

### Question for practice:

Examine the significance of India-Indonesia relations in trade, security, and global geopolitics, highlighting key developments and future potential.

## Schools Must Adapt to AI with Values

**Source:** The post Schools Must Adapt to AI with Values has been created, based on the article “**What AI could do in the classroom**” published in “**Indian Express**” on 5th February 2025

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper3-Science and Technology- developments and their applications and effects in everyday life.

**Context:** The article discusses the role of AI in education, inspired by the World Economic Forum's theme, *Collaboration for the Intelligent Age*. It emphasizes balancing intelligence and consciousness in learning. Schools must integrate AI while nurturing human values and guiding students responsibly.

For detailed information on **Significance of AI for Education Sector** [read this article here](#)

### How Can Schools Adapt to the Intelligent Age?

**1. Integrate Intelligence and Consciousness:** Schools must connect **intelligence (problem-solving, reasoning, decision-making)** with **consciousness (metacognition, introspection, emotions, imagination, and sensory perception)** to develop responsible citizens. (*Eckhart Tolle's perspective*)

**2. Ensure AI Access for All:** Every child, irrespective of place or status, must have access to **adaptive learning and AI tools** to bridge learning gaps. (*Mentioned in the article: AI should be available to all students, not just privileged ones.*)

**3. Manage AI's Impact on Learning:** The launch of **ChatGPT** changed education, enabling students to complete assignments **without effort or understanding**. Teachers remain hesitant due to **AI hallucinations** and the technology's vast implications.

**4. Promote Citizenship and Social Responsibility:** Schools must emphasize **citizenship, interdependence, and mutual interest** to build cohesive societies. (*Only schools can integrate universal values, as mentioned in the article.*)

**5. Evolve Teaching Methods:** Education must shift towards **collaborative intelligence**, where AI assists rather than replaces **natural learning**. (*Inspired by Khalil Gibran: “Children live in the house of tomorrow.”*)

### What Should Educators Do Next?



1. Educators must **accept AI while ensuring deep learning**.
2. They should refine teaching methods and build a system where **AI enhances learning without replacing critical thinking**.
3. Collaboration between **teachers, students, and AI** will create **strong societies and better education systems**.

**Question for practice:**

Discuss how schools can adapt to the Intelligent Age by integrating AI while nurturing human values.

**India's nuclear power challenges and proposed reforms**

**Source:** The post India's nuclear power challenges and proposed reforms has been created, based on the article "C Raja Mohan writes: The story of India's atomic slide – and an opportunity to bounce back" published in "Indian Express" on 5th February 2025

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

**Context:** The article discusses India's nuclear energy challenges and reforms. It highlights past policy mistakes, global restrictions, and outdated laws. It supports amending the Atomic Energy Act and CLNDA to allow private investment, boost nuclear power, and drive technological growth like the space sector.

For detailed information on **India's Nuclear Energy Program** [read this article here](#)

**What are the key issues in India's nuclear power sector?**

1. **Historical Achievements and Current Stagnation:** India was the second Asian nation to build a nuclear power plant in 1969 but has failed to meet its nuclear energy goals. Currently, India's nuclear power capacity stands at about 8,200 MW, significantly less than its 2000 target of 10,000 MW.

2. **International and Domestic Challenges:** The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1970 restricted India's access to nuclear technology. Furthermore, India's 1974 nuclear test led to sanctions and reduced international cooperation, negatively impacting nuclear capacity growth.

3. **Legislative Obstacles:**

- The **Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act (CLNDA)** in 2010 made nuclear projects risky. It allowed power plant operators to sue equipment suppliers in case of accidents. This was different from global norms, where only operators handle liability. Foreign and private investors avoided India's nuclear sector due to this law.

- **Atomic Energy Act of 1962** : This law makes nuclear energy a **government monopoly**. The **Department of Atomic Energy (DAE)** controls all nuclear activities and funding. This limits private investment, slows innovation, and prevents the creation of a strong nuclear industry.

4. **Comparison with Other Countries:** Nations like China and South Korea have far surpassed India in nuclear capacity, with 58,000 MW and 32,000 MW respectively. This stark contrast highlights the effects of India's constrained nuclear policy and regulatory environment.

**What changes did the Finance Minister propose?**



**Amendment of Two Laws:** The Finance Minister proposed changes to the *Atomic Energy Act (1962)* and the *Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act (2010)* to revive India's nuclear sector.

**Increase in Nuclear Power Capacity:** She set a target of **100,000 MW by 2047**, a major increase from **8,200 MW** today.

**How could these changes impact India's technological growth?**

**Encouraging Private Participation:** The reforms aim to remove **government monopoly** and allow private companies like Tata, L&T, and BHEL to build nuclear power plants.

**Lessons from Space Reforms:** Similar to space sector liberalization, nuclear reforms could boost investment, innovation, and efficiency.

**Question for practice:**

Examine the key challenges in India's nuclear power sector and how proposed legislative reforms could impact its growth.

### India's Budget 2025-26 Focuses on Growth Challenges

**Source:** The post India's Budget 2025-26 Focuses on Growth Challenges has been created, based on the article "A Budget that is mostly good but with one wrong move" published in "The Hindu" on 6th February 2025

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper3- Economy-Government Budgeting.

**Context:** The article discusses India's Union Budget 2025-26. It highlights GDP growth projections, tax revenue trends, government spending, and fiscal policy changes. It praises capital expenditure growth but criticizes the shift from fiscal deficit targets to a less transparent debt-GDP ratio approach.

For detailed information on **Union Budget 2025-2026 Highlights** [read this article here](#)

**What is the GDP Growth Projection for 2025-26?**

1. The **Union Budget 2025-26** projects a **nominal GDP growth rate of 10.1%**.
2. The **Economic Survey 2024-25** estimates **real GDP growth between 6.3% and 6.8%** for 2025-26.
3. If growth improves, this provides a **buffer for economic stability**.
4. The government aims to **accelerate growth to push India towards developed country status**.
5. The **Economic Survey suggests an 8% real growth rate** is needed for this goal.

**How Have Capital Expenditure and Revenues Changed?**

**A. Capital Expenditure Trends**

1. **Capital expenditure for 2025-26 is ₹11.2 lakh crore**, slightly higher than the **₹11.1 lakh crore** projected in Budget 2024-25.
2. The **increase over the 2024-25 revised estimates is ₹1.03 lakh crore**.

3. The share of capital expenditure in total expenditure has improved by 10 percentage points since 2020-21.

4. Higher capital spending helps economic growth through infrastructure investments.

5. Total government expenditure will grow by 7.6% in 2025-26 (BE). This is lower than the 10.1% nominal GDP growth.

## B. Revenue Trends

### a. Tax Revenue Trends:

1. Gross tax revenue (GTR) growth has declined:

- 2023-24: 13.5%
- 2024-25 (RE): 11.2%
- 2025-26 (BE): 10.8%

2. GST growth also fell from 12.7% in 2023-24 to 10.9% in 2025-26 (BE).

3. Direct taxes now contribute 59% of total tax revenue, up from 52% in 2021-22.

4. Personal income-tax growth fell due to tax concessions, declining from 25.4% in 2023-24 to 14.4% in 2025-26 (BE).

5. Corporate tax growth improved from 7.6% in 2024-25 (RE) to 10.4% in 2025-26 (BE).

### b. Non-Tax Revenue Trends:

1. Non-tax revenue rose from ₹5.3 lakh crore (RE) to ₹5.8 lakh crore (BE).

2. The increase of ₹35,715 crore mainly came from higher dividends from RBI and public sector companies.

## Why Is the Shift Away from Fiscal Deficit Targets a Concern?

1. **Less Transparency:** The 2025-26 Budget replaces fiscal deficit targets with debt-GDP ratio projections, making fiscal planning less clear.

2. **Past Commitment Ignored:** The 2024-25 Budget planned to reduce the fiscal deficit below 4.5% by 2025-26, but the new budget removes this glide path.

3. **Vague Assumptions:** The budget provides alternative debt-GDP ratio paths based on nominal GDP growth assumptions of 10.0%, 10.5%, and 11.0%, making fiscal discipline uncertain.

4. **Risk to Private Investment:** A larger government claim on available funds may reduce private sector investments, slowing economic growth.

## Conclusion

The **Budget 2025-26** balances growth and fiscal discipline. It focuses on capital spending and direct tax growth but reduces transparency in fiscal targets. The government should invest in AI and ensure clear fiscal policies to sustain long-term growth.

#### Question for practice:

Examine the impact of the shift from fiscal deficit targets to debt-GDP ratio projections on fiscal transparency and economic growth.

### US Deportations Affect India and Relations Significantly

**Source:** The post US Deportations Affect India and Relations Significantly has been created, based on the article "Not worth the risk: On the U.S., India and illegal emigration" published in "The Hindu" on 6th February 2025

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

**Context:** The article discusses the deportation of illegal Indian immigrants from the U.S. under stricter immigration policies. It highlights the use of military flights, diplomatic concerns, and India's responsibility to prevent illegal migration by addressing economic issues and raising awareness.

For detailed information on **Trump's Policies Impact India's Economy and Workers** [read this article here](#)

#### Why Are These Deportations Significant?

1. **Large Scale:** The U.S. deported **1,60,000 individuals** between June and October 2024 to **over 145 countries**, including India.
2. **Undocumented Indians:** There are **7,25,000 undocumented Indians** in the U.S., making them a key group affected. States like Gujarat, Punjab, and Haryana have high numbers of illegal immigrants.
3. **Use of Military Flights:** For the first time, military flights were used, showing strict enforcement.
4. **Diplomatic Concerns:** The deportations coincided with **Prime Minister Modi's U.S. visit**, creating tensions.
5. **Harsh Treatment:** Reports of **shackling migrants** led to protests, including from **Colombian President Gustavo Petro**.

#### What is the impact on India-U.S. relations?

1. These deportations happened just before Prime Minister Narendra Modi's U.S. visit.
2. This suggests that diplomatic talks may not stop such actions. It could create tensions between India and the U.S.

#### What should India do?

1. India must verify and accept deported citizens.
2. The government must also stop illegal migration by:
  - Educating youth in states with high deportation rates.

- Highlighting the risks of illegal migration.
- Addressing economic distress, unemployment, and the agricultural crisis.
- Preventing people from traveling to dangerous regions for work.

### Conclusion

India cannot change U.S. immigration policies. But it must solve the root causes of migration. This needs urgent action from both the central and state governments.

### Question for practice:

Evaluate the impact of the U.S. deportation of illegal Indian immigrants on India-U.S. relations and India's responsibility in addressing illegal migration.

### Implications of Supreme Court order on sacred groves

**Source:** The post Implications of Supreme Court order on sacred groves has been created, based on the article "What is the Supreme Court directive on sacred groves?" published in "The Hindu" on 6th February 2025

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper3- Environment- Conservation

**Context:** The article discusses the Supreme Court's order to map and classify Rajasthan's sacred groves as forests and community reserves under the Wildlife Protection Act. This contradicts the Forest Rights Act, which grants control of such lands to local gram sabhas for conservation.

For detailed information on **Sacred Groves** [read this article here](#)

### What are Sacred Groves and what Are they Important?

1. **Definition:** Sacred groves are community-protected forest patches, conserved through customs and traditions.
2. **Number in India:** India has an estimated 1-10 lakh sacred groves, the highest in the world.
3. **Names in Different Regions:** Known as *orans* in Rajasthan, *devara kadu* in Karnataka, *sarna* in Chota Nagpur, *kavu* in Kerala, *devban* in Himachal Pradesh, and *devgudi* in Maharashtra and Chhattisgarh.
4. **Biodiversity and Conservation:** They protect unique flora and fauna, support perennial streams, and serve as medicinal plant sources.
5. **Environmental Benefits:** Help stabilize soil, prevent erosion, and mitigate floods, landslides, and droughts.
6. **Cultural and Religious Significance:** Communities maintain them through traditions, myths, and local beliefs.

### What Are Community Reserves?

1. **Definition:** Community reserves are protected areas under the **Wildlife Protection Act (WLPA) 2002**, created on **community or private land** to conserve **fauna, flora, and cultural values**.

**2. Control and Management:** The **Chief Wildlife Warden** has overall authority, while a **Community Reserve Management Committee** manages the reserve.

**3. Legal Responsibilities:** Communities must **prevent offenses** like **wildlife harm, boundary damage, littering, and illegal fires**.

#### **What Did the Supreme Court Order on Sacred Groves?**

1. The Supreme Court ordered the Rajasthan Forest Department to map all sacred groves using ground and satellite methods.

**2. It directed that all groves, regardless of size, be classified as 'forests' and notified as 'community reserves' under the Wildlife Protection Act (WLPA), 1972.**

**3.** The court recommended forming *Community Reserve Management Committees* with local representatives.

**4.** It suggested that the Union Environment Ministry map sacred groves nationwide.

**5.** The order follows *T.N. Godavarman v. Union of India*, where forests were defined broadly.

#### **What are the implications of this order?**

**1. Shift of Control:** Sacred groves will move from community governance to the Forest Department, reducing community participation in conservation.

**2. Conflict with FRA 2006:** Under FRA, **gram sabhas manage forests**, but under WLPA, the **Forest Department** gains control, limiting community participation.

**3. Large-scale Impact:** Rajasthan has 25,000 sacred groves covering six lakh hectares, now under official control.

**4. Traditional Practices Affected:** Community conservation, rooted in beliefs, will be disrupted.

**5. Legal Precedence:** The court upheld its 2018 directive, enforcing its broad definition of 'forest land' under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980.

**6.** The Rajasthan government's **Forest Policy 2023** removed earlier protection rules for sacred groves.

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

Evaluate the impact of the Supreme Court's order to classify Rajasthan's sacred groves as forests and community reserves on local community governance and conservation practices.

### **India and Bangladesh relations after government change**

**Source:** The post India and Bangladesh relations after government change has been created, based on the article "**Bangladesh foreign adviser writes: India, let's work together**" published in "**Indian Express**" on 6th February 2025

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



**Context:** The article discusses India-Bangladesh relations after Sheikh Hasina's government fell. The new interim government, led by Muhammad Yunus, wants good ties with India. It addresses concerns about Hindus, SAARC revival, trade, border issues, and cooperation in energy and regional stability.

For detailed information on **India-Bangladesh Relations** [read this article here](#)

### What is the Current State of India-Bangladesh Relations?

1. **Political Shift:** Sheikh Hasina's government fell in **July-August 2024** due to a **student-led mass uprising**. The Indian government **failed to anticipate** this change. **Professor Muhammad Yunus** is now the **Chief Adviser** of the interim government.

2. **Efforts for Cooperation:** The interim government wants **good relations** with India based on **mutual respect**. Foreign Secretary **Vikram Misri's visit in December** was seen as a **positive step**.

### 3. Trade and Economic Strengths:

- India is the **fifth-largest economy** with a **strong technology sector**.
- Bangladesh is the **second-largest garments exporter** after China.
- Bangladesh contributes **the highest number of UN peacekeepers**.
- **Professor Yunus' microcredit model** has influenced financial systems globally, including in India.

### 4. Concerns Over Minority Rights:

- **Violence occurred** after Hasina's fall, affecting **Muslims and Hindus**.
- The interim government **acted strictly** against the perpetrators.
- Citizens **helped protect Hindu families and temples**.
- Indian media exaggerated incidents, according to the article.
- A **Voice of America survey** found that **two-thirds of Bangladeshis** felt minority rights had improved.

5. **SAARC Revival Efforts:** The interim government **wants to revive SAARC**, but **India is not supporting it**. It suggests **small symbolic steps**, like leaders **posing for a photograph together** at a global event.

### 6. Positive Developments:

- Exchange of fishermen between both countries.
- Trilateral energy agreement allows Bangladesh to access hydroelectric power from Nepal.
- **Border Issues:** The article calls for **ending the killing of unarmed civilians at the border** to **strengthen ties**.

7. India and Bangladesh have **shared interests** and **historical ties**. Despite challenges, **opportunities for cooperation** remain open.

### Conclusion

The interim government of Bangladesh, led by Professor Muhammad Yunus, aims to strengthen relations with India, focusing on mutual respect and regional cooperation. Key initiatives include the trilateral energy agreement with Nepal and improved conditions for minorities, demonstrating a commitment to pragmatic and positive engagement.

### Question for practice:

Discuss the impact of the political shift in Bangladesh on its relations with India.

## Trump freezes foreign aid affecting global help

**Source:** The post Trump freezes foreign aid affecting global help has been created, based on the article “**Crippling aid work: The fallout of U.S. foreign assistance freeze will be far-reaching**” published in “**The Hindu**” on 7th February 2025

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

**Context:** The article discusses U.S. President Donald Trump's decision to freeze foreign aid. It explains that USAID funding is crucial for global aid. The freeze disrupts humanitarian efforts. The move is seen as inward-looking and could harm millions who depend on U.S. assistance.

For detailed information on **Trump's America First Policy and Global Impact** [read](#) this article here

### What is USAID and why is it important?

1. USAID (United States Agency for International Development) was established in 1961 under the Foreign Assistance Act.
2. It provides humanitarian and development aid worldwide. According to USASpending.gov, USAID was allocated **\$44.2 billion** in the 2024 budget.
3. This is 0.4% of the U.S. federal budget, but media reports say USAID provided nearly 42% of UN-tracked humanitarian aid in 2024.

### How does USAID help different countries?

1. USAID funds programs in health care, food aid, and policy advocacy.
2. In India, it has supported **education, immunization, HIV/TB prevention, polio eradication, and child health** since the 1960s. In the latest fiscal year, USAID contributions to India were **over \$150 million**.
3. In conflict-ridden regions, USAID is a lifeline for food and medical aid.

### What actions has the Trump administration taken?

1. **Foreign Aid Freeze:** On his first day in office, President Donald Trump **imposed a 90-day freeze on foreign aid**.
2. **Justification for the Freeze:** The administration cited **inefficiencies and ideological opposition to USAID** as reasons.

3. **Criticism of USAID:** Elon Musk, head of the Department of Government Efficiency, called USAID a “viper’s nest of radical-left Marxists.”

4. The government has also:

- **Removed content from the USAID website**
- **Placed USAID personnel on administrative leave**
- **Ordered the return of overseas USAID staff within 30 days**

**What are the consequences of this decision?**

Withdrawing from foreign aid will **disrupt global humanitarian structures**. Millions of people will lose access to **food, healthcare, and critical resources**. This decision shows an **inward-looking approach** and weakens U.S. leadership in global development.

**Question for practice:**

Evaluate the impact of President Donald Trump’s foreign aid freeze on global humanitarian efforts and U.S. leadership in development.

### **Should India build its own AI model**

**Source:** The post Should India build its own AI model has been created, based on the article “**Should India build a sovereign, foundational AI model?**” published in “**The Hindu**” on 7th February 2025

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper3-Science and Technology-indigenization of technology and

developing new technology And Awareness in the fields of IT, Computers

**Context:** The article discusses whether India should build its own AI foundation model. Experts debate if it is necessary for sovereignty or just national pride. They highlight high costs, research challenges, and the need for smart investments in AI infrastructure and applications.

For detailed information on **On Building Sovereign AI in India – India’s challenge** [read this article here](#)

**Does India need to develop its own foundational AI model?**

1. Experts debate whether India should build a sovereign AI model. Some argue that sovereignty concerns, such as **U.S. sanctions on AI chips**, make it necessary.
2. Others believe that **open-source models like DeepSeek R1** reduce this need. Instead of focusing on sovereignty, India should ensure it has the **capability to build and utilize AI models effectively**.

**Can India afford to build an AI model, and does it have the technology?**

1. Developing a foundational AI model requires **huge investments and advanced technology**. **DeepSeek V3 cost \$5.6 million**, while **Big Tech firms spend \$80 billion annually** on AI infrastructure.
2. India lacks **semiconductor manufacturing** and has no contracts with **TSMC**.
3. Unlike **Huawei’s 910C chips**, India does not have **high-performance GPUs** needed for AI model training.

4. Additionally, **the Indian AI market is smaller** than the U.S., making it harder to recover the investment.

#### What is the best AI strategy for India?

1. **Focus on AI applications:** Instead of building a costly foundational AI model, India should develop **AI solutions** for governance, businesses, and Indian languages. *(Example: AI for Bharat is training IndicTrans2 and a text-to-speech system for Indian languages.)*

2. **Invest in R&D and infrastructure:** The **IndiaAI Mission** is providing **subsidized GPUs** to startups and academia to **lower AI development costs**. However, India's **public procurement system lacks error tolerance**, making private investment and research critical.

3. **Leverage open-source models:** **DeepSeek R1** and other open-source models reduce dependency on proprietary AI. If the U.S. applies sanctions, India can "fork" existing open-source AI models and modify them.

4. **Be realistic about AI investments:** **DeepSeek V3's training cost \$5.6 million**, and **Big Tech spends \$80 billion annually on AI infrastructure**. India's limited AI budget is **less than the cost of training Meta's Llama 4 model**, so resources must be **spent wisely**.

5. **Prioritize language and industry needs:** Developing AI models tailored to **Indian language processing** and **enterprise applications** will offer better returns. Competing directly with **ChatGPT or DeepSeek** is impractical.

#### Question for practice:

Examine whether India should prioritize building its own foundational AI model or focus on AI applications and infrastructure development.

### Tax Cut Boosts Spending and Economic Growth

**Source:** The post Tax Cut Boosts Spending and Economic Growth has been created, based on the article "**Budget 2025's tax cuts for middle class will boost consumption many times over**" published in "**Indian Express**" on 7th February 2025

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper3- Economy- Growth and Development

**Context:** The article explains how the Budget 2025 tax cut of ₹1 lakh crore for the urban middle class will boost spending. This extra money will create more demand, increasing consumption and GDP growth. It is a short-term stimulus, not a replacement for long-term infrastructure investment.

For detailed information on **How to Boost Investment and Economic Growth** [read this article here](#)

#### What are the Multiplier effects of tax cut of ₹1 lakh crore?

The multiplier effects of the ₹1 lakh crore tax cut are substantial and can be understood through the following points:

1. **Increased Disposable Income:** The tax cut directly increases the disposable income of urban middle-class households by ₹1 lakh crore, empowering them to spend more.

2. **High Consumption Multiplier:** The estimated consumption multiplier for the urban middle class is 5. This suggests that every ₹1 of tax cut could generate ₹5 in new consumption. This multiplier is derived from a

marginal propensity to save (MPS) of 20%, indicating these households typically save 20% of any additional income.

**3. Total Economic Impact:** Applying the consumption multiplier, the ₹1 lakh crore tax cut could lead to an additional ₹5 lakh crore in consumption. This would significantly boost the economy by increasing demand for goods and services.

**4. Boost to GDP:** The additional consumption could enhance GDP growth. A ₹5 lakh crore increase in consumption translates to about a 2.7% increase in GDP, based on India's current GDP of ₹185 lakh crore.

**5. Supports Private Investment:** By increasing demand, the tax cut encourages businesses to invest and expand, potentially leading to more job creation and higher incomes, further stimulating economic growth.

#### What can be done to support this growth?

**1. Implement Easy Monetary Policies:** The RBI should adopt easier monetary policies to lower interest rates and encourage private investment, supporting businesses in expanding and creating jobs.

**2. Encourage Local Consumption:** Promote purchasing domestically produced goods to ensure that the increased spending benefits the local economy.

**3. Maintain Fiscal Discipline:** Continue managing the fiscal deficit effectively, which is projected to be below 4.4% of GDP, to maintain economic stability and investor confidence.

**4. Support Private Investment:** The tax cut can stimulate demand, encouraging firms to launch new projects and hire more, thus increasing consumer spending and further boosting growth.

#### Question for practice:

Discuss the multiplier effects of the ₹1 lakh crore tax cut for the urban middle class and how it can impact economic growth.

### India prioritizes growth and adaptation over emissions

**Source:** The post India prioritizes growth and adaptation over emissions has been created, based on the article **“Excessive preoccupation with temperature goal’: How India has signalled shift in approach to climate crisis”** published in **“Indian Express”** on 7th February 2025

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper3- Environment- Conservation

**Context:** The article discusses India's changing approach to climate action. It prioritizes economic growth and adaptation over emission cuts. India argues that rich countries have failed to meet climate goals. It plans to develop first and decarbonize later. It also aims to expand clean energy technologies independently.

#### Why is India changing its climate strategy?

India has shifted its climate policy focus. It now prioritizes economic growth and adaptation over immediate emission cuts. This shift is due to the failure of developed countries to meet climate targets. Global emissions are still rising, and climate finance commitments remain unfulfilled.

#### What is India's new argument on climate action?



1. **Economic Growth First:** India argues that **rapid economic growth is the best defense** against climate change. Adaptation provides immediate benefits, unlike emission cuts.
2. **Failure of Global Efforts:** Global emissions are still rising, and developed countries have failed to meet targets. **US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement (2025)** weakens global action.
3. **Economic Survey for 2024-25 Recommend:** The Economic Survey suggests that India should first reach the development level of richer countries by 2047 and then focus on achieving a net-zero emission goal by 2070. This approach follows China's model.
4. **China's model:** China focused on economic growth first. Its emissions **quadrupled since the mid-1990s**. However, this also helped it build the world's largest clean energy sector. India sees this as a model. Once China peaks emissions, it can reduce them faster than others.
5. **Energy Independence:** India plans 100 GW nuclear energy by 2047 and focuses on solar, wind, hydrogen, and SMRs to control its transition.

#### What challenges does India face?

**Dependence on Coal:** Coal remains essential for energy needs, but restrictions could slow economic growth.

**Global Climate Inaction:** Developed nations failed to meet emission targets, reducing India's incentive for aggressive decarbonization.

**Technology Dependence:** India lacks local manufacturing for clean energy. Without scaling up, it will depend on foreign supply chains.

**Slow Nuclear Expansion:** Despite the **India-US civil nuclear deal**, nuclear energy growth has been sluggish.

#### Question for practice:

Discuss India's changing approach to climate action and the reasons behind its shift in strategy.

### Digital technology is changing rural India's education

**Source:** The post Digital technology is changing rural India's education has been created, based on the article "**Technology and the challenge of equitable education**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 8th February 2025

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

**Context:** The article discusses how digital technology, especially smartphones, is expanding in rural India. It highlights the potential of AI and digital tools in education. It stresses the need to educate mothers and create a roadmap to use technology for underprivileged students.

For detailed information on **Measuring digital literacy -Why India must measure digital literacy** [read this article here](#)

#### What Is the Impact of Digital Technology on Rural India?

1. **Smartphone Penetration:** Rural smartphone ownership surged from **36% in 2018 to 84% in 2024**, showing rapid digital adoption.

2. **Educational Tools:** During the **COVID-19 pandemic**, smartphones delivered texts, worksheets, and videos, ensuring educational continuity.

3. **Long-Term Impact:** The digital skills learned during the pandemic have persisted, **shaping new learning methods** in rural communities.

4. **New Digital Trends:** Post-pandemic, interest in **AI-based education** is growing, opening new possibilities for learning in rural India.

### What Challenges Remain in Educating the Underprivileged?

1. **Limited Education of Mothers:** Over **40% of mothers** have studied less than class five, affecting their ability to help children.

2. **Unclear Smartphone Ownership Among Mothers:** The article does not clarify whether **mothers of young children** own smartphones, impacting digital learning at home.

3. **School Attendance Issues:** Many villages have a **fragmented education system** where students attend different types of schools or **do not attend at all**.

4. **Profit-Driven Technological Innovations:** Most **education technologies are designed for profit**, making access difficult for underprivileged communities.

### How Can Technology Further Enhance Education?

1. **Smartphone Accessibility:** As **84% of rural households now own smartphones**, digital education can expand further.

2. **Sustained Digital Learning:** Digital resources like **virtual training and AI tools** can continue enhancing education beyond pandemic use.

3. **Supporting Mothers' Education:** Educating **mothers with limited schooling** can help strengthen children's learning at home.

4. **Organized Learning Models:** **Broadcast learning**, tested in Maharashtra, can help **organize group learning** for rural students without access to structured education.

### What Are the Economic Implications of Technological Innovations in Education?

1. **Growing Digital Market:** With most households already owning a smartphone, **purchasing second devices** may boost the **digital economy**.

2. **Technology and Profit Barriers:** **For-profit models** limit access to educational innovations where profit potential is low, restricting benefits for the poor.

3. **AI and Hardware Costs:** **AI-driven education requires high-end hardware**, increasing financial inequality and creating a **new cost burden**.

4. **Investment for Equitable Access:** **Philanthropy alone is not enough**; India **needs a clear roadmap** to ensure that technology benefits the most disadvantaged.

### Question for practice:

Examine how digital technology is transforming education in rural India and the challenges that remain for underprivileged students.

### **RBI cuts repo rate to support growth.**

**Source:** The post RBI cuts repo rate to support growth. has been created, based on the article “**Growth over inflation: The interest rate cut signals a shift in the RBI’s immediate priorities**” published in “**The Hindu**” on 8th February 2025

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper3- Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilisation of resources, growth Development

**Context:** The RBI cut the repo rate from 6.50% to 6.25% to support growth. Inflation fell to 5.2%, but growth is slow. Global economic risks remain. The RBI expects inflation to ease. The policy aligns with the Budget. A scheduling change could improve decision-making.

#### **Why did the RBI cut the repo rate?**

1. The RBI reduced the **repo rate from 6.50% to 6.25%**, the first cut in **nearly five years**. This decision prioritizes **economic expansion over inflation control**.
2. In the previous bi-monthly review, the **MPC had opted for the status quo with a 4:2 vote**. At that time, inflation was **6.2% (October 2023)**, and **GDP growth was 5.4% (Q2 2023-24)**.
3. Now, **inflation has moderated to 5.2% (December 2023)**, but **growth projections for 2024-25 have slipped to 6.4%**, the lowest in four years.

#### **What global and domestic factors influenced this decision?**

1. Globally, **stalled disinflation, a strong U.S. dollar, and diminished prospects of U.S. rate cuts** have put pressure on **emerging markets, including India and the rupee**.
2. Domestically, inflation is expected to **average 4.8% in 2024-25 and 4.2% in 2025-26**, based on **assumptions of a normal monsoon and a bumper harvest of key vegetables (tomato, onion, potato)**, which historically **cause price spikes**.

#### **How does the policy align with the government’s economic strategy?**

1. The RBI’s post-Budget stance indicates **closer coordination with fiscal policy**.
2. The government has called for **monetary and fiscal policies to work in tandem**.
3. The rate cut is expected to **stimulate consumption, attract private investment, and boost growth**, though its effectiveness remains **uncertain**.

#### **Should the RBI change its review schedule for better decision-making?**

1. Had the **MPC met a week later**, it might have had **additional justification for the rate cut**, as **January inflation was expected to cool to around 4.5%**.
2. A **slight adjustment in the MPC’s bi-monthly meeting schedule** could make monetary policy **more data-driven and responsive**, helping the committee base decisions on **real-time economic indicators**.

### Question for practice:

Evaluate whether the RBI's decision to cut the repo rate aligns with both domestic economic conditions and global economic trends.

### India can lead AI with innovation and strategy

**Source:** The post India can lead AI with innovation and strategy has been created, based on the article “**AI race: What India should do**” published in “**Indian Express**” on 8th February 2025

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper3-Awareness in the fields of IT, Space, Computers.

**Context:** The article discusses India's potential to lead in AI. It highlights India's strengths in AI talent, startups, and digital infrastructure. It stresses the need for AI hardware independence, open-source models, and global leadership. It calls for urgent innovation and policy changes.

For detailed information on **India's Strategy for AI Leadership** [read this article here](#)

#### Why is AI important for India?

1. **Strong AI Workforce:** India has **4,20,000 AI professionals**, more than many countries' entire tech sectors.
2. **High AI Adoption:** **92% of Indian enterprises use AI**, the highest in the world.
3. **Growing AI Market:** India's AI market is worth **\$17 billion**.
4. **Leading AI Startups:** **Sarvam AI** (Indian languages), **Niramai** (breast cancer detection), and **BHASHINI** (22+ language translations) are driving innovation.
5. **Digital Growth:** **49% of global real-time payments** come from India, with **\$568 billion in monthly UPI transactions**.
6. **Government Support:** The **IndiaAI Mission** aims for AI leadership.

#### How has India built a strong digital foundation?

India has transformed its digital landscape in the last decade.

1. **Financial Inclusion:** Bank account penetration rose from 30% to 80% in seven years, while costs dropped from \$23 to 15 cents per account.
2. **Digital Payments:** India handles **49% of global real-time payments**, with **\$568 billion in monthly UPI transactions**.
3. **Startups & Innovation:** India has 108 unicorns, using DPI to develop fintech, health-tech, and commerce platforms.
4. **Crisis Management:** During COVID-19, India transferred **\$4.5 billion to 160 million people** instantly.

#### What are the global AI trends?

1. **US Investment in AI & Semiconductors:** The **Stargate initiative** commits **billions of dollars** to AI and semiconductor research. It aims to create **1,00,000 jobs** and secure US dominance in AI.
2. **China's Cost-Effective AI Development:** **DeepSeek** built an **open-source AI model** with just **200 employees** and **\$10 million**, competing with **OpenAI**, which has **4,500 employees** and **\$6.6 billion** in funding.
3. **US AI Hardware Restrictions:** The **AI diffusion rule** limits **advanced GPU** exports to India, placing it under **Tier II** restrictions despite being a Quad partner.

#### What should India do to lead AI?

1. **Build cost-effective AI solutions** like ISRO, maximizing output with fewer resources.
2. **Promote open-source AI** to foster innovation, like **DeepSeek's low-cost AI success**.
3. **Develop sovereign AI models** using Indian data to avoid biases.
4. **Strengthen multilingual AI** for India's **22+ official languages**, like **BHASHINI**.
5. **Gain Tier I AI status** to remove **US-imposed GPU restrictions**.
6. **Invest in AI hardware** to ensure self-reliance in computing power.
7. **Act urgently** with a **mission-driven approach**, leveraging **India's 4,20,000 AI professionals** and **92% enterprise adoption rate**.

#### Question for practice:

Discuss how India can achieve AI leadership by leveraging its strengths and addressing key challenges.

### Terrorism and its evolving tactics

**Source:** The post terrorism and its evolving tactics has been created, based on the article "**Keeping a watch on the growing arc of violence**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 10th February 2025

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper3-Security - Terrorism

**Context:** The article discusses global instability, ongoing wars, and the failure of international bodies to prevent conflicts. It highlights the resurgence of Islamist terrorism, the growing digital radicalization, and recent terror attacks. It warns of a potential new wave of terrorism using advanced technology.

For detailed information on **Counter terrorism policies** [read this article here](#)

#### What Is the Current Global Situation?

1. **Wars and Conflicts:** Violence continues in Europe and West Asia. The Ukraine war is prolonged, and Gaza faces heavy attacks by Israel.
2. **Failing Global Institutions:** The UN Security Council and the International Court of Justice are ineffective.
3. **Rise of Terrorism:** Islamist terrorism is evolving with digital tools. Al-Qaeda has resumed training in Afghanistan.



4. **Future Threats:** Terror groups use Artificial Intelligence to recruit and spread extremist ideologies.

### What Are the Recent Terror Incidents in the U.S.?

1. In January, an explosion occurred in a Tesla cyber truck outside a hotel where Donald Trump was staying.
2. On New Year's Day, a man drove a truck into a crowd in New Orleans, killing 14 people. He had an IS flag on his vehicle.
3. U.S. intelligence has also foiled a terror plot in Virginia.

### What is the status of Islamist Terrorism?

#### 1. Status of Islamist Terrorism

- Islamist terrorism remains a significant threat globally.
- It is evolving with modern technology, especially through online radicalization.
- Groups like al-Qaeda and ISIS continue to adapt and decentralize operations.

#### 2. Evolve Over Time

- Started gaining prominence in 1979 with Sunni and Shia militant movements.
- Radicalization led to the creation of global jihad movements like al-Qaeda and ISIS.
- Shifts in tactics are evident as jihadist groups now use digital platforms to spread their ideologies.

#### 3. Comeback

- Al-Qaeda has resumed operations in Taliban-run Afghanistan.
- The Islamic State in Khorasan Province is expanding its reach beyond Afghanistan and Pakistan.
- Recent attacks in various countries signal a resurgence of terrorist activities.
- Small-scale attacks in the West raise concerns about a new wave of terrorism.

### Is Peace in West Asia a Reality or an Illusion?

1. **False Peace:** The illusion of peace in West Asia is highlighted by ongoing wars in Gaza and Lebanon. The United States and Israel believe they have diminished Iran's influence, promoting a false sense of stability.
2. **Underlying Instability:** Despite surface calm, underground activities and resistance movements remain active, indicating unresolved conflicts and potential future unrest.
3. **Pyrrhic Victory:** Current victories in the region are described as 'pyrrhic,' meaning they are achieved at too great a cost to be beneficial, suggesting that the supposed peace could be temporary and unstable.
4. **Uncertain Impact:** The long-term impact of these conflicts and interventions by external powers like the United States is still uncertain, hinting at a fragile peace that could easily unravel.

### Why Are Experts Worried?

Experts warn that terrorists are using new technologies. Artificial Intelligence and social media are helping spread extremist ideologies. Security agencies believe early action is needed to stop another wave of attacks. Ignoring these warnings could lead to more violence worldwide.

### Question for practice:

Evaluate the resurgence of Islamist terrorism and its evolving tactics in the modern world.

## India increases funding for research and development

**Source:** The post India increases funding for research and development has been created, based on the article "A gift horse's teeth: Higher allocations are not enough to boost scientific research" published in "The Hindu" on 10th February 2025

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper3- Government Budgeting And Science and Technology

**Context:** The article discusses India's 2025-26 budget, which increases funding for research and development. It highlights a ₹20,000 crore investment in small modular reactors and support for private sector R&D. However, concerns remain about infrastructure, private participation, and effective utilization of funds.

For detailed information on **India's R&D Funding and Private Sector Role** [read this article here](#)

### What Is the New Funding Initiative?

1. The 2025-26 budget includes ₹20,000 crore for developing small modular reactors, with a target of five reactors by 2033.
2. A **Research, Development, and Innovation fund** is introduced within the **Department of Science and Technology (DST)**.
3. This increases DST's total budgetary allocation to **₹28,000 crore**, which is **over three times** last year's allocation and **seven times** the actual expenditure in **2023-24**.

### How Will This Impact the Private Sector?

1. The budget aims to boost **private sector involvement** in **R&D**, a field largely dominated by government spending.
2. Currently, **private sector R&D contribution is only 36%**, while total R&D spending in **India was 0.64% of GDP in 2020**, the **lowest since 1995**.
3. In the last five years, business enterprises accounted for **around 40% of government R&D expenditure**.
4. Public sector R&D units **allocated only 0.30% of their sales turnover** to research, while the private sector **allocated 1.46% in 2020-21** (DST estimates).

### What Are the Challenges Mentioned?

1. Despite the increased funding, **India lacks key infrastructure** needed for research growth.
2. The country still does not have essential elements like **chipsets, semiconductor fabs, and a strong innovation ecosystem**.

3. Sectors such as **fuel, metallurgy, pharmaceuticals, textiles, IT, and biotechnology** have technological strengths, but **returns from core R&D and intellectual property generation are still low.**

#### **What Are the Expected Outcomes?**

1. The government needs to **clearly define how private entities can access funds** and outline **tangible public benefits.**
2. Increased funding alone **will not ensure success** unless **structural issues are resolved.**
3. To make India a **global research leader**, focus must be on:

- **Strengthening foundational infrastructure**
- **Incentivizing private innovation**
- **Ensuring long-term industry engagement**

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

Examine how the 2025-26 budget's increased funding for R&D addresses private sector participation and infrastructure challenges in India.

### **India's role in the AI Action Summit in Paris**

**Source:** The post India's role in the AI Action Summit in Paris has been created, based on the article "**India's opportunity at the AI Action Summit**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 10th February 2025

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper3- Science and Technology- developments and their applications and effects in everyday life.

**Context:** The article discusses India's role in the AI Action Summit in Paris. It highlights India's opportunity to advocate for AI resource access, promote relevant AI applications, and address AI risks for the Global South. Hosting the next summit could strengthen India's global AI leadership.

For detailed information on **Paris AI Summit 2025** [read this article here](#)

#### **What is the AI Action Summit in Paris?**

1. The AI Action Summit will be held in Paris on February 10-11, 2025. India is co-chairing the event with France.
2. This is the third summit after the UK (2023) and South Korea (2024). The Paris summit will discuss AI safety, innovation, governance, and the future of work.

#### **How has India engaged in global AI discussions?**

1. India participated in AI summits in the UK and South Korea.
2. The UK summit focused on AI safety and led to the launch of the UK AI Safety Institute (AISi).
3. The South Korea summit expanded discussions on multilateral cooperation. India has also announced its own AI Safety Institute.

4. India has promoted AI for the Global South in multilateral forums. Under India's G20 presidency in 2023, leaders agreed on a "pro-innovation regulatory approach" to balance AI growth with safety.

5. India hosted the Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI) meeting in 2023, calling for equitable AI access.

For detailed information on **India's role in shaping global AI governance** [read this article here](#)

### What should India focus on at the Paris Summit?

#### 1. Expanding AI resource access

India should push for fair access to AI tools, including:

- AI computing power (like India's 18,600-GPU facility with 40% government funding).
- Data storage, cloud computing, and open-source AI models (like DeepSeek).
- Easier global transfer of AI technologies with safety rules.

#### 2. Developing AI for local needs

India should support AI applications for real-world problems in the Global South, such as:

- Early disease detection in local healthcare systems.
- Personalized education platforms for different learning needs.
- AI tools for improving agriculture.
- A repository of AI use cases can help guide future projects.

#### 3. Addressing AI risks for the Global South

1. Advocate for AI risk assessments based on real-world harm, as noted in the **International Scientific Report on AI Safety**.
2. Highlight **cultural risks** from AI models trained on Western data.
3. Propose a **repository of AI-related harms** to shape future safety policies.

### How can India benefit from this summit?

By leading these discussions, India can strengthen its position as an AI leader. This could help India host the next AI Action Summit. It would also establish India as a bridge between AI superpowers and developing nations.

### Question for practice:

Discuss how India can leverage the AI Action Summit in Paris to strengthen its role in global AI leadership.

## Mass layoffs are returning in Big Tech 2025

**Source:** The post Mass layoffs are returning in Big Tech 2025 has been created, based on the article “**A DIFFERENT WAY FORWARD: In culture that equates productivity with purpose, what happens when jobs vanish?**” published in “**Indian Express**” on 10th February 2025

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

**Context:** The article discusses the return of mass layoffs in Big Tech in early 2025. Companies like Meta, Amazon, and Google are cutting jobs. AI is replacing workers. People are struggling financially and emotionally. Many are searching for new ways to find purpose and stability.

### Why Are Mass Layoffs Returning in 2025?

Big Tech companies like Meta, Amazon, Microsoft, and Google are cutting jobs again. Layoffs had decreased in 2024 but are increasing in early 2025. Companies are focusing on cost-cutting, reversing earlier hiring trends.

### What Is Causing These Layoffs?

Several factors are driving job losses:

1. **Political Changes:** The return of Donald Trump as U.S. President is reshaping Silicon Valley. Companies are adjusting to new policies and increased regulatory scrutiny.
2. **Company Strategies:** Meta laid off 5% of its workforce, citing "low performance." Alphabet introduced voluntary exit programs, similar to Elon Musk's restructuring of Twitter (now X).
3. **Artificial Intelligence (AI):** AI is both a threat and an opportunity. A report suggests that 60% of jobs in advanced economies are vulnerable to automation. China's DeepSeek has shown that innovation can happen with small research teams, reducing the need for large workforces.

### How Are Layoffs Affecting Workers?

Job loss is causing financial and emotional distress:

1. Many workers are unable to afford their apartments.
2. Severance packages are running out, creating financial uncertainty.
3. Job searches feel overwhelming, as past career achievements no longer guarantee employment.
4. Work was once a source of identity, but now that sense of stability is disappearing.

### What Are People Doing to Survive?

Workers are trying alternative income sources:

1. Some move back in with their parents or sublet their apartments.
2. Some take contract work without benefits or long-term security.
3. Others monetize hobbies, selling art, essays, or handmade items.
4. Many turn to social media, creating vlogs, reviewing products, and selling courses on content creation.



## What Is the Bigger Shift in Work Culture?

The traditional career path—starting from entry-level, reaching mid-career success, and retiring—is breaking down. The structure of work is crumbling, forcing people to find meaning outside of jobs. The future of work remains uncertain, but new lifestyles are emerging.

### Question for practice:

Examine the factors driving mass layoffs in Big Tech in early 2025.

## Trump's Gaza Plan and West Asia's Challenges

**Source:** The post Trump's Gaza Plan and West Asia's Challenges has been created, based on the article "Gaza and Trump's 'expanding the canvas' strategy" published in "The Hindu" on 11th February 2025

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

**Context:** The article discusses Trump's proposal to relocate Gaza's population and redevelop the area, his efforts to expand the Abraham Accords, and Saudi Arabia's stance on Palestinian statehood. It also examines West Asia's conflicts, economic issues, and Saudi-U.S. relations under Mohammed bin Salman.

For detailed information on **Donald Trump's return as U.S. President and its impact on South Asia** [read this article here](#)

### What are the major problems in West Asia?

#### A. Political Problems in West Asia

1. **Unresolved Israel-Palestine Conflict:** Gaza war caused destruction. Trump's relocation plan for 2.3 million Gazans is unrealistic. Israel rejects a Palestinian state, but Saudi Arabia demands it.
2. **Regional Instability:** Violence since October 7, 2023, has weakened Iran's influence. The "Axis of Resistance" is inactive but could return. Syria's civil war has left lasting damage.
3. **Growing Religious Extremism:** Ultra-religious Jewish groups influence Israel. HTS-led groups are strong in Syria.
4. **Trump's Unpredictable Diplomacy:** His aggressive approach could increase tensions. He struggles to adapt to new regional realities.

#### B. Economic Problems in West Asia

1. **War Damage:** Rebuilding Gaza costs \$50 billion, Lebanon \$8.5 billion, and Syria \$500 billion. Western sanctions slow recovery.
2. **Oil Dependence:** Saudi Arabia's GDP is \$1.07 trillion, but oil demand may decline. Trump's energy policies threaten oil prices.

### What is Trump's proposal for Gaza?

1. Donald Trump proposed relocating 2.3 million Gaza residents to Egypt and Jordan.

2. He suggested the U.S. should take over Gaza and develop it into a global tourist destination. This idea was seen as unrealistic and controversial. Some called it a colonial land grab.

3. He also hinted at a plan for the West Bank.

### What is Saudi-U.S. relations under Mohammed bin Salman?

1. **Long-standing Alliance:** Saudi-U.S. relations have lasted over 80 years, based on security cooperation and oil trade.

2. **Saudi Arabia's Economic Strength:** The country has a GDP of \$1.07 trillion, a Public Investment Fund worth \$930 billion, and Aramco's market value is \$1.79 trillion.

3. **Trump-MbS Partnership:** Trump's first call after returning to office was to MbS. MbS offered to invest \$600 billion in the U.S., and Trump asked him to increase it to \$1 trillion.

4. **Geopolitical Role:** MbS hosted two major Arab-Islamic summits on Gaza, ended Saudi involvement in Yemen, and normalized ties with Iran and Qatar.

5. **Abraham Accords Stalemate:** Saudi Arabia refuses to recognize Israel without a Palestinian state, complicating Trump's efforts to expand the accords.

### What are Trump's challenges?

Trump's aggressive diplomacy is unpredictable. He must convince Israel to be more flexible. He must also work with MbS, who may invest up to \$1 trillion in the U.S. A strong Saudi-U.S. partnership could help stabilize West Asia, but major obstacles remain.

### Question for practice:

Examine the major political and economic challenges in West Asia and how they impact Saudi-U.S. relations under Mohammed bin Salman.

## India strengthens Global South ties and leadership

**Source:** The post India strengthens Global South ties and leadership has been created, based on the article "India as a bridge between the Global North and South" published in "The Hindu" on 11th February 2025

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

**Context:** The article explains India's efforts to lead the Global South while strengthening ties with the West. It highlights India's competition with China, its need for inclusive partnerships, human-centric development, and global governance reforms to become an effective global development leader.

For detailed information on **India and Global South** [read this article here](#)

### Why is India Increasing Its Focus on the Global South?

India's increasing focus on the Global South is driven by several key factors:

1. **Strategic Positioning:** India aims to establish itself as a leader in global governance reforms, advocating for the interests of developing nations, as emphasized by Prime Minister Modi at the 18th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas and the 3rd Voice of Global South Summit in 2024.

2. **Balancing Global Powers:** India is deepening ties with Western nations while countering China's influence in regions like Africa, where both countries are heavily investing.

3. **Building New Alliances:** High-level visits, such as to Poland and hosting US officials, showcase efforts to forge new partnerships.

4. **Alternative Development Model:** The Global Development Compact highlights India's approach, rooted in its own developmental experiences, promoting a partnership model rather than traditional donor-recipient dynamics.

### Is India's Approach Different from the Non-Alignment Movement (NAM)?

1. Yes, India's current approach differs from NAM. NAM was driven by **decolonization** and was often critical of the West.

2. Today, India is increasing its influence in the Global South while also strengthening ties with the **U.S. and Europe**.

3. High-level visits, such as **Jake Sullivan's (former U.S. National Security Adviser) visit to India in January 2025** and **Modi's visit to Poland in August 2024**, show this shift.

4. Unlike NAM, India **seeks inclusive partnerships** rather than ideological divisions.

### How Can India Be a Strong Development Partner?

#### A. Equal Partnerships, Not Just India-First Policies

1. India promotes equal partnerships with developing nations instead of following traditional donor-recipient models.

2. However, India's '**Global Development Compact**' focuses on strategies rooted in Indian experiences.

3. To be more effective, India must also **learn from other Global South nations** instead of positioning itself as a sole knowledge provider.

#### B. A More Human-Centric Development Model

1. India promotes **Mission LiFE ('Lifestyle For Environment')**, which focuses on **low-consumption lifestyles**.

2. While this is important, India should **expand its human-centric approach** to focus on **building human resources and capacity**.

3. Countries in the Global South need strategies to **boost their domestic industries**, which India can support.

4. India has traditionally provided training through the **Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) program**, but it should **help countries develop long-term institutional capacity**.

4. **Exchanges in small business development (MSMEs), digital infrastructure, climate action, and energy solutions** are potential areas of cooperation.

### How Can India Lead Global Governance Reforms?

1. India helped include the **African Union in the G20 (2023)** during its presidency, demonstrating its commitment to inclusive global governance.
2. India should not only push for reforms in existing institutions but also **build domestic capacity** to support development partnerships.
3. Initially, India can **leverage partnerships with experienced development players like the UN, Germany, and France**.
4. In the long term, India must develop its **own international cooperation systems** to **scale up its global initiatives**.

### What is India's Challenge as a Leader of the Global South?

1. India wants to be the **"Voice of the Global South,"** but it must also **listen** to developing nations.
2. During the **NAM era, India provided a third option beyond the Cold War blocs**.
3. Now, India has an opportunity to create a **new development model** for the Global South.

### Question for practice:

Evaluate India's strategy for becoming a strong development partner for the Global South.

### Uttarakhand UCC restricts live-in relationships legally

**Source:** The post Uttarakhand UCC restricts live-in relationships legally has been created, based on the article **"The problem of regulating live-in relationships"** published in **"The Hindu"** on 11th February 2025

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper2- Indian Constitution

**Context:** The article discusses Uttarakhand's Uniform Civil Code (UCC) and its impact on live-in relationships. It highlights concerns about compulsory registration, lack of protection for same-sex couples, legal uncertainties in maintenance, violation of privacy, and increased state and parental control over personal relationships.

For detailed information on **Uniform Civil Code (UCC) Debate- In wake of Uttarakhand UCC** [read this article here](#)

### What does the Uttarakhand UCC say about live-in relationships?

1. **Mandatory Registration:** The UCC requires opposite-sex live-in relationships to be registered within **one month**. Failure to register can lead to **criminal charges, fines, or imprisonment**.
2. **Criminalization of Non-Registration:** If a couple does not register their relationship, they can be punished with imprisonment and/or hefty fines.
3. **No Recognition for Same-Sex Couples:** The law **only applies to opposite-sex couples**, leaving **same-sex relationships unprotected**.

4. **Police Involvement:** Registered live-in relationships must be **reported to the local police**, treating them as a law-and-order issue.

5. **Parental Notification:** If either partner is under **21 years**, their **parents/guardians are informed**, which could lead to **honour-based violence**.

#### **What are the problems with defining live-in relationships?**

1. The UCC defines a live-in relationship as a union "in the nature of marriage," similar to the Domestic Violence Act, 2005. But many live-in relationships do not resemble marriages.

2. The law requires couples to register within a month, but many such relationships do not have a clear start date. This may force casual or short-term relationships into legal registration.

#### **How does the UCC affect privacy and sexual autonomy?**

1. The Supreme Court, in *Shakti Vahini v. Union of India (2018)*, upheld an adult's right to choose their partner.

2. However, the UCC allows authorities to inform parents if one partner is below 21 years.

3. This could lead to parental control over adult relationships. Many parents misuse legal provisions, such as false rape cases, to stop inter-caste and inter-religious relationships.

#### **What is the overall impact of these provisions?**

1. The law increases state and parental control over personal choices. It makes live-in relationships harder to maintain.

2. Instead of providing legal protection, it may expose couples to social and legal risks.

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

Examine how the Uttarakhand Uniform Civil Code (UCC) impacts live-in relationships in terms of legal recognition, privacy, and individual autonomy.

### **EFTA India partnership boosts trade and innovation**

**Source:** The post EFTA India partnership boosts trade and innovation has been created, based on the article "**India-EFTA trade agreement opens the door to long-term, multifaceted cooperation**" published in "**Indian Express**" on 11th February 2025

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper2-International relations- Bilateral, Regional and Global Groupings and Agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

**Context:** The article discusses India's space success and its growing innovation. It explains the new EFTA-India trade agreement. EFTA countries bring advanced technology and investment. The partnership aims to create jobs, boost trade, and support India's green transition through long-term collaboration.

For detailed information on **EFTA-India Relations** [read this article here](#)

#### **Why is the EFTA-India Partnership Important?**



**1. Strong Investment Commitment:** EFTA plans to invest **USD 100 billion** in India and create **1 million jobs** in the next **15 to 20 years**.

**2. Boosts India's Innovation:** EFTA countries are leaders in **advanced technology, pharmaceuticals, financial services, and precision engineering**. Their expertise supports India's **innovation-driven economy**.

**3. Supports Green Transition:** **Norwegian and Icelandic expertise** in **renewable energy** can help India's sustainability goals.

**4. Proven Collaboration in Space:** **Swiss technology** contributed to India's **Moon mission** success.

**5. Expands Trade Opportunities:** The **TEPA agreement** ensures **lower tariffs, better customs procedures, and intellectual property protection**.

**6. Enhances Business Cooperation:** Over **100 EFTA companies** visited India, showing strong business interest.

**7. Long-Term Partnership:** Unlike traditional trade deals, this partnership is based on **trust, shared values, and sustainable growth**.

#### **What is the Role of the EFTA Desk in India?**

The **EFTA desk**, launched on **February 10, 2024**, will help businesses **find partners, understand regulations, and navigate the market**. It ensures **strong cooperation and smooth implementation of TEPA**.

#### **Conclusion**

EFTA-India Partnership is just beginning. Both sides need **continuous efforts** to build a **win-win relationship**. **Innovation, investment, and sustainability** will drive mutual prosperity.

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

Examine how the EFTA-India Partnership contributes to India's economic growth, innovation, and sustainability.

### **COP29 is called the Climate Finance COP**

**Source:** The post COP29 is called the Climate Finance COP has been created, based on the article "**A role for India in South-South climate cooperation**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 12th February 2025

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

**Context:** The article discusses COP29, called the *Climate Finance COP*, and its role in implementing Article 6 of the Paris Agreement. Article 6.2 allows countries to trade carbon credits to meet climate goals. India can benefit by attracting climate finance, collaborating internationally, and supporting South-South cooperation, especially with African nations.

For detailed information on **COP 29 Outcomes** read this article [here](#)

#### **Why is COP29 Called the Climate Finance COP?**

1. COP29, held in Baku, Azerbaijan, focused on financial mechanisms for climate action.

2. A major achievement was operationalizing **Article 6 of the Paris Agreement**, enabling carbon markets.
3. **Article 6.2** allows trading of **Internationally Transferred Mitigation Outcomes (ITMOs)** to fund emissions reductions.
4. India demanded **\$1 trillion annually** in climate finance for developing nations.

### What is ITMO Trading?

#### 1. Definition and Purpose

- ITMO (Internationally Transferred Mitigation Outcome) trading allows countries to **trade carbon credits** under **Article 6.2 of the Paris Agreement**.
- It helps developing countries reduce emissions while attracting **finance, technology, and capacity-building support** from developed nations.

#### 2. India's Role in ITMO Trading

- India is the **third-largest greenhouse gas emitter** in absolute terms but faces financial and technical constraints in meeting its **45% emission intensity reduction target by 2030**.
- Before COP29, India **demanded \$1 trillion annually** from developed nations for climate finance.

ITMO transactions can **fund climate-resilient projects and green technology development**.

#### 3. Key Sectors Benefiting

- India identified **14 priority areas**, including **renewable energy (RE), energy storage, carbon capture, and sustainable aviation fuel**.
- India has partnerships with **South Korea, the European Union, and Japan** to develop these technologies.

### What is India's Role in South-South Cooperation?

1. **Supporting African Nations:** India can help African countries tackle climate impacts in **agriculture and water resources**.
2. **Technology and Capacity Building:** India can share expertise in **renewable energy, digital tools, and sustainable agriculture** with African nations.
3. **Policy Commitment:** PM Modi's **10 principles for India-Africa engagement** emphasize economic cooperation and climate resilience.
4. **Climate Finance Mobilization:** Article 6.2 allows India to **generate ITMOs while investing in African sustainable projects** to meet global climate targets.

### What Challenges Does India Face?

India faces several challenges in utilizing ITMOs under Article 6.2:

1. **Risk of Developed Nations' Over-Reliance:** Developed countries might buy low-cost emissions reductions from India, avoiding significant emissions cuts domestically.

2. **Opportunity Cost:** Selling ITMOs could hinder India from achieving its own sustainability goals.
3. **Governance and Transparency Issues:** Inadequate regulation can lead to inefficiencies and inequities in ITMO transactions.
4. India needs robust policies to ensure fair ITMO agreements that benefit its climate ambitions while supporting global climate goals.

**Question for practice:**

Examine why COP29 is referred to as the “Climate Finance COP”?

**Bail Conditions Forcing Marriage Harm Survivors' Dignity**

**Source:** The post Bail Conditions Forcing Marriage Harm Survivors' Dignity has been created, based on the article “A legal ‘remedy’ that perpetuates survivor trauma” published in “The Hindu” on 12th February 2025

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper2-Governance – Mechanisms, laws, institutions and bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of vulnerable sections.

**Context:** The article criticizes courts granting bail to rape accused on the condition of marrying the survivor. It argues that this violates legal guidelines, harms survivors, and shifts the state’s responsibility. Such conditions reinforce patriarchal norms and may affect the trial’s fairness.

**Can Courts Grant Bail on the Condition of Marriage?**

1. In *Atul Gautam vs State of Uttar Pradesh (2025)*, bail was granted if the accused married the survivor and deposited ₹5 lakh.
2. In *Abhishek vs State of Uttar Pradesh and Ors. (2024)*, bail was given with a similar condition.
3. The Supreme Court in *Aparna Bhat vs State of Madhya Pradesh (2021)* ruled that bail conditions must prevent contact with the survivor.
4. In *Re: Right to Privacy of Adolescents (2024)*, the Court held that the state must provide support to survivors.
5. Bail conditions must not violate *Article 21*, ensuring dignity and justice.

**Does This Violate Legal Guidelines?**

1. The Supreme Court in *Aparna Bhat vs State of Madhya Pradesh (2021)* ruled that bail conditions must prevent contact between the accused and the survivor to avoid secondary trauma.
2. Courts must not reinforce gender stereotypes or patriarchal views.
3. In *Kunal Kumar Tiwari vs State of Bihar (2017)*, the Court ruled that bail conditions should not be arbitrary.
4. The Allahabad High Court’s decisions contradict these rulings.
5. Bail conditions forcing marriage violate the survivor’s autonomy and create dependence on the accused.

**How Do These Conditions Affect Survivors?**

1. **Violates Legal Guidelines:** The Supreme Court in *Aparna Bhat vs State of Madhya Pradesh (2021)* ruled that bail conditions must prohibit contact between the accused and survivor to prevent trauma. The Allahabad High Court's decisions contradict this.
2. **Forces Unequal Relationships:** Marriage as a condition assumes it can undo the crime. This forces survivors into coercive relationships, violating their autonomy.
3. **Encourages Manipulation:** The accused may misuse marriage to escape conviction, as seen in *Atul Gautam vs State of Uttar Pradesh (2025)*.
4. **Affects Trial Fairness:** Bail conditions should not influence trials. Marriage alters survivor-accused dynamics, impacting testimony and justice.
5. **Shifts State Responsibility:** In *Re: Right to Privacy of Adolescents (2024)*, the Court ruled the state must support survivors, not shift responsibility to courts or accused.

#### What Needs to Change?

1. Judicial decisions must focus on justice, not social norms.
2. The dignity, rights, and autonomy of survivors must be protected.
3. Courts should ensure fair trials and prevent conditions that may harm survivors.
4. The state must take responsibility for survivor welfare, not shift it to courts.

#### Question for practice:

Evaluate whether granting bail on the condition of marriage violates legal guidelines and affects the rights and dignity of survivors.

### Impact of Trump freezing USAID foreign aid

**Source:** The post Impact of Trump freezing USAID foreign aid has been created, based on the article "**How will freeze on USAID affect the world?**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 12th February 2025

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

**Context:** The article talks about U.S. President Donald Trump freezing USAID's foreign aid for 90 days. USAID staff were placed on leave, and funding was halted. This could harm many countries, including India. Elon Musk and Marco Rubio support restructuring USAID, but critics call it politically motivated.

For detailed information on **Trump freezes foreign aid affecting global help** [read this article here](#)

#### What is USAID?

1. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) was created in 1961 to manage U.S. foreign aid.
2. It works in over 100 countries, supporting health, education, food security, and governance.
3. In 2024, it had a budget of \$44.2 billion, contributing 42% of humanitarian aid tracked by the UN.

### What action did President Trump take?

1. On January 20, President Donald Trump froze USAID's foreign aid for 90 days. The order aimed to review how funds were used.
2. USAID staff (about 10,000 people) were placed on leave. Only mission-critical personnel remained. A judge temporarily delayed the staff reduction, but the funding freeze continued.
3. Elon Musk, head of the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), called USAID a "criminal organization."
4. Secretary of State Marco Rubio, acting as USAID's administrator, said the agency needed restructuring. Trump has long criticized foreign aid, arguing that funds should help the U.S. first.

### How will this affect other countries?

1. **Funding Freeze:** USAID supports many nations, including Ukraine, Ethiopia, and Afghanistan. The aid freeze will disrupt ongoing projects.
2. **Health Impact:** Over six million people could die from HIV/AIDS in four years if funding is cut, according to the UN AIDS agency.
3. **Exceptions:** While \$13.3 million in aid to Haiti was frozen, \$40.7 million was allowed for its police force.
4. **Job Cuts:** Only 294 of 10,000 USAID employees may remain.
5. **Criticism:** Former USAID administrator Andrew Natsios called this a disaster for the Global South.

### What impact will this have on India?

USAID's funding to India has declined over time. In the last decade, India received about \$1.5 billion. In 2024, USAID funded \$79.3 million for health programs like HIV/AIDS, TB, and child immunization. The impact may be limited, but some healthcare projects could suffer.

### Why is this decision controversial?

1. **Limited Overall Effect:** USAID's funding to India has decreased over time. In the last decade, India received about **\$1.5 billion**, which is **only 0.2% to 0.4% of USAID's global funding**.
2. **Health Programs at Risk:** In 2024, **\$79.3 million** was allocated for health programs like **HIV/AIDS, TB, maternal and child health, and immunization**. These projects may face disruptions.
3. **Temporary Suspension of Operations:** USAID has asked all partner organizations in India to **pause their projects**.
4. **Government Role:** It is unclear if **the central or state governments** will fund and continue these programs.

### Question for practice:

Evaluate the impact of President Donald Trump's decision to freeze USAID's foreign aid on global health programs and economies, including its effects on India.



## India Announces Major Tax Cuts for Growth

**Source:** The post India Announces Major Tax Cuts for Growth has been created, based on the article “**TRUST IN THE TAXPAYER: Budget reinvigorates debate on whether taxes can encourage spending and growth**” published in “**Indian Express**” on 12th February 2025

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper3- Economy-Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilisation, of resources, growth, development and employment.

**Context:** The article discusses recent tax cuts in India. Incomes below ₹12 lakh are now tax-free, benefiting 83.52% of taxpayers. It examines whether this will boost spending and growth. The article also covers corporate tax reforms and upcoming changes in the Income Tax Act.

For detailed information on **Tax Cut Boosts Spending and Economic Growth** [read this article here](#)

### Who Benefits from the New Tax Cuts?

1. Taxpayers with annual incomes below ₹12 lakh are exempt from paying income tax, affecting 83.52% of tax assesses.
2. Those earning above ₹12 lakh also see significant tax reductions, with an example showing a possible tax reduction of more than a third for incomes at ₹25 lakh.

### What Effects Are Anticipated from the New Tax Cuts?

1. **Higher Savings and Spending:** Median taxpayers earn ₹5–5.5 lakh, and their monthly spending is ₹6,334 (urban) and ₹3,866 (rural). More disposable income could boost demand.
2. **Potential Job Creation:** Increased spending on goods and services may create jobs.
3. **Mixed Investment Impact:** Past corporate tax cuts did not sustain investment beyond a year.
4. **Fiscal Cost:** The tax cut costs ₹1 lakh crore but could raise future tax revenue if demand grows.
5. **Alternative Approach:** Revising indirect taxes might be more effective in increasing consumption.
6. **Ease of Compliance:** New tax reforms include simplified audits and rationalized tax rules for corporations.

### What Further Tax Reforms Are Expected?

1. **New Income Tax Act:** The Finance Minister plans to introduce a new **Income Tax Act**, which will be **half its current size** and remove **penal provisions**.
2. **Simplified Transfer Pricing Audits:** A **block audit system** will be introduced, locking transfer pricing assessments for **two years**, reducing compliance burden.
3. **Rationalization of TDS and Capital Gains Tax:** The government will simplify **TDS thresholds** and **capital gains tax calculations** to improve compliance.
4. **Focus on Ease of Business:** Measures aim to **prevent tax disputes** and simplify operations for large corporations.
5. **Impact on Growth:** The changes seek to boost **taxpayer trust, spending, and economic activity**.

**Question for practice:**

Discuss how the recent tax cuts in India are expected to impact savings, spending, and economic growth.

**India's plan to amend nuclear liability laws**

**Source:** The post India's plan to amend nuclear liability laws has been created, based on the article “**Nuclear energy — dangerous concessions on liability**” published in “**The Hindu**” on 13th February 2025

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper3-Infrastructure: Energy

**Context:** The article criticizes India's plan to amend nuclear liability laws. It argues that changes will benefit U.S. companies but weaken safety and accountability. It highlights past nuclear disasters, high reactor costs, and U.S. pressure to remove supplier liability.

For detailed information on **India's nuclear liability law and associated issues** [read this article here](#)

**What Changes Are Proposed in India's Nuclear Liability Laws?**

1. The government plans to amend the **Atomic Energy Act** and **Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act** to reduce supplier responsibility.
2. **Current Law:** The **operator (NPCIL)** is liable for damages, capped at **₹1,500 crore**, but can recover costs from the supplier if faulty equipment causes an accident.

For detailed information on **Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act (CLNDA)** [read this article here](#)

**How have past accidents shown supplier faults?**

1. At Fukushima (2011), U.S. company General Electric ignored safety warnings from 1972.
2. After the Three Mile Island accident (1979), Babcock & Wilcox failed to act on safety risks.
3. In Bhopal (1984), the Supreme Court ruled that hazardous enterprises have “absolute liability.”

**Why is the U.S. pressuring India?**

1. **To protect U.S. nuclear companies:** The U.S. wants India to amend liability laws to indemnify suppliers. Currently, Indian law allows the operator (NPCIL) to recover damages from suppliers for defective equipment.
2. **Fear of legal risks:** U.S. firms worry that India might increase the liability cap, exposing them to financial losses.
3. **Lobbying efforts:** Former U.S. Ambassador Eric Garcetti confirmed lobbying Indian leaders to amend the law.
4. **Failure to sell reactors:** Despite the U.S.-India Civil Nuclear Agreement, no U.S. reactors have been sold to India.
5. **Global corporate interests:** U.S. firms fear accepting liability in India might set a precedent in other countries where they demand complete indemnity.

**6. To push costly U.S. reactors:** The AP1000 project in South Carolina failed after spending \$9 billion. Two AP1000 reactors in Georgia cost \$36.8 billion, over 250% of the initial estimate. The U.S. wants India to buy these reactors despite their high costs and delays.

#### **Why is supplier indemnity dangerous?**

1. Without liability, suppliers have no economic incentive to ensure reactor safety.
2. Westinghouse claims AP1000 accidents happen only once in 50 million years but still seeks indemnity.
3. If suppliers fear losses, Indian citizens near reactors face greater risks.

#### **What does this mean for India?**

1. The government appears to prioritize U.S. corporate interests over citizen safety.
2. The proposed amendments could lead to higher costs and lower accountability.
3. India must decide whether to protect its people or bow to foreign pressure.

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

Examine how the proposed amendments to India's nuclear liability laws could impact safety, accountability, and foreign influence.

### **Union Budget 2025-26 supports women's economic growth**

**Source:** The post Union Budget 2025-26 supports women's economic growth has been created, based on the article "**Budgeting for a gender-inclusive 'Viksit Bharat'**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 13th February 2025

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper3- Economy-government budgeting

**Context:** The article discusses the Union Budget 2025-26 and its focus on women's development. It highlights increased gender budget allocation, support for women's employment, skilling, and entrepreneurship. It also emphasizes formalizing gig workers, AI education, and financial inclusion for women entrepreneurs and farmers.

For detailed information on **Union Budget 2025-2026 Highlights** [read this article here](#)

### **How Does the Budget 2025-26 Support Women's Development?**

1. The Union Budget 2025-26 focuses on **inclusive growth**, giving special attention to women. The government aims for **70% women's participation in economic activities by 2047**.
2. The budget includes **gender-responsive policies** to increase women's employment, entrepreneurship, and financial inclusion.
3. The gender budget has increased to **₹4.49 lakh crore**, which is **8.8% of the total budget**, up from **6.8% last year**.
4. This is the highest allocation in **two decades**. **49 Union Ministries and departments** have gender-focused policies.

5. 12 new ministries, including Railways, Ports, Shipping and Waterways, Land Resources, Pharmaceuticals, and Food Processing Industries, have integrated gender-responsive policies.

### What Are the Key Initiatives for Women?

#### 1. Employment Initiatives for Women:

- **Female Labour Force Participation Rate (FLFPR)** increased from 33% in 2021-22 to 42% in 2023-24.
- **52% of funds from employment schemes** are directed toward women.
- **Major schemes include:** Skill India Programme; Entrepreneurship and Skill Development Programme (ESDP); National Skill Training Institutes; Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM); MGNREGS and PM Employment Generation Programme; PM Vishwakarma and Krishonnati Yojana

#### 2. Initiatives to Boost Women's Workforce Participation:

- **New schemes to promote women's participation:** Prime Minister Dhan-Dhaanya Krishi Yojana ; First-time Entrepreneurs' Scheme; Sustainable Livelihood for Urban Workers Initiative; Centres of Excellence for Make in India

#### 3. Support for Women in the Gig Economy

- **90% of working women are in the informal sector.**
- Government introduced **identity cards and e-Shram portal registration** for gig workers.
- Access to **social security entitlements and financial benefits.**

#### 4. Women in Technology

- **₹600 crore gender budget under India AI Mission** for digital education and skilling.
- **Centre of Excellence on AI for Education** to prepare women for tech jobs.

### How Will Women Farmers and Entrepreneurs Benefit?

1. **Simplifying loan requirements**, such as delinking Kisan Credit Cards from land ownership, will help women farmers.

2. **Tracking gender-disaggregated data** will improve policy effectiveness.

**20.5% of MSMEs are women-owned, employing 27 million people.**

3. **Providing collateral-free loans and alternative credit scoring models** will help women entrepreneurs.

4. According to **Bain & Company and Google**, **30 million new women-owned businesses** could create **150-170 million jobs** by 2030.

### How Will These Measures Help Achieve Viksit Bharat?

1. The government's vision for **zero poverty, 100% skilled labour, and India as the food basket of the world** depends on women's economic empowerment.

2. Gender-responsive budgeting, improved infrastructure, and social support will help achieve **70% women's workforce participation by 2047**.

#### Question for practice:

Examine how the Union Budget 2025-26 supports women's economic empowerment through employment, entrepreneurship, and financial inclusion.

### Supreme Court petition seeks lifetime ban for convicts

**Source:** The post Supreme Court petition seeks lifetime ban for convicts has been created, based on the article "Should convicted persons contest elections?" published in "The Hindu" on 13th February 2025

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper2-Salient features of the Representation of People's Act.

**Context:** The article discusses a Supreme Court petition seeking a lifetime ban on convicted persons from contesting elections. It explains existing disqualification laws, past court rulings, and concerns about criminalization in politics. It also highlights recommendations for stricter rules and electoral reforms.

#### What are the current legal provisions?

- Section 8(3) of the Representation of the People Act, 1951:** A person convicted of a criminal offense and sentenced to at least **two years of imprisonment** is disqualified from contesting elections for **six years after release**.
- Section 8(1) of the RP Act, 1951:** A person convicted under laws like the **Protection of Civil Rights (PCR) Act, UAPA, Prevention of Corruption Act**, or for **heinous crimes like rape** is disqualified **irrespective of the sentence period, plus six years after release**.
- Section 11 of the RP Act, 1951:** The **Election Commission (EC)** has the power to **remove or reduce** the disqualification period of a convicted person. For **Example (2019)**, the EC **reduced the disqualification period of Prem Singh Tamang**, convicted under the **Prevention of Corruption Act**, from **six years to 13 months**, allowing him to contest and win a **by-election in Sikkim**. This decision was questioned because the EC had earlier recommended **strict action against criminalization in politics**.

#### What were past Supreme Court decisions?

- ADR Case (2002):** The Supreme Court ruled that all candidates must **disclose their criminal records** before contesting elections.
- CEC vs. Jan Chaukidar Case (2013):** The Supreme Court upheld the **Patna High Court's interpretation** that undertrial prisoners **cannot contest elections** because **Section 62(5) of the RP Act** states that prisoners **cannot vote**. Since one qualification to contest elections is to be an **elector**, undertrials **lost eligibility** to contest. However, Parliament **amended the law in 2013**, overturning this judgment and **allowing undertrial prisoners to contest elections**.
- Lily Thomas Case (2013):** The Supreme Court **struck down Section 8(4) of the RP Act, 1951**, which earlier allowed **sitting legislators** to continue in office **if they filed an appeal** after conviction. After this ruling, any sitting legislator **is disqualified immediately upon conviction**.

#### What is the Central government's stance?



In 2020, the Central government filed an affidavit stating that **MPs and MLAs are not government employees** and do not have **service conditions** like civil servants. Therefore, it argued that the **current disqualification period of six years** after serving the sentence is **adequate**.

**Why is criminalization of politics a concern?**

**1. ADR Report (2024) Findings:**

- **251 (46%) of 543 elected MPs** have **criminal cases** against them.
- **171 (31%) of MPs** face **serious charges**, including **rape, murder, attempt to murder, and kidnapping**.
- Candidates with **criminal backgrounds** had a **15.4% chance of winning**, while candidates with **clean records** had only a **4.4% chance**.

**2. Recommendations from the Law Commission (1999, 2014) and the Election Commission (EC):**

- They suggested that even persons **against whom charges have been framed** for offenses punishable by **more than five years** should be **barred from contesting elections**.
- However, political parties have **not agreed** due to concerns over possible **misuse of this provision**.

**What could be the way forward?**

**1. Lifetime ban for serious crimes:** Convictions for **heinous crimes** and offenses under the **Prevention of Corruption Act** could justify a **permanent disqualification** to ensure **probity in public life**.

**2. Review of EC's power to reduce disqualification:** The **constitutional validity** of Section 11 of the RP Act, which allows the **Election Commission to reduce or remove disqualifications**, should be **reviewed by the Supreme Court**.

**Question for practice:**

Evaluate whether the current legal provisions on disqualification of convicted persons from contesting elections are sufficient to address the issue of criminalization in politics.

### **India should not exit the WTO despite farmer demands**

**Source:** The post India should not exit the WTO despite farmer demands ban for convicts has been created, based on the article **"DON'T GO IT ALONE: Rather than withdraw from WTO, India should strengthen trade multilateralism"** published in **"Indian Express"** on 13th February 2025

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper2- International Relations-Important International institutions, agencies and fora- their structure, mandate.

**Context:** The article discusses why India should not exit the WTO despite farmer demands. WTO rules limit MSP, but India has policy options like the peace clause and income support. Leaving the WTO would harm exports, trade dispute resolution, and global trade relations.

For detailed information on **WTO Reforms and India** [read this article here](#)

**What Are the Main Issues with MSP and WTO Rules?**

1. **Indian farmers want India to leave the WTO** because it restricts their MSP (Minimum Support Price) through its rules.
2. **MSP as a Trade-Distorting Subsidy:** The WTO's Agreement on Agriculture (AoA) classifies MSP as a trade-distorting subsidy. It restricts how much subsidy a country can provide to its farmers.
3. **Outdated External Reference Price (ERP):** The WTO uses an outdated ERP from 1986-88 to compare MSP. Due to inflation, the gap between MSP and ERP has widened, making India's subsidies appear excessive.
4. **India's Negotiation Efforts:** India has been pushing for ERP revision at the WTO but has not succeeded.
5. **Existing Policy Leeway:** The peace clause allows India to provide higher MSP for crops like wheat and rice without immediate legal challenges.
6. **Alternative Support Mechanisms:** The **Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi** provides Rs 6,000 per year to farmers, which does not violate WTO rules.

#### What Would Happen If India Left the WTO?

1. **Loss of Export Benefits:** India's exports currently enjoy **Most-Favoured-Nation (MFN) treatment** and **National Treatment** under WTO rules. Leaving the WTO would make Indian products less competitive in global markets.
2. **More Trade Agreements Needed:** India would have to negotiate separate Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with many countries. FTAs usually have stricter conditions, especially when developing countries negotiate with developed ones.
3. **Weaker Trade Dispute Protection:** The WTO provides a platform for resolving trade disputes. Without WTO membership, India would lose this option.

#### Why is Staying in the WTO Important for India?

1. The WTO is facing challenges, especially from the US, which is not supporting it fully. A weaker WTO could allow countries like the US to take unilateral actions in trade.
2. India should work to strengthen the WTO rather than leave it. Strengthening **multilateral trade** benefits developing countries like India by keeping global markets open and fair.
3. Farmers should be informed about these realities and involved in policy decisions.

#### Question for practice:

Examine how WTO rules impact India's MSP policy and the potential consequences of India leaving the WTO.

### China's dam project raises concerns for India

**Source:** The post China's dam project raises concerns for India has been created, based on the article "**China's dam project opens the floodgates of concern**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 14th February 2025

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

**Context:** China plans to build a large dam on the Yarlung Zangbo river in Tibet. This worries India due to water flow, environmental risks, and bilateral tensions. Legal issues exist, and regional cooperation is weak. Renewing agreements and expert talks may help.

For detailed information on **Tsangpo Dam: Impact on India Explained Pointwise** [read this article here](#)

### Why is China building a dam on the Yarlung Zangbo?

1. China is constructing a large hydroelectric dam on the Yarlung Zangbo river in Tibet to meet its renewable energy goals.
2. The dam aligns with China's 14th Five-Year Plan (2021–2025), which aims to transition from coal to renewable energy sources.
3. Hydroelectric power is a major component of China's strategy to reduce its dependence on fossil fuels.
4. The project is part of China's broader initiative to achieve carbon neutrality by 2060.
5. China's push towards renewable energy is driven by its commitment to sustainable development and reducing environmental pollution from fossil fuels.

### How will the dam impact India?

- 1. Reduced Water Flow:** The Brahmaputra is vital for millions in India's northeast. The dam may disrupt water supply, affecting agriculture and livelihoods.
- 2. Environmental Risks:** The dam is in a seismically active zone. A Tibet earthquake in January 2025 killed 120 people and injured 150.
- 3. Ecosystem Disruption:** It may alter sediment flow, increase riverbank erosion, and harm biodiversity. The dam may also alter sediment flow, increase riverbank erosion, and harm biodiversity.
- 4. Geopolitical Tensions:** The expired MoUs and China's control over upstream water increase India's vulnerability.

### What are the legal and diplomatic challenges?

- 1. Lack of Legal Framework:** The 1997 UN Watercourses Convention emphasizes fair water use, cooperation, and harm prevention, but neither India nor China is a signatory.
- 2. China's Water Policies:** China claims to follow fair water-sharing principles, but lower riparian states, including India, accuse it of using water as a tool for pressure.
- 3. Expired Agreements:** MoUs between India and China for sharing water data on the Brahmaputra and Sutlej rivers have expired, increasing uncertainty.
- 4. Expert Level Mechanism (ELM):** It remains the only forum for water discussions between India and China but lacks a binding agreement.
- 5. Political Tensions:** Bangladesh has not strongly opposed the dam due to its growing ties with China. Relations between India and Bangladesh worsened after Sheikh Hasina's government fell in August 2024. Other lower riparian countries like Nepal, Bhutan, and Pakistan may also be affected. However, regional cooperation on water issues is weak.

**Question for practice:**

Examine the environmental, legal, and geopolitical challenges posed by China's dam on the Yarlung Zangbo.

**Doctor shortage and students studying abroad**

**Source:** The post Doctor shortage and students studying abroad has been created, based on the article "**The problematic globalisation of medical education**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 14th February 2025

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

**Context:** The article discusses the global shortage of doctors and limited access to medical education. Many students study abroad due to intense competition at home. Quality concerns exist in foreign medical schools. Governments are expanding medical seats but face resistance from the medical establishment.

**Why do students go abroad for medical education?**

1. **Limited Medical Seats:** In India, around 2.3 million students take the medical entrance exam, but only one in 22 secures admission.
2. **High Private Tuition Fees:** Many students cannot afford costly private medical colleges in India.
3. **Foreign Universities as an Alternative:** Over 20,000 Indian students study abroad annually in countries like Russia, Ukraine (before the war), Kazakhstan, China, the Philippines, and Nepal.
4. **Western Students Also Move Abroad:** Many French, German, and Norwegian students study in Poland, Hungary, and Romania due to limited seats in their home countries.

**Which countries attract international medical students?**

1. Over 2,00,000 students study medicine abroad. Ukraine had 24,000 foreign students before the war.
2. Indian students prefer Russia, Ukraine (before the war), Kazakhstan, China, the Philippines, Nepal, and Mauritius.
3. Western students also study in Hungary, Poland, and Romania.
4. Some foreign medical colleges are controlled by Indian institutions, like Manipal College of Medical Sciences in Nepal.

**What challenges do foreign-trained medical students face?**

1. **Licensing Exam Requirement:** Indian students who complete medical education abroad must clear a national licensing examination to practice in India.
2. **Mandatory Internship:** They must also complete an internship upon returning to India.
3. **Varying Global Standards:** Different countries have different licensing rules, making it difficult for foreign-trained doctors to practice globally.
4. **Quality Concerns:** Many foreign medical schools operate for profit and lack proper regulation.

### What steps are governments taking to solve the issue?

1. **Increasing Medical Seats:** The Indian government has significantly expanded the number of medical seats, adding nearly 1.1 lakh undergraduate and postgraduate seats over the past decade, a 130% increase.
2. **Future Expansion Plans:** In the Union Budget speech of February 2025, it was announced that an additional 10,000 seats will be introduced in medical colleges and hospitals in 2026. This is part of a broader five-year goal to add 75,000 new seats, addressing the growing demand for qualified medical professionals.
3. **Addressing Global Needs:** This expansion aims to reduce the pressure on students to study abroad and improve domestic medical training quality.

### Conclusion

Governments struggle to balance demand and quality in medical education. The medical establishment resists increasing seats, fearing a loss of exclusivity. With aging populations, the need for doctors is growing. Ensuring quality education for future doctors is a key challenge.

### Question for practice:

Examine the reasons for the increasing number of students going abroad for medical education, the challenges they face, and the efforts taken by governments to address this issue.

## Supreme Court approves ad-hoc judges for backlog

**Source:** The post Supreme Court approves ad-hoc judges for backlog has been created, based on the article “**Is appointing ad-hoc judges a viable means to reduce backlog?**” published in “**The Hindu**” on 14th February 2025

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper2- Judiciary

**Context:** The article discusses the Supreme Court’s approval of appointing retired judges as ad-hoc judges to reduce pending criminal cases. Experts debate the effectiveness, challenges, and reforms needed for the process. They highlight government cooperation, judicial independence, infrastructure needs, and incentives for retired judges to return.

For detailed information on **Ad Hoc Judges of HC** [read this article here](#)

### Why did the Supreme Court approve ad-hoc judges?

1. **Case Backlog:** As of January 25, 2025, there were 62 lakh pending cases in High Courts, indicating a severe backlog that needs immediate attention.
2. **Judicial Vacancies:** As of February 1, 2025, High Courts had 367 vacancies out of a sanctioned strength of 1,122 judges.
3. **Previous Endorsements:** The Supreme Court had previously supported the idea in its 2021 Lok Prahari v. Union of India ruling, recognizing the need for additional judicial resources.
4. **Limited Success of Past Efforts:** Only three instances of such appointments had been recorded before, showing that while the concept was not new, it hadn’t been effectively utilized.



**5. Operational Independence:** Ad-hoc judges are meant to alleviate case burdens without interfering with the regular judicial appointment process, making them a practical solution to expedite pending cases, particularly criminal appeals. This helps reduce the financial strain of maintaining overcrowded jails.

#### **What are the challenges in appointing ad-hoc judges?**

- 1. Limited Historical Use:** Only three instances of ad-hoc judge appointments have been recorded so far, showing the lack of implementation despite constitutional provisions.
- 2. Presidential Approval Required:** These appointments need government approval, making executive cooperation crucial, though political sensitivity is usually not a concern.
- 3. Cumbersome Procedures:** The process involves High Court Chief Justices recommending candidates, Supreme Court collegium approval, and government clearance, which causes delays.
- 4. Lack of Incentives:** Retired judges may prefer arbitration or private practice due to better financial returns and career flexibility.
- 5. Judicial Independence Concerns:** Serving judges returning to legal practice face restrictions, limiting their future career opportunities.

#### **Will ad-hoc appointments affect regular judicial appointments?**

- Experts believe they will not interfere with the appointment of sitting judges.
- Ad-hoc judges serve for only two to three years and do not compete with existing judges.
- High Courts are already functioning below their sanctioned strength, with 367 vacancies as of February 1, 2025.
- These appointments will help in clearing criminal appeals, reducing overcrowded jails.

#### **Are there infrastructure and resource challenges?**

- Courts need more personnel, such as stenographers and secretaries, to support ad-hoc judges.
- The government must allocate funds to provide essential facilities.
- High Courts already have space that can be converted into courtrooms.
- Logistical challenges can be addressed with proper planning.

#### **Will retired judges be interested in ad-hoc appointments?**

- Many retired judges prefer arbitration or independent practice due to higher earnings.
- Tribunal positions are also hard to fill for similar reasons.
- After serving as ad-hoc judges, senior lawyers face restrictions in practicing in the same High Court.
- To attract judges, better perks and privileges may be required.

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

Evaluate the effectiveness of appointing ad-hoc judges in reducing the backlog of criminal cases in High Courts.

### India faces rising heatwave threats and challenges

**Source:** The post India faces rising heatwave threats and challenges has been created, based on the article “**We need to tackle heatwaves with greater urgency**” published in “**Indian Express**” on 14th February 2025

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

**Context:** The article talks about the rising heatwave threat in India due to climate change. It explains its impact on health, water, power, and jobs. It highlights NDMA's efforts in creating Heat Action Plans (HAPs) to improve preparedness, awareness, and long-term heatwave management.

For detailed information on **Heatwaves in India** [read this article here](#)

#### Why Are Heatwaves a Growing Concern in India?

1. **Rising Frequency and Severity:** India is experiencing more frequent, prolonged, and intense heatwaves due to climate change.
2. **Global Temperature Increase:** January 2025 was the 18th month in the last 19 when global temperatures crossed the 1.5°C threshold.
3. **Health Risks:** 90% of Indians are vulnerable to heat-related illnesses, overburdening healthcare systems.
4. **Job Losses:** The World Bank estimates 34 million job losses in India by 2030 due to heat stress.
5. **Water Scarcity:** 54% of India's land faces high-to-extreme water stress. India has only 4% of the world's freshwater but 18% of its population.
6. **Agricultural Impact:** High temperatures lead to crop failures, lower yields, and increased irrigation demands, affecting food security.
7. **Power Shortages:** 70% of India's electricity comes from thermal power plants that need water for cooling. Heat reduces their efficiency and causes power shortages.
8. **Industrial Impact:** Increased electricity demand for cooling affects power availability for industries, reducing manufacturing productivity.

#### What Is NDMA Doing to Tackle Heatwaves?

1. **Classified Heatwaves as a Major Hazard:** The NDMA recognizes heatwaves as a serious disaster and works to improve public awareness.
2. **Developed Heat Action Plans (HAPs):** Over 250 HAPs have been created to manage heatwave risks at state, district, and city levels.
3. **National Workshops on Heatwaves:** It organizes workshops to improve preparedness and response strategies.

**4. National Framework for Heatwave Mitigation and Management (2024):** This framework shifts focus from short-term response to **long-term preparedness and mitigation**.

**5. Encouraging States to Notify Heat as a Disaster:** Helps in better resource allocation.

**6. Early Warning Systems:** Strengthened **NDMA-IMD coordination** for accurate and localized heat alerts.

**7. Cooling Solutions:** Promoting **cool roofs, green infrastructure, cool rooms and water kiosks and revised working hours and cooling vests** to reduce heat exposure.

**8. Public Awareness Programs:** Educating people on health risks, prevention, and response strategies.

#### **What Are the Challenges Ahead?**

1. Despite the increase in Heat Action Plans, implementation remains a challenge.
2. Scaling up successful strategies and ensuring local ownership are priorities.
3. Transforming cities into **heat-resilient ecosystems** is necessary to withstand rising temperatures in the future.

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

Evaluate the effectiveness of NDMA's Heat Action Plans (HAPs) in mitigating the rising heatwave threat in India.

### **China's restrictions threaten India's manufacturing and growth**

**Source:** The post China's restrictions threaten India's manufacturing and growth has been created, based on the article "**Dealing with China's weaponisation of e-supply chains**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 15th February 2025

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

**Context:** China is restricting its engineers and critical equipment exports to India, affecting Apple-Foxconn's production. This move is to slow India's manufacturing growth. India must develop local industries, invest in skilled labor, and attract private capital for long-term manufacturing independence.

For detailed information on **Issue with China's Export Restrictions** [read this article here](#)

#### **Why is China Restricting Engineers and Equipment to India?**

1. China has stopped its engineers and technicians from working in Foxconn's India facilities. It is also restricting exports of critical manufacturing equipment.
2. This move affects Apple-Foxconn's production in India. China is using its dominance in advanced machinery and skilled workforce to slow India's progress.
3. China is reacting to India's growing role in global supply chains.
4. Many companies are adopting a **China Plus One** strategy to reduce dependence on China. India, Vietnam, and Mexico are gaining from this shift. China wants to protect its role in global production and maintain its geopolitical advantage.

#### **How Does This Impact India's Manufacturing Growth?**

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- 1. Disrupts Apple-Foxconn's Production:** China's restrictions on engineers and critical equipment are slowing down manufacturing in India.
- 2. Affects India's Global Manufacturing Ambitions:** Apple-Foxconn is key to India's goal of becoming a manufacturing hub.
- 3. Creates a Manpower Shortage:** Foxconn is replacing Chinese engineers with Taiwanese workers.
- 4. Hurts Production of iPhones:** In FY 2023-24, Apple assembled **\$14 billion** worth of iPhones in India.
- 5. Exposes Dependence on China:** India relies on China for specialized machinery and components.
- 6. Threatens Supply Chain Growth:** India benefits from the **China Plus One** strategy but needs self-reliance.

#### What is India Doing to Boost Manufacturing?

- 1. Encouraging Apple-Foxconn's Growth:** In FY 2023-24, Apple assembled **\$14 billion** worth of iPhones in India through Foxconn, Pegatron, and Tata Electronics.
- 2. Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme:** The **Union Budget 2024** increased allocation to **₹8,885 crore (\$1.02 billion)** from **₹6,125 crore (\$0.70 billion)**.
- 3. Removing Import Duties:** The **Union Budget 2025** removed import taxes on mobile phone components and lithium-ion battery machinery.
- 4. Expanding the National Manufacturing Mission:** India is promoting **technological clusters** and **worker skill development programs** for a self-sufficient electronics ecosystem.
- 5. Attracting Private Investment:** India encourages private capital to develop **domestic contract manufacturers**.

#### How Do India-China Relations Affect This Issue?

1. India and China signed a **patrolling agreement** in **October 2024** to ease military tensions in Ladakh.
2. However, China's restrictions show that economic ties do not always depend on stable borders. Competition between India and China is expected to increase.

#### What Should India Do Next?

1. India must plan for long-term self-reliance in manufacturing. It should involve Apple and Foxconn to negotiate with China.
2. At the same time, India should:
  - Develop a strong **domestic supply chain** for components and machinery.
  - Invest in **worker training** and **skill development programs**.
  - Support **private capital** to create **Indian contract manufacturers**.
  - Expand the **National Manufacturing Mission** with more financial support.

3. India needs a **holistic manufacturing ecosystem** to reduce dependence on China and become a global leader in electronics production.

#### Question for practice:

Evaluate the impact of China's restrictions on engineers and critical equipment exports to India on India's manufacturing growth and its efforts to achieve self-reliance.

### Rebuilding Teesta-3 Dam poses risks and challenges

**Source:** The post Rebuilding Teesta-3 Dam poses risks and challenges has been created, based on the article "The Teesta dam and the long shadow of climate change" published in "The Hindu" on 15th February 2025

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

**Context:** The article discusses the risks of rebuilding the Teesta-3 dam in Sikkim after its destruction by a 2023 glacial lake outburst flood. Experts warn that climate change increases such risks, and rebuilding should prioritize local safety over commercial viability.

For detailed information on **Issue with hydropower projects on the Teesta River** [read this article here](#)

#### Why Was the Teesta-3 Dam Destroyed?

- 1. Glacial Lake Outburst Flood (GLOF):** In October 2023, the **Teesta-3 dam** was destroyed by a GLOF originating from **South Lhonak Lake**.
- 2. Moraine Slope Failure:** The dam's destruction was triggered by a **slope failure** at the lake's moraine, causing rocks to tumble into the water, creating a powerful ripple effect.
- 3. Volume of Water Released:** Satellite data showed that approximately **50 billion litres of water** surged into the valley below, carrying dam debris that intensified the destruction downstream.
- 4. Catastrophic Impact:** The flood killed **over 100 people** and affected **more than 80,000** across four districts, also triggering landslides about **30 to 40 kilometres downstream**.

#### How Is Climate Change Making GLOFs More Dangerous?

- 1. Accelerated Glacier Melting:** Rising temperatures are **melting Himalayan glaciers faster**, increasing water accumulation in glacial lakes.
- 2. Increase in Glacial Lakes:** Between **2011 and 2024**, the number of glacial lakes grew by **10.8%**, and their surface area expanded by **33.7%** (Central Water Commission report).
- 3. Black Carbon Deposition:** Soot from industries speeds up glacier melting, worsening the risk.
- 4. Unstable Geological Formations:** Glacial retreat weakens mountain slopes, making landslides and floods more likely. For example – South Lhonak Lake: It grew to 167 hectares by 2023, leading to the Teesta-3 dam disaster.

#### Why Is the Government Planning to Rebuild the Dam?

- 1. Successful and Commercially Viable:** The **Teesta-3 dam** was considered a **successful project** before its destruction and was commercially profitable.



2. **Power Generation Equipment Intact:** The **hydroelectric machinery** survived the GLOF, making restoration easier.

3. **Growing Power Demand:** India's **rising electricity needs** require continued hydropower production.

4. **Stronger Design Proposed:** The new design includes a **larger spillway, stronger concrete construction, and an early-warning system.**

5. **Worst-Case Scenario Modeling:** The **India Meteorological Department** used **maximum future rainfall predictions** to guide reconstruction.

### **Why Is Rebuilding the Dam Controversial?**

1. **Seismic and Landslide Risks:** The dam is in an **earthquake- and landslide-prone area**, making it vulnerable to future disasters.

2. **Flawed Clearance Process:** The dam has faced **public interest litigations** over **techno-economic approval issues** and **alleged corruption.**

3. **Unpredictable Disaster Patterns:** Experts warn that **rainfall models alone** cannot predict future floods, as seen in **2023 GLOF.**

4. **Potential for Greater Destruction:** If another, stronger flood occurs, the new dam might **fail catastrophically**, causing **greater downstream damage.**

5. **Erosion and Sediment Transport:** A study in **January 2025** highlighted that existing models do not fully account for erosion and **sediment transport**, making risk predictions uncertain.

6. **Engineering Limitations:** Some experts argue that **engineering solutions alone** cannot prevent climate-related disasters and suggest that long-term safety measures should be prioritized.

For detailed information on **On Dam Safety** [read this article here](#)

### **What Are the Broader Risks?**

1. The dam increased damage in the 2023 flood by obstructing water flow.

2. A stronger or different flood in the future could cause even greater destruction.

3. Some experts argue that rebuilding in disaster-prone areas is unsustainable.

4. They suggest prioritizing local safety, social security, and economic resilience over commercial viability.

5. The cost of risk mitigation should be included in the dam's power tariff.

### **Question for practice:**

Examine the risks and challenges associated with rebuilding the Teesta-3 dam in Sikkim after its destruction by the 2023 Glacial Lake Outburst Flood.

## India's Growing Influence in the Indian Ocean

**Source:** The post India's Growing Influence in the Indian Ocean has been created, based on the article “**What India needs to do in the Indian Ocean**” published in “**Indian Express**” on 15th February 2025

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

**Context:** The article discusses India's role in the Indian Ocean and its maritime influence. It highlights historical trade, security challenges, and India's naval neglect. It also covers efforts like the SAGAR initiative and India's hosting of the **Eighth Indian Ocean Conference (IOC) in Muscat**.

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

### Why is the Indian Ocean important?

1. The Indian Ocean is the world's third-largest ocean and connects 26 countries.
2. It handles **70% of global container traffic** and **80% of India's external trade**.
3. **90% of India's energy trade** passes through its waters.
4. The region is crucial for landlocked nations like **Nepal and Bhutan**.
5. Global powers like the **US, UK, France, and China** have a strong presence here.

### What was India's historical role in the Indian Ocean?

1. Ancient Indian traders like the **Manigramam Chettis** and **Nanadesis** dominated maritime trade.
2. Indian kingdoms like the **Andhras, Pallavas, and Cholas** traded with the **Arab world and Southeast Asia**.
3. **Kautilya's Arthashastra** mentioned port commissioners, showing India's early focus on maritime affairs.
4. The **British colonial rulers** did not develop India's naval power.
5. After independence, India continued to focus more on land-based defense.

### What challenges does the Indian Ocean region face today?

1. **Security threats** include piracy, terrorism, arms trafficking, and illegal fishing.
2. **Climate challenges** include rising sea levels, disaster relief, and evacuations.
3. **Undersea cables**, mostly controlled by European and Chinese firms, are critical for global communication.
4. The region has become a crowded space with ships from major global powers.

### How is India strengthening its maritime presence?

1. India ranks **20th in global shipbuilding**, with only **0.06% market share**.

2. Diplomat **K M Panikkar**, in *India and the Indian Ocean* (1945), warned about India's maritime dependence.
3. The **SAGAR Initiative (Security And Growth for All in the Region)** was launched in **2015**.
4. India is hosting the **Eighth Indian Ocean Conference (IOC)** in **Muscat** with **30 countries** participating.

#### What is the future of India's role in the Indian Ocean?

1. Geopolitical strategist **Alfred T. Mahan** said that control over the Indian Ocean is key to global power.
2. India aims to **become a strong blue-water navy** and lead the **Global South**.
3. Regional leaders must ensure that **the Indian Ocean remains under their control** and is not dominated by external powers.

#### Question for practice:

Examine the strategic importance of the Indian Ocean and the challenges it faces today.

### Modi's visit to Washington impacted India-US relations

**Source:** The post India's Growing Influence in the Indian Ocean has been created, based on the article "**Express View on Modi and Trump's meeting: A promising future**" published in "**Indian Express**" on 15th February 2025

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper2- International Relations-Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting

**Context:** The article discusses India-US relations after Modi's visit to Washington. It covers trade, immigration, and defense cooperation. Both leaders aim to resolve differences and strengthen ties. India will repatriate illegal immigrants. The US wants better market access. Defense and technology partnerships will expand.

#### How are India and the US strengthening their strategic partnership?

1. Modi and Trump aimed to **reduce differences** and expand cooperation.
2. A new framework, **COMPACT** (Catalysing Opportunities for Military Partnership, Accelerated Commerce & Technology), was introduced to enhance **military, trade, and technology partnerships**.
3. The summit marked a commitment to a "**result-driven agenda**", which India needs to implement effectively.
4. Modi's visit set the stage for deeper ties before **Trump's expected visit to India later in the year**.

#### What are the key issues in trade and immigration?

1. Trump emphasized **reducing the US trade deficit**, which had shifted in India's favor.
2. He demanded **better market access for US goods** and criticized India's **tariffs**.
3. Reciprocal tariffs were expected by **spring**, giving India a chance to **negotiate a fair trade arrangement**.
4. Both countries set an ambitious target of **\$500 billion in annual bilateral trade by 2030**.

5. On **illegal immigration**, India agreed to **repatriate verified illegal immigrants** from the US.
6. Both nations planned to **combat human trafficking** by targeting criminal networks.
7. The US acknowledged the importance of **legal and sustainable mobility** for **skilled Indian professionals, students, and businesspeople**.

**In which sectors are India and the US increasing cooperation?**

1. **Energy:** India, a major **hydrocarbon importer**, aimed to benefit from **US energy exports**.
2. **Nuclear energy:** Both countries agreed to **expand cooperation**, as the sector was experiencing a revival.
3. **Defense:** India planned to **increase US arms imports**, and Trump agreed to **review restrictions on defense technology transfers**.
4. **Technology:** Both leaders committed to **expanding cooperation in emerging areas like Artificial Intelligence**.
5. **Regional security:** They pledged to **enhance engagement in the Indo-Pacific and broaden their focus on the Middle East**.

**What is the broader impact of the Modi-Trump partnership?**

1. Modi's "**India First**" and Trump's "**America First**" policies found common ground.
2. Both leaders emphasized **self-interest and deal-making** in international relations.
3. Their partnership set **India and the US on a promising path** for economic and strategic collaboration.

**Question for practice:**

Evaluate how Modi's visit to Washington impacted India-US relations in terms of trade, immigration, and defense cooperation.

**Panchayati Raj is declining despite grassroots success**

**Source:** The post Panchayati Raj is declining despite grassroots success has been created, based on the article "**The panchayati raj movement is in distress**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 17th February 2025

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper2- devolution of powers and finances up to local levels and challenges therein.

**Context:** The article discusses the decline of panchayati raj in India despite its success in grassroots democracy. It highlights issues like reduced autonomy, urbanization, and reliance on cash transfers. It suggests reforms to revive panchayats for rural development and governance.

For detailed information on **Panchayat Raj Institution(PRI) in India** [read this article here](#)

**Why is the Panchayati Raj system important?**

1. **Decentralized Governance:** Established by the **73rd Amendment (1992)**, it created a **three-tier system** at **village, block, and district levels** for better local governance.

**2. Women's Leadership:** 50% reservation for women, SCs, and STs has led to 14 lakh women representatives, strengthening grassroots democracy.

**3. Social Sector Implementation:** Panchayats help execute key programs like MGNREGA and PM Awas Yojana, ensuring local development.

**4. Large Rural Population:** 94 crore Indians still live in villages, with 45% engaged in agriculture, making local governance crucial.

### What are the major challenges faced by Panchayats?

Despite early success, Panchayati Raj is facing a decline due to multiple factors:

#### 1. Limited Administrative Power:

- States have not fully transferred administrative control.
- Only 20% of states have given all 29 subjects listed in the Eleventh Schedule to panchayats.

#### 2. Reduction in Financial Autonomy:

- Central transfers increased from ₹1.45 lakh crore (2010-15) to ₹2.36 lakh crore (2021-26).
- Untied grants have decreased from 85% (Thirteenth Finance Commission) to 60% (Fifteenth • Finance Commission), limiting local decision-making.

#### 3. Decline in Local Accountability

- Direct benefit transfers (DBT) through Jan Dhan-Aadhaar-Mobile (JAM) platform bypass panchayats.
- Schemes like PM-KISAN (₹6,000 per year to farmers) are executed without panchayat involvement.

#### 4. Impact of Urbanization

- In 1990, 75% of Indians lived in villages; now, only 60% do.
- The focus has shifted to urban governance and municipal reforms.

For detailed information on **Issues with Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs)** [read this article here](#)

### How can the Panchayati Raj system be revived?

To strengthen panchayats, reforms are needed in various areas:

**1. Improve Citizen Engagement:** Technology can help in local planning, decision-making, and transparency.

**2. Support Migration Management:** Panchayats can assist migrants and their families to reduce distress migration.

#### 3. Enhance Environmental Roles:

- Panchayats can lead water conservation and renewable energy initiatives.



- They can help manage **common property resources** with **scientific and traditional knowledge**.

4. **Disaster Risk Management** Panchayats can implement **early warning systems, disaster-resistant infrastructure, and community preparedness programs**.

**What is the way forward?**

Panchayats should not be treated as **mere delivery agencies for government schemes**. Rural governance must be revived to support **94 crore people** still living in villages. A **new vision for panchayati raj** is needed to balance rural and urban development.

**Question for practice:**

Examine the factors contributing to the decline of the Panchayati Raj system in India and suggest reforms to strengthen it.

### **Marital rape ruling raises legal and social concerns**

**Source:** The post Marital rape ruling raises legal and social concerns has been created, based on the article "**Sex and violence: Marriage should not provide immunity for sexual violence**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 17th February 2025

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

**Context:** The article discusses a Chhattisgarh High Court ruling that acquitted a man accused of forcing sex on his wife, leading to her death. It highlights the issue of marital rape, lack of legal protection, and the need for stronger laws and societal change.

For detailed information on **Issues with Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs)** [read this article here](#)

**What Was the High Court's Ruling?**

1. The Chhattisgarh High Court ruled that a husband forcing unnatural sex on his wife is not a crime.
2. The court relied on **Exception II of Section 375** of the IPC, which states that **marital rape is not an offense unless the wife is under 18**.
3. This decision **overturned a sessions court verdict**, which had sentenced the husband to **10 years in prison** after his wife died following forced physical relations.

For detailed information on **The case regarding the marital rape exception (MRE)** [read this article here](#)

**What Is the Main Concern in This Case?**

1. The case highlights the issue of **consent in marriage**.
2. The High Court presumed that **a wife always consents to sex** within marriage.
3. However, **consent must be given freely** in every situation.
4. When force leads to **physical harm or death**, it should not be excused under marriage laws.

**Why Is Marital Rape Still Not a Crime in India?**

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1. India is **one of the few countries** where marital rape is **not a criminal offense**.
2. The **Supreme Court deferred hearings** on this issue in **October 2024**.
3. The **Union government argues** that criminalizing marital rape could “**undermine the institution of marriage**”.
4. The courts have also stated that **lawmakers should decide** on this matter.

#### What Does Data Say About Spousal Violence?

The **National Family Health Survey-5 (2019-2021)** shows that **32% of ever-married women (ages 18-49) in India** have faced **physical, sexual, or emotional spousal violence**. However, **very few seek help** due to fear, social pressure, and lack of legal protection.

#### What Needs to Change?

Laws exist to protect women, but **a shift in societal mindset is necessary**. Marriage **should not give immunity for violence**. The government, judiciary, and society **must ensure that women live free from fear and violence**.

#### Question for practice:

Discuss the legal and societal implications of the Chhattisgarh High Court's ruling on marital rape in India.

### Bangladesh is changing its foreign relations now

**Source:** The post Bangladesh is changing its foreign relations now has been created, based on the article “**Interpreting the recent Bangladesh-Pakistan thaw**” published in “**The Hindu**” on 17th February 2025

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

**Context:** The article discusses Bangladesh's changing foreign relations after Sheikh Hasina's removal. The new government is engaging more with Pakistan while India watches closely. Bangladesh depends on India economically, but India must address security concerns and maintain strong ties with Dhaka.

For detailed information on **India-Bangladesh Relations** [read this article here](#)

#### Why are Bangladesh-Pakistan relations changing?

1. **Political Shift:** After Sheikh Hasina's removal in August 2024, Bangladesh's new leadership under Muhammad Yunus is engaging more with Pakistan.
2. **High-Level Engagement:** Yunus has met Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif multiple times but has not met India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
3. **Military Cooperation:** A Pakistani military delegation visited Rangpur, near India's Siliguri Corridor. Bangladesh's Army second-in-command visited Pakistan's military chiefs.
4. **Economic and Strategic Moves:** Bangladesh resumed direct flights to Islamabad and participated in Pakistan's Aman 2025 naval exercises, sending a warship for the first time in a decade.

#### What challenges does Bangladesh face in changing its foreign policy?

1. **Public Opinion on 1971 War:** Many Bangladeshis still see separation from Pakistan as central to their identity. Pakistan does not acknowledge the war as a separatist movement.
2. **Limited Economic Gains:** Trade with Pakistan is difficult as India separates both countries. India exported \$11.25 billion to Bangladesh in 2023.
3. **Security Concerns:** Pakistan's growing ties with Bangladesh may unsettle India. Bangladesh hosted a Pakistani military delegation near India's Siliguri Corridor.
4. **Geopolitical Risks:** Balancing relations with India, China, and Pakistan is challenging. The Maldives and Nepal are also aligning more with China, increasing regional uncertainty.

#### What is India's response to these changes?

1. **Monitoring Bangladesh-Pakistan ties:** India is observing Bangladesh's engagement with Pakistan, including military cooperation, resumed flights, and naval drills.
2. **Economic dependence:** India remains Bangladesh's top trading partner, exporting \$11.25 billion to Bangladesh in 2023, while Bangladesh exported \$2 billion to India.
3. **Security concerns:** India must set clear boundaries on **terrorism, weapons trade, joint military drills, and maritime security**.
4. **Strategic balancing:** India is **engaging with the Taliban**, as seen in **Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri's meeting with Afghanistan's Foreign Minister** in January 2025.
5. **Soft diplomacy:** India must strengthen **people-to-people contacts, cultural exchanges, and development projects** to maintain influence.

#### Question for practice:

Examine the factors influencing Bangladesh's shifting foreign policy towards Pakistan and its implications for India.

### States producing thermal power bear pollution while consuming States gain benefits

**Source:** The post States producing thermal power bear pollution while consuming States gain benefits has been created, based on the article "**Lighten the pollution burden of thermal power States**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 18th February 2025

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

**Context:** The article discusses how States producing thermal power bear pollution burdens while consuming States benefit. It suggests compensating these States through taxes or Finance Commission transfers. It highlights India's electricity distribution, pollution impact, and the need for fair environmental burden-sharing.

For detailed information on **New thermal plants: A reality check** [read this article here](#)

#### What is the current status of electricity produce in India?

1. **Total Installed Capacity:** India's total electricity generation capacity stands at **4,56,757 MW**.
2. **Sector-wise Distribution:**

- **Private sector:** Leads with **53.4%** share.

- **State sector:** Holds **23.7%**.

- **Central sector:** Accounts for **22.9%**.

3. **Thermal Power Share:** Represents a significant portion with **2,37,268.91 MW** out of the total capacity.

- **Private sector:** **85,899.095 MW (36.20%)**.

- **State sector:** **75,991.905 MW (32.03%)**.

- **Central sector:** **75,377.91 MW (31.77%)**.

4. **Heavy Reliance on Coal:** About **59.12%** of India's energy supply is from coal, with thermal power being a major contributor to carbon emissions.

5. **State Dynamics:**

a. **Key Producing States:**

- **Maharashtra:** **31,510.08 MW** (highest non-renewable capacity).

- **Uttar Pradesh:** **26,729.374 MW**

- **Gujarat:** **26,073.41 MW**

b. **Key Renewable Energy State:** Rajasthan: **22,398.05 MW** (highest renewable capacity).

c. **Electricity Trade:**

- **Chhattisgarh:** Largest net seller (**535.29 MW**).

- **Gujarat:** Largest net importer (**528.17 MW**).

6. **Pollution Burden:** Producing States bear pollution, but consuming States benefit.

**Do Producing States Receive Any Compensation?**

1. **No direct compensation** is given to States that generate electricity from central sector thermal power plants.

2. **Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, and Odisha** produce the most thermal power but have **lower per capita electricity consumption**.

3. **Coal-rich States** bear pollution, while **consuming States benefit** from clean electricity.

4. **Electricity production is tax-free**, and **GST is not imposed** on transmission or distribution.

5. **The Finance Commissions** have recommended environmental grants, but no specific compensation exists.

6. **A new mechanism** is needed to share environmental costs fairly.

**What Should Be Done?**

### 1. Imposing a Tax on Thermal Power Generation

- Producing States can levy a tax on thermal power generation.
- The Union government can collect this tax and transfer it to them.

### 2. Compensation Through Finance Commission

- The **Sixteenth Finance Commission** can allocate funds based on environmental damage.
- The last three Finance Commissions have provided environmental grants.

### 3. Recognizing Negative Externalities

- Chhattisgarh (535.29 MW) and Odisha (95.40 MW) sell electricity but bear pollution.
- Gujarat (528.17 MW) and Maharashtra (187.50 MW) benefit without pollution costs.

### 4. Ensuring Fair Sharing of Environmental Costs

- A **new policy** must ensure **all States share pollution burdens fairly**.
- Electricity-importing States must **compensate producing States** for pollution.

#### Question for practice:

Examine how the current electricity distribution system in India impacts the environmental burden on producing States and the benefits received by consuming States.

## Post-Soviet colour revolutions and Georgia's geopolitical struggle

**Source:** The post Post-Soviet colour revolutions and Georgia's geopolitical struggle has been created, based on the article "**Georgia and the resurrection of the colour revolutions**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 18th February 2025

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

**Context:** The article discusses post-Soviet "colour revolutions" that aimed to replace pro-Russian governments with pro-Western ones. These movements, though peaceful, were seen by Russia as Western interference. Georgia's recent protests reflect ongoing geopolitical struggles between Russia and the West.

#### What Are Colour Revolutions?

1. **Definition:** Colour revolutions were peaceful uprisings in post-Soviet states to replace pro-Russian governments with pro-Western ones.

#### 2. Key Examples:

- **Georgia (2003) – Rose Revolution:** Eduard Shevardnadze was replaced by Mikheil Saakashvili.
- **Ukraine (2004) – Orange Revolution:** Protested against election fraud.



- **Kyrgyzstan (2005) – Tulip Revolution:** Led to leadership change.

3. **Western Influence:** Western groups, like the **National Endowment for Democracy (NED)**, provided financial and logistical support. The goal was to promote democracy but was seen as external interference.

4. **Russia's View:** Russia saw these revolutions as Western attempts to weaken its influence. It feared similar movements inside its borders.

5. **Long-term Impact:** The initial promise of democracy soon faded. Corruption remained, and leaders backed by the West often acted undemocratically. Public frustration grew as real change did not happen.

### What Is Happening in Georgia Now?

1. The **Georgian Dream Party** secured a decisive victory in recent elections.
2. **Mikheil Kavelashvili**, a former footballer, became the new President.
3. Former President **Salome Zourabichvili** initially refused to vacate office.
4. She called herself the "**only legitimate President**" and joined protests.
5. She claimed the elections were **marred by electoral malpractices and corruption**.
6. The ruling party accused **Western-backed NGOs** of organizing the protests.
7. Protests in Georgia reflect a long-standing geopolitical battle between **Russia and the West**.

### What Is the Global Context of These Events?

1. These events occur amid **global tensions over the U.S.'s role in the world, especially under President Donald Trump**.
2. Russia continues to **try to maintain its influence over its neighboring countries**.
3. The effectiveness of **Western soft power strategies like promoting democracy appears to be waning**.

### Question for practice:

Discuss how the recent protests in Georgia reflect the broader geopolitical struggle between Russia and the West.

### Indian courts interpret laws using constitutional morality

**Source:** The post Indian courts interpret laws using constitutional morality has been created, based on the article "**Constitutional morality: the origins and nuances of the concept**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 18th February 2025

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper2-Constitution of India —historical underpinnings, evolution, features, amendments, significant provisions and basic structure.

**Context:** The article discusses how Indian courts use "constitutional morality" to interpret laws. It traces its origin to George Grote and Dr. Ambedkar. It emphasizes respecting constitutional rules while allowing critique, ensuring democracy functions with stability, fairness, and self-restraint.

For detailed information on **Courts must be guided by constitutional morality** [read this article here](#)

### What is Constitutional Morality?

1. Constitutional morality is a concept used by Indian courts to interpret laws. It ensures that legal decisions follow constitutional principles rather than changing public opinions.
2. The Supreme Court used it in cases like *Navtej Singh Johar v. Union of India (2018)* and *Joseph Shine v. Union of India (2018)*.
3. It is seen as a safeguard against changing public morality but also criticized as a powerful tool that may override majority opinion.

For detailed information on **Constitutional morality** [read this article here](#)

### Where Did the Concept Come From?

1. The concept of constitutional morality was introduced by British historian **George Grote** in his book *A History of Greece*.
2. He used it to explain why **Athenian democracy** succeeded.
3. Grote defined it as a **deep respect for constitutional rules and procedures**.
4. He argued that **strong rules alone are not enough**; people must also trust and follow the system.

### How Did Dr. Ambedkar Interpret Constitutional Morality?

1. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar used the concept while drafting the Indian Constitution.
2. In his speech *The Draft Constitution* (November 4, 1948), he said constitutional morality is not natural in society. It must be taught and spread.
3. He warned that the Constitution could be misused if government actions do not match its spirit.
4. He emphasized self-restraint in governance to protect democracy.

### How Should Constitutional Morality Work in Practice?

1. Constitutional morality means following rules even when they do not benefit a particular group.
2. It ensures that people respect constitutional processes while allowing reforms.
3. It helps in handling differences through agreed procedures, not emotions.
4. Unlike Jürgen Habermas' *constitutional patriotism*, which links democracy to shared national values, constitutional morality focuses on following legal procedures.

### Why Is Constitutional Morality Important Today?

1. In modern debates, constitutional morality helps balance stability and change.
2. It prevents extreme views from controlling democracy.
3. The Indian Constitution was created to provide a stable system.

4. Following constitutional morality ensures respect for rules while allowing improvements when needed.

#### Question for practice:

Discuss how Indian courts use the concept of constitutional morality to interpret laws and maintain democratic stability.

### Why Reservations Are Not the Best Solution for Muslims

**Source:** The post Why Reservations Are Not the Best Solution for Muslims has been created, based on the article “Yogendra Yadav writes: Social Justice for Muslims should not be about reservations” published in “Indian Express” on 18th February 2025

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

**Context:** The article discusses how Muslims in India face economic and educational disadvantages. It argues that reservations for all Muslims are not the best solution. Instead, it suggests policies like better OBC inclusion, anti-discrimination laws, targeted development, and support for Muslim-dominated industries.

For detailed information on **Religion and Reservations in India** [read this article here](#)

#### Why Do Muslims Need Affirmative Action?

1. Muslims in India face economic and educational disadvantages.
2. The **Sachar Committee Report (SCR)** found that their education levels are similar to **SCs and STs** and their income levels are like **OBCs**.
3. Many Muslim children do not enter higher education. Even when family income and parental education are the same, **upper-caste Hindus are twice as likely** to enter private colleges and professional courses.

#### Why Is Reservation Not Suitable for Muslims?

1. **Legal Issue** – The Constitution does not allow reservation based on religion. Courts have rejected this idea.
2. **Sociological Issue** – Muslims are diverse. They belong to different **biradaris** (communities) with different levels of education and wealth.
3. **Political Issue** – A separate Muslim quota could lead to **opposition and conflict**, making things worse for the community.

#### What Is the Alternative to Reservation?

1. **Expand OBC List for Muslims:** Currently, only **50% of Muslims** are included as OBCs. But **75% of them** meet the criteria. More backward Muslim groups should be added, like in **Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, and West Bengal**.
2. **Divide OBCs into Two Groups:** Instead of one OBC category, create “**extremely backward**” and “**backward**” lists.
3. **SC Status for Dalit Muslims and Christians:** The current rule **excludes Dalit Muslims and Christians** from SC benefits. This should change.

4. **Anti-Discrimination Law:** A strong law is needed to stop discrimination based on religion. An **Equal Opportunity Commission** should monitor its implementation.

#### How Else Can Muslims Be Helped?

1. The report also suggests **non-quota-based policies** to improve Muslims' conditions.

2. **Improve Infrastructure in Muslim Areas:** Government programs after the **Sachar Report** focused on **Minority Concentration Districts (MCDs)**. This should now cover **blocks, villages, and localities**. The government should ensure Muslims actually benefit.

3. **Support Muslim-Dominated Businesses:** Many Muslims work in **weaving, brass work, carpet making, perfume industry, and meat processing**. The government should provide financial and technical support to these industries.

4. **Encourage Private Sector Participation:** A direct **quota in private jobs may fail**, but the government can set **diversity conditions** for companies receiving government contracts and subsidies.

5. **Promote NGOs and Self-Help Groups:** Community organizations should focus on **education, skill training, and job opportunities** for Muslims.

#### Question for practice:

Examine why reservations for all Muslims may not be the most suitable solution for addressing their economic and educational disadvantages in India.

### Earthquake dangers in Türkiye Syria and Himalayas

**Source:** The post Earthquake dangers in Türkiye Syria and Himalayas has been created, based on the article “Quakes may well sharpen India’s seismic readiness” published in “**The Hindu**” on 19th February 2025

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper1-Important Geophysical phenomena such as earthquakes and GS paper3- Disaster and disaster management.

**Context:** The article discusses the danger of earthquakes in Türkiye, Syria, and the Himalayan region. It warns about potential disasters in India due to tectonic activity. It calls for urgent government action, better infrastructure planning, and disaster preparedness to reduce damage and save lives.

For detailed information on **Earthquakes in Himalayas Threaten Lives and Infrastructure** read this article [here](#)

#### Why Are Earthquakes Dangerous?

1. **High Death Toll:** The February 6, 2023 earthquake in Türkiye and Syria had a magnitude of 7.8 and resulted in at least 17,000 deaths.

2. **Destruction of Infrastructure:** A second quake occurred nine hours later, causing further destruction to buildings and infrastructure.

3. **Geological Instability:** Earthquakes are caused by movements along fault lines between tectonic plates, which can remain dormant for years before suddenly shifting.

4. **Widespread Impact:** The January 7, 2025, earthquake in Tibet, with a magnitude of 7.1, affected regions across national borders, impacting Nepal and Northern India and causing up to 400 deaths.

### Where Do Earthquakes Come From?

1. Earthquakes happen due to movements along **fault lines** between tectonic plates.
2. The **Earth's crust** sits on **15 major tectonic plates** that are tightly locked.
3. These plates can stay still for **decades or centuries** but suddenly move, causing earthquakes.
4. The **Indian Plate** is pushing against the **Eurasian Plate**, creating pressure under the **Himalayas**.
5. Fault lines are unpredictable and cause **mass destruction** when they shift.

### Is India at Risk of a Major Earthquake?

1. **Tectonic Pressure Build-Up:** The Indian Plate is pushing against the Eurasian Plate. Scientists warn that built-up pressure may cause a massive earthquake.
2. **Recent Earthquakes:** A **7.1 magnitude** earthquake hit Tibet on **January 7, 2025**, killing up to **400 people** and affecting Nepal and North India.
3. **Past Disasters:** The **7.8 magnitude** Türkiye-Syria earthquake on **February 6, 2023**, killed at least **17,000 people**.
4. **Delhi and Bihar Tremors:** On **February 17, 2025**, strong tremors were felt in Delhi and Bihar.
5. **Infrastructure Risks:** Weak buildings, dams, and roads in seismic zones increase danger.
6. **Urgent Action Needed:** Scientists and media warn of risks. India must prepare before disaster strikes.

### What Should Be Done?

1. **Stop Harmful Construction** – Engineering projects that weaken rocky terrain in **seismic risk zones (II, III, IV)** should be rolled back.
2. **Strengthen Infrastructure** – Existing **seismic zonation maps** must be updated to assess and reinforce **high-risk structures like hydropower projects and atomic reactors (e.g., Narora in Zone IV)**.
3. **Earthquake Insurance** – A **seismic building insurance scheme** should be introduced to encourage protection against structural collapse.
4. **Improve Disaster Response** – Costs for **rescue, shelter, and rehabilitation** should be assessed and planned **zone-wise**.
5. **Use Advanced Technology** – Collaboration with **global experts on earthquake anticipation sensors and architecture solutions** should be fast-tracked.

### Conclusion

Earthquakes cannot be stopped or predicted accurately, but their damage can be reduced. India must act now to prevent a future disaster. The government, scientists, and citizens must work together for safety and preparedness.



### Question for practice:

Examine the risks and preparedness measures for major earthquakes in India based on tectonic activity and past disasters.

## India Tightens Digital Censorship Amid Legal Debates

**Source:** The post India Tightens Digital Censorship Amid Legal Debates has been created, based on the article "The danger of a digital censor board" published in "The Hindu" on 19th February 2025

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper3- **Security**- Role of Media and Social Networking Sites in Internal Security Challenges etc.

**Context:** The article discusses the controversy over *India's Got Latent* and comments by YouTuber Ranveer Allahabadi. It highlights legal issues around vulgarity, censorship laws, and growing government control over digital media. It connects this to broader political and technological changes in India.

### What Does the Law Say About Vulgarity?

- Supreme Court's View:** In *Apoorva Arora v. Govt. of NCT of Delhi (2024)*, the Supreme Court ruled that foul language alone is not a crime. Only content that arouses sexual or lustful thoughts is considered obscene.
- Ranveer Allahabadi's Case:** His remarks were crude but do not meet the legal definition of obscenity. The Supreme Court called his mind "very dirty," but that does not make his words criminal.
- Blocking Websites:** Despite the legal position that "decency and morality" are not grounds for blocking websites under Section 69A of the Information Technology Act, the government has increased censorship through the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021.
- Past Example:** In 2021, *Tandav* faced criminal cases for hurting religious sentiments, forcing creators to edit scenes. The government later introduced stricter IT Rules, increasing digital censorship.

For detailed information on **Control over media- old censorship on a new medium** [read this article here](#)

### How Has the Government Responded?

- Condemnation from High Authorities:** Chief Ministers and the Supreme Court criticized the remarks made by Ranveer Allahabadi on *India's Got Latent*, with the Supreme Court labeling his mind as "dirty."
- Push for Broadcasting Bill:** The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting proposed a Broadcasting Bill to regulate digital creators like traditional media. A Parliamentary Committee, led by BJP MP Nishikant Dubey, is pushing for stricter laws. Public outcry had slowed the bill, but recent events have revived it.

For detailed information on **Social and Digital media regulations in India** [read this article here](#)

### What is the bigger picture behind digital censorship?

- The government's approach reflects a shift in India's political economy.
- Yamini Aiyar and Neelanjan Sircar describe this as *techno-patrimonialism*, where technology enables direct benefit transfers as political rewards.
- Digital censorship aligns with this trend, restricting content that challenges power.

### Question for practice:

Examine how the legal framework in India distinguishes between vulgarity and obscenity in digital media.

### India's Death Penalty Criteria Under Question

**Source:** The post India's Death Penalty Criteria Under Question has been created, based on the article "What is the 'rarest of rare' doctrine?" published in "The Hindu" on 19th February 2025

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper2 – Governance – Criminal Justice System in India

**Context:** The article discusses two murder cases with different punishments, raising questions about India's death penalty criteria. It explains the 'rarest of rare' doctrine, its origins, and legal developments. It highlights ongoing debates on judicial discretion and the need for clear guidelines.

For detailed information on **Challenges in Death Penalty and Sentencing Decisions** [read this article here](#)

### How Did Two Murder Cases Get Different Punishments?

On January 22, 2024, two murder cases had different verdicts. One case led to a life sentence, while the other resulted in the death penalty. This raised questions about how courts apply the 'rarest of rare' doctrine.

1. **Kolkata Case:** A female postgraduate doctor was raped and murdered in a hospital. The accused, Sanjay Roy, was convicted based on forensic evidence. The judge ruled that this case did not meet the 'rarest of rare' criteria. Roy was sentenced to life imprisonment with a fine.

2. **Kerala Case:** Sharon Raj, a 23-year-old student, was poisoned by his partner, Greeshma. He died 11 days later due to multiple organ failures. The Neyyattinkara court ruled it was a 'rarest of rare' case and sentenced Greeshma to death.

### What Is the 'Rarest of Rare' Doctrine?

The death penalty in India follows the 'rarest of rare' principle. It decides when a crime is severe enough to deserve capital punishment.

1. **1972 – Jagmohan Singh Case:** The Supreme Court upheld the death penalty as constitutional. The petitioner argued that it violated Article 14 and 19. The court ruled that judges consider all facts before sentencing.

2. **1980 – Bachan Singh Case:** The Supreme Court established the 'rarest of rare' doctrine. It ruled that the death penalty should be used only in extreme cases.

3. **1983 – Machhi Singh Case:** The court gave five conditions to determine 'rarest of rare' cases:

- **Brutality** – when the murder is committed in an extremely brutal and dastardly manner so as to arouse extreme indignation within the community.
- **Motive** – when the murder is committed for a motive which reveals total depravity.
- **Social Impact** – when a murder occurs of someone belonging to a minority community and is committed not for personal reasons but in circumstances which arouse social wrath.
- **Magnitude** – Crime affecting many people.

• **Victim's Condition** – when the victim of murder is a child, a helpless woman, a person rendered helpless by old age or infirmity etc..

4. **1983 – Mithu Case:** The Supreme Court removed the mandatory death penalty for prisoners committing murder. The court ruled this violated Articles 14 and 21.

5. **2022 – Supreme Court Review:** The court started reviewing how to ensure fair hearings in death penalty cases. It may set new guidelines on mitigating circumstances.

### What Is the Main Debate?

The death penalty remains controversial in India. The 'rarest of rare' principle is not clearly defined. Judges have wide discretion, leading to different punishments for similar crimes. Experts suggest that clear guidelines are needed to ensure fairness.

### Question for practice:

Evaluate the application of the 'rarest of rare' doctrine in the Kolkata and Kerala murder cases and its impact on the verdicts.

## India's Chief Election Commissioner Appointment and Concerns

**Source:** The post India's Chief Election Commissioner Appointment and Concerns has been created, based on the article "**New CEC, under new law**" published in "**Indian Express**" on 19th February 2025

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper2- Polity-Appointment to various Constitutional posts, powers, functions and responsibilities of various Constitutional Bodies.

**Context:** The article explains how the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) of India was appointed before and after a new law in 2023. It discusses the role of the selection committee, Rahul Gandhi's objection, and the Supreme Court case challenging the new appointment process.

For detailed information on **Changes in the Election Commission of India's selection process** [read this article here](#)

### How were Chief Election Commissioners appointed earlier?

1. The Election Commission (EC) has three members: one Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and two Election Commissioners (ECs).
2. The President appointed them based on the Prime Minister's advice.
3. Traditionally, the senior-most EC became the next CEC.
4. Seniority was decided by appointment order. Example: Gyanesh Kumar was considered senior because his name appeared first in the appointment notification.

### How was the new Chief Election Commissioner appointed this time?

1. The **Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service, and Term of Office) Act, 2023** changed the process.
2. A **Search Committee** led by the Law Minister shortlisted five names.

3. A **Selection Committee** with the Prime Minister, the Leader of Opposition, and a Cabinet Minister chose the final candidate.

4. On February 17, 2025, the committee met, and Gyanesh Kumar was appointed CEC.

5. Rahul Gandhi submitted a **dissent note** and asked for a delay until the Supreme Court's decision.

For detailed information on **Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners Act, 2023** [read this article here](#)

#### What are the eligibility conditions under the new Act?

1. The CEC and ECs must have held a **Secretary-level post** in the Government of India.
2. They must have experience in **election management**.
3. No reappointment is allowed.
4. A person can serve a maximum of **six years** as EC and CEC combined.

#### Why was the appointment process changed?

1. Supreme Court judgments between **2015 and 2022** questioned the government's exclusive power to appoint ECs.
2. On **March 2, 2023**, the Supreme Court ruled that a **panel with the Prime Minister, Leader of Opposition, and the Chief Justice of India (CJI)** should select the CEC.
3. Before this ruling could be implemented, Parliament passed the **2023 Act** in December, replacing the CJI with a Cabinet Minister.
4. This change gave the **government more control** over the appointment.

#### What are the issues with this appointment?

##### 1. New Selection Process Gives Government More Control:

The **2023 Act** replaced the **Chief Justice of India (CJI)** in the Selection Committee with a Cabinet Minister, allowing the **government to dominate** decisions.

##### 2. Supreme Court's Pending Review:

- Petitions challenge the **removal of the CJI** from the selection process.
- The **Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR)** has filed a case.
- The Supreme Court's hearing is on **February 19, 2025**.

#### Question for practice:

Examine how the appointment process of the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) in India changed after the enactment of the 2023 law and the concerns raised regarding this change.

## Manipur faces President's Rule amid political and ethnic turmoil

**Source:** The post Manipur faces President's Rule amid political and ethnic turmoil has been created, based on the article "**Manipur is in need of 'greater common good' politics**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 20th February 2025

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper2-Polity-issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure

**Context:** The article discusses the imposition of President's Rule in Manipur on February 13, 2025. It explains political struggles, ethnic tensions, and missed Assembly deadlines. It highlights different types of populism and urges sensitive governance to resolve conflicts and restore stability.

For detailed information on **Manipur Crisis: Constitutional Breakdown, Judicial Delays, and Government Inaction** [read this article here](#)

### Why was President's Rule imposed in Manipur?

1. **Constitutional Breakdown:** Article 174 mandates that the gap between two Assembly sessions cannot exceed **six months**. This deadline expired on **February 12, 2025**.
2. **Political Instability:** Chief Minister **N. Biren Singh** resigned on **February 9**, leading to a leadership crisis. The BJP faced internal conflicts over his replacement.
3. **Ethnic Unrest:** **20 months of lawlessness** since **May 3, 2023**, made governance difficult.

### What political struggles led to this crisis?

1. **BJP's Internal Conflict:** Dissident MLAs wanted to remove **Chief Minister N. Biren Singh**. The BJP's central leadership likely forced his resignation on **February 9, 2025**.
2. **No-Confidence Motion:** The **Congress** planned to move a **no-confidence motion**. Rebel BJP MLAs were ready to support it, even at the risk of disqualification.
3. **Assembly Crisis:** **Article 174** mandates that two sessions cannot be more than **six months apart**. The skipped winter session forced a **February 10 Budget session**, which was canceled.
4. **Governor's Role:** Governor **Ajay Kumar Bhalla** declared the session "**null and void**" on **February 9**, worsening the crisis.
5. **Result:** Without a Chief Minister or Assembly session, **President's Rule** was imposed on **February 13, 2025**.

### How has President's Rule been used in Manipur before?

1. **Manipur has experienced President's Rule 11 times**, including the latest on **February 13, 2025**.
2. According to a **2016 RTI reply**, it had **President's Rule 10 times** before.
3. This makes Manipur **one of the most politically unstable States** in India.
4. **Ethnic diversity** contributes to instability, with **33 Scheduled Tribes**, mainly **Nagas and Kuki-Zos**, alongside **Meiteis, Pangals, and non-tribal groups**.
5. Frequent **political conflicts and governance failures** have led to repeated **constitutional breakdowns**.



6. The latest crisis arose from **missed Assembly deadlines, BJP infighting, and ethnic unrest.**

**How did populism fuel ethnic tensions?**

**1. Types of Populism:** The book *Righteous Demagogues (2024)* defines three populism types – **Reordering, Additive, and Quotidian.**

**2. Biren Singh's Policies:** His government targeted **Kuki-Zo tribes** through **crackdowns on forest encroachment, poppy cultivation, and illegal migration.**

**3. Ethnic Polarization:** His actions were **harsh and humiliating**, increasing hostility.

**4. Political Rivalry:** Opponents **exploited ethnic fears** to strengthen their base.

**What are the challenges ahead?**

President's Rule may not last long, and BJP might return to power soon. However, **several challenges remain:**

- **Cross-border movement** must be controlled but managed carefully.
- **Poppy eradication and forest conservation** should continue but with sensitivity.
- **Ethnic hostilities must end**, and governance should focus on **common welfare** rather than ethnic populism.

Manipur became a full-fledged State in **1972** and has had diverse leadership in the past. The future should focus on **inclusive governance**, where leaders emerge based on merit rather than ethnic loyalty.

**Question for practice:**

Examine how political instability and ethnic tensions contributed to the imposition of President's Rule in Manipur on February 13, 2025.

### **Trump's policies create divisions between US and Europe**

**Source:** The post Trump's policies create divisions between US and Europe has been created, based on the article "**C Raja Mohan writes: Has Trumpism broken the Collective West?**" published in "**Indian Express**" on 20th February 2025

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

**Context:** The article discusses growing divisions between the U.S. and Europe after Trump's return. It explains how Trump's policies on security, trade, and politics challenge Western unity. Russia and China benefit from this split. India remains cautious and focuses on its own interests.

For detailed information on **Trump's Second Term Reshapes America and World** [read this article hear](#)

**What Are the Recent Shifts in U.S. and European Relations?**

**1. Trump's Peace Talks with Russia:** U.S. President Trump initiated direct negotiations with Russia over Ukraine, bypassing Kyiv and Brussels.

2. **Shock in Europe:** Vice President JD Vance strongly criticized European mainstream parties at the Munich Security Conference, leaving some allies in tears.

3. **Security Commitments:** Trump wants to reduce America's security role in Europe, raising concerns among NATO allies.

4. **Trade Policies:** Trump argues that the existing global trade system no longer benefits American workers and promotes bilateral trade deals.

5. **Political Divide:** Trump-backed conservatives are challenging liberal policies in the West, with figures like Elon Musk supporting right-wing parties in Europe.

### How Has Russia Responded to the Western Divide?

1. Russia has promoted the idea of a "Collective West" to unite its people against Europe and the U.S.
2. The ongoing peace talks with the U.S. are viewed by Russia as a chance to regain its significant position in Europe, a status it held post-World War II but lost after the Soviet Union collapsed.
3. Russia sees the division within the West as an opportunity to restore its influence in the European regional order.
4. The expected summit between Putin and Trump could further Russia's goal to reintegrate into Western economic and security structures.

### What Role Does China Play in the Situation?

1. **Exploiting Divisions:** China benefits from the growing divide between the U.S. and its European allies, which weakens the "Collective West."
2. **Strategic Probing:** China, like Russia, repeatedly tests the gaps in U.S. alliances, especially in Asia.
3. **Potential Gains:** An American withdrawal from Europe and Asia aligns with China's strategic interests.
4. **Negotiating with the U.S.:** Despite criticizing the "Collective West," China, like Russia, is eager to strike deals with Washington when beneficial.

### How Is India Positioning Itself Amid These Changes?

1. **India's Cautious Approach:** India no longer follows past anti-Western propaganda from Russia and China. It now critically assesses their rhetoric.
2. **Engaging with Western Powers:** India does not fully align with either side but actively seeks strategic agreements with Western nations.
3. **Understanding the West's Internal Conflict:** India recognizes the growing divide between the U.S. and Europe and sees opportunities in these changes.
4. **Seeking a Grand Bargain:** Like Moscow and Beijing, India is ready to negotiate favorable deals with Western powers to protect its national interests.

**Question for practice:**

Evaluate how the growing divisions between the U.S. and Europe under Trump's leadership impact global power dynamics, particularly in relation to Russia, China, and India.

### Indian rupee keeps losing value

**Source:** The post Indian rupee keeps losing value has been created, based on the article “**RBI's rupee challenge**” published in “**Indian Express**” on 20th February 2025

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

**Context:** The article discusses the depreciation of the Indian rupee and the RBI's role in managing it. It explains how market forces, inflation, trade deficits, and capital flows influence the rupee's value. It warns of risks like currency crises due to volatile capital movements.

For detailed information on **Rupee's Fall Driven by Stronger US Dollar** [read this article here](#)

#### What is the status of Indian Rupee?

1. The Indian rupee has been depreciating steadily over the years. In 2010-11, the exchange rate was **₹45.56 per USD**, but by **2023-24**, it reached **₹82.78 per USD**.
2. The rupee has weakened every year except **2017-18**. Since **September 2024**, its monthly average value has also declined.

#### What Causes the Rupee to Depreciate?

1. **Higher Inflation in India:** Inflation in India is generally higher than in international markets. This reduces the purchasing power of the rupee faster than the US dollar. Higher inflation also increases import costs, such as oil, which further weakens the rupee.
2. **Trade and Current Account Deficits:** India imports more goods and services than it exports. Even large **remittances from Indians abroad** cannot fill this gap. This forces India to rely on foreign capital inflows to cover deficits and build foreign exchange reserves.

#### Why Can't Market-Driven Exchange Rates Stop Depreciation?

1. The rupee's value depends on capital inflows and outflows. Since India opened its capital account in the 1990s, portfolio investments have been volatile.
- 2., Unlike **Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)** or **commercial bank lending**, portfolio investments enter and exit quickly, making the rupee unstable.

#### What Are the Risks of Letting the Rupee Depreciate?

1. **Capital Flight:** If investors expect the rupee to fall, they may withdraw funds, worsening the depreciation.
2. **Foreign Exchange Reserve Drain:** The **RBI intervenes** to control volatility using forex reserves. However, excessive intervention can weaken reserves and investor confidence.
3. **Risk of Currency Crisis:** Some countries have faced **sharp currency collapses** in recent decades. India has avoided this, but the risk remains due to the rupee's history of sudden declines.

#### What Role Does the RBI Play?

1. The RBI intervenes in the forex market to prevent sudden and significant fluctuations in the rupee's value.
2. However, its actions can sometimes spur capital outflows if investors expect the rupee to fall sharply, complicating the RBI's efforts.
3. India's persistent trade deficits and reliance on volatile capital flows make the economy vulnerable to currency crises.
4. Despite the RBI's efforts to stabilize the rupee, India's structural economic issues, such as a lack of competitive exports and dependence on foreign capital, pose ongoing challenges to maintaining a stable exchange rate.

**Question for practice:**

Examine the factors contributing to the depreciation of the Indian rupee and the risks associated with it.

**Strengthening telecom networks ensures resilience during disasters**

**Source:** The post Strengthening telecom networks ensures resilience during disasters has been created, based on the article **"On building resilient telecom infrastructure"** published in **"The Hindu"** on 20th February 2025

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper3- Disaster Management

**Context:** The article discusses how disasters impact telecom networks and how to protect them. It highlights power failures, damaged cables, and high-speed winds as major risks. It suggests solutions like stronger infrastructure, better planning, underground cables, and financial support to ensure telecom resilience during disasters.

**Why Are Telecom Networks Important During Disasters?**

1. The Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) released a report on improving telecom networks in disasters.
2. The report, initiated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2019, addresses the vulnerabilities of telecom infrastructure during calamities like cyclones and earthquakes.
3. Telecom networks help disaster management authorities communicate quickly. This is crucial when lives and property are at risk.
4. They connect local municipalities with State and Union governments. A working telecom system ensures faster coordination and response.

For detailed information on **Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure** [read this article](#) [hear](#)

**How Do Disasters Impact Telecom Networks?**

1. **Damage to Towers:** High-speed winds can break towers.
2. **Cable Breakage:** Overland cables can snap, disrupting communication.
3. **Undersea Cable Issues:** Coastal regions are vulnerable because they connect India to the global internet. Damaged landing stations can cause major disruptions.

4. **Power Failures:** Most disruptions happen due to electricity loss. Data analysis since 2016 shows power issues are the main reason for telecom failures.

#### What Immediate Steps Can Be Taken to Reduce Disruptions?

1. **Ensure Power Supply:** Power failures are the main cause of outages, so restoring electricity is crucial.
2. **Provide Emergency Fuel:** Odisha officials give 50 litres of fuel to telecom operators to keep networks running.
3. **Use Real-Time Monitoring:** The Department of Telecommunications tracks outages and directs resources quickly.
4. **Raise Generator Placement:** Keeping diesel generators above flood levels prevents failures.

#### How Can Networks Be Strengthened for Long-Term Resilience?

1. **Build Stronger Towers:** Coastal towers should withstand high wind speeds to reduce damage.
2. **Implement Underground Cables:** The "dig-once" policy protects telecom infrastructure from surface-level damage.
3. **Use Disaster Risk Modelling:** Telecom planning should include hazard vulnerability assessments.
4. **Adopt Parametric Insurance:** Financial protection ensures quick recovery and better disaster-proofing.
5. **Stronger Coordination:** Sharing real-time damage reports helps in faster repairs.

#### Conclusion

Disaster-proof telecom networks need strong infrastructure, smart planning, and financial support. Small but effective changes can prevent major failures. Investing in resilience will help India's telecom networks stay operational during emergencies.

#### Question for practice:

Discuss the impact of disasters on telecom networks and the measures to enhance their resilience.

### Mediation helps reduce India's massive case backlog

**Source:** The post Mediation helps reduce India's massive case backlog has been created, based on the article "Converting court case backlogs into treasure troves" published in "The Hindu" on 22nd February 2025

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper2-Polity-Dispute Redressal Mechanisms and Institutions.

**Context:** The article discusses India's massive judicial backlog and suggests mediation as a solution. Mediation is faster, cheaper, and helps resolve disputes amicably. It proposes identifying cases suited for mediation, assigning trained mediators, and encouraging wider adoption to ease the court's burden.

For detailed information on **Mediation Act 2023** [read this article here](#)

#### How serious is the backlog in India's legal system?



The Indian legal system has a massive backlog of cases.

1. The **Supreme Court** has **82,000 cases** pending.
2. The **High Courts** have **over 62 lakh cases**.
3. **Lower courts** have **close to five crore cases**.
4. **Nearly 50 lakh cases** have been pending for more than **10 years**.
5. This backlog creates delays in justice, affecting millions of people.

**What causes this backlog?**

1. **Low Judge-to-Population Ratio:** India has **21 judges per million people**, leading to case delays.
2. **Adversarial Legal System:** Multiple **interim applications and appeals** prolong litigation.
3. **Government as a Major Litigant:** The **government is involved in nearly half** of all disputes, increasing case numbers.
4. **Infrastructure and Resource Shortages:** Courts **lack physical infrastructure, financial resources, and human capacity** to manage cases.
5. **High Litigation Culture:** People approach courts for **all types of disputes** (e.g., with neighbors, suppliers, and government), increasing the burden.

**How can mediation help solve this problem?**

1. **Efficiency:** Mediation typically resolves cases faster than formal litigation, reducing the caseload.
2. **Cost-effective:** It is cheaper for all parties compared to the expenses of prolonged court cases.
3. **Amicable solutions:** Promotes mutual agreements, often preserving relationships better than adversarial outcomes.
4. **Reduction in backlog:** Can expediently process the millions of pending cases, especially the **50 lakh cases pending for over 10 years**.
5. **Adoption by the judiciary:** Since 2005, mediation has been recognized and promoted by Indian courts as a viable solution for various disputes.

**What needs to be done to make mediation successful?**

1. **Identify cases suitable for mediation** – Courts should classify pending cases that mediators can handle.
2. **Assign trained mediators** – Cases should be given to **experienced mediators**, either chosen by parties or assigned.
3. **Ensure reasonable fees** – Mediators should be paid fairly to encourage professional participation.
4. **Encourage businesses, government, and individuals** – The **government is a party in nearly half of all disputes**, so reducing its litigation can ease backlog.

5. **Promote mediation in courts** – Judges already **support mediation** and should push for its wider adoption.

6. **Highlight mediation's benefits** – It is **cheaper, faster, and restores relationships** compared to litigation.

**What are the benefits of mediation?**

1. **Saves time** (most cases need only a few sessions).
2. **Reduces costs** for both parties and the legal system.
3. **Restores relationships** by promoting fair settlements.
4. **Less burden** on courts, allowing judges to focus on serious cases.
5. Encourages a **more efficient and accessible** justice system.

For detailed information on **Significance of Mediation for Dispute Resolution** [read this article here](#)

**Question for practice:**

Examine how mediation can help reduce India's judicial backlog and improve the efficiency of the legal system.

### Can the Lokpal investigate High Court judges

**Source:** The post Can the Lokpal investigate High Court judges has been created, based on the article "**Judges' dilemma: Accountability and independence ought to be equally important for judges**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 22nd February 2025

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper2- Judiciary

**Context:** The article discusses whether High Court judges fall under the Lokpal's jurisdiction. The Supreme Court stayed the Lokpal's ruling. It highlights concerns about judicial independence and accountability, suggesting the need for a better mechanism to handle corruption charges against judges.

For detailed information on **Lokpal of India** [read this article here](#)

**Can the Lokpal Investigate High Court Judges?**

1. The **Lokpal ruled** that High Court judges are under its jurisdiction as "public servants" under the **Prevention of Corruption Act**.
2. The **Supreme Court stayed** this ruling on its own motion, raising concerns about judicial independence.
3. Earlier, the **Lokpal rejected a complaint** against a former **Chief Justice of India (CJI)**, stating that the **Lokpal Act, 2013**, does not cover Supreme Court judges.
4. It justified its ruling on High Court judges by stating that High Courts are **statutory bodies**, unlike the Supreme Court, which is a **constitutional body**.

**How Does This Affect Judicial Independence and Accountability?**

1. Many believe this ruling **undermines judicial independence**, as judges would be answerable to the Lokpal.

2. The **Supreme Court, government law officers, and senior advocates** found the Lokpal's decision **disturbing** for this reason.

3. In **K. Veeraswami vs Union of India (1991)**, the Court ruled that a case **cannot be filed against a judge** without consulting the CJI, but it also recognized that judges are **public servants** under the **Prevention of Corruption Act**.

#### **What Is the Current Process for Handling Corruption Complaints Against Judges?**

1. Complaints must be sent to the CJI, Chief Justice of a High Court, or the President.
2. If found credible, actions include **asking the judge to resign, denying judicial work, or recommending removal through Parliament**.
3. Some judges are **transferred**, but the reason is **not disclosed**.
4. The Supreme Court may review whether **independent prosecution under court supervision** is needed.

#### **Does the Judiciary Need a Stronger Accountability Mechanism?**

1. The Supreme Court may **review the Lokpal ruling**, raising the need for better **accountability mechanisms**.
2. The judiciary should consider if the **current process is sufficient** or if **independent prosecution under court supervision** is necessary.
3. **Both accountability and independence** should be given equal importance.

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

Discuss how the Lokpal's jurisdiction over High Court judges impacts judicial independence and accountability.

### **Interfaith couples face risks under marriage law**

**Source:** The post Interfaith couples face risks under marriage law has been created, based on the article "**A LAW, WEAPONISED: The no-objection provision defeats the purpose of the Special Marriage Act**" published in "**Indian Express**" on 22nd February 2025

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper1-Society – Salient Features

**Context:** The article discusses an interfaith couple in Bhopal who faced violence for legally registering their marriage under the Special Marriage Act. It criticizes the Act's notice period, which compromises privacy and enables interference, and highlights concerns about religious intolerance and privacy violations.

For detailed information on **Contradictory approach of the Madhya Pradesh High Court on inter-faith marriage** [read this article here](#)

#### **Why was the couple attacked for registering their marriage?**

1. A Muslim man and a Hindu woman in Bhopal tried to register their marriage under the **Special Marriage Act, 1954**.
2. A group of vigilantes attacked the man inside the court complex. **CCTV footage** of the attack went viral on social media.

3. The couple had followed legal procedures, yet their right to marry was denied through violence.

#### How does the Special Marriage Act put interfaith couples at risk?

1. **Mandatory Public Notice:** The Act requires couples to give notice **one month before marriage**. This compromises their **privacy and safety**.

2. **Privacy Violation:** In the **Bhopal case**, a **leak from the marriage registrar's office** led to an attack on the couple.

3. **Misuse of Objection Clause:** **Section 7** allows **anyone** to object, even for **personal vendetta, vested interest, or social bias**.

4. **Failure to Protect Couples:** The **male partner was beaten inside a court**, proving that even **legal institutions do not ensure safety**.

#### Why are interfaith marriages facing increasing resistance?

**Religious Bias and "Love Jihad" Narrative:** Many Hindu-Muslim marriages are wrongly labeled as **"love jihad"**, implying forced religious conversion. This leads to opposition from **moral policing groups**.

2. **Judicial Contradiction:** The **K.S. Puttaswamy case (2017)** declared privacy a fundamental right, yet the law exposes interfaith couples to harm.

3. The couple's case shows that even **legal protection and court premises** do not ensure safety.

#### What needs to change in the law?

1. **Section 7 of the Special Marriage Act** allows public objections, but it is often misused.

2. Privacy violations and religious bias make interfaith marriages difficult.

3. The government must reform this law to protect couples from **harassment and violence**.

#### Question for practice:

Examine how the provisions of the Special Marriage Act, 1954, compromise the privacy and safety of interfaith couples in India.

### India's Growth Challenges and the Middle-Income Trap

**Source:** The post India's Growth Challenges and the Middle-Income Trap has been created, based on the article **"India's transition to a high-income country is riddled with unknowns"** published in **"Indian Express"** on 22nd February 2025

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

**Context:** The article discusses India's economic growth and the challenge of moving from a lower-middle-income to a high-income country. It highlights regional income disparities, the need for better policies, and the risk of getting stuck in the middle-income trap without strong governance.

For detailed information on **Strategies to escape the middle-income trap** [read this article here](#)

### Why is India still a lower middle-income country?

1. India became a lower middle-income country in 2007 and remains in this category.
2. Its per capita income has risen from **\$1,022 to \$2,700** in 18 years.
3. To reach **upper middle-income status**, India needs a per capita income of **\$4,516**.
4. The **IMF predicts** India's per capita income will be **\$4,195 by 2029**, making the transition possible in the next decade.

### What is the income status of Indian states?

1. **Upper middle-income state:** Delhi (**\$5,579**).
2. **States nearing upper middle-income:** Telangana (**\$4,306**), Karnataka (**\$4,021**), Haryana (**\$3,934**), Tamil Nadu (**\$3,807**).
3. **Lower middle-income states:** Chhattisgarh (**\$1,780**), West Bengal (**\$1,861**), Odisha (**\$1,970**).
4. **Low-income state:** Bihar (**\$729**), far below the national average (**\$2,700**).
5. **Economic divide:** Western and southern states have strong industries (IT, chip design, manufacturing), while poorer states lack industrial bases.
6. **Future challenge:** Ensuring all states grow rapidly and avoid stagnation.

### What are the India's developmental challenges?

1. **Income Disparity:** Western and southern states like Telangana (\$4,306), Karnataka (\$4,021), and Delhi (\$5,579) have higher incomes compared to states like Bihar (\$729), indicating significant regional income disparities.
2. **Middle-Income Trap:** With a per capita income growth from \$1,022 to \$2,700 in 18 years, India risks staying in the lower middle-income category without reaching the \$4,516 needed for upper middle-income status.
3. **Lack of Diverse Industries:** Poorer states lack robust manufacturing and modern services sectors, essential for economic growth.

### What are the risks of a middle-income trap?

1. India must avoid stagnation, which has affected many countries.
2. Even **China** has not yet become a high-income economy despite rapid growth.
3. Western and southern states need to **advance in technology** and high-value industries.
4. Factors like **labour migration, skill development, and capital access** will shape their success.

### What policies can help India grow faster?

1. India needs **clear economic policies** to sustain high growth.



2. The government must decide between **free trade and protectionism**.
3. Supporting **many industries** instead of focusing on a few national champions is crucial.
4. Strong **institutions and governance** are necessary for sustained development.
5. Achieving **high-income status** requires an **8% growth rate**, which is much higher than the current 6%.

#### Question for practice:

Discuss the challenges India faces in transitioning from a lower middle-income to a high-income country.

### India's Industries Depend on Cheap Labor Over Innovation

**Source:** The post India's Industries Depend on Cheap Labor Over Innovation has been created, based on the article "**Indian industry needs innovation, not mindless toil**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 24th February 2025

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper3-Effects of liberalisation on the economy, changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth.

**Context:** The article discusses how Indian industries rely on cheap labor instead of technology and innovation. Workers work long hours for low wages, especially migrants. This harms productivity and growth. Other countries modernized, but India's industries resist change, limiting global competitiveness and long-term progress.

For detailed information on **Boosting India's Economy through Innovation and Reform** [read this article here](#)

#### What is the Current Working Condition of Workers in India?

1. **Long working hours:** Many factory workers, especially in Ludhiana, work **11-12 hours daily** without breaks during high-demand periods.
2. **Low job security:** Only **21.7% of workers** have regular salaried jobs, and half of them lack contracts, paid leave, or social security.
3. **High work hours:** ILO (2024) data shows Indian workers work **46.7 hours per week**, compared to **38 hours in the U.S.** and **36.6 hours in Japan**.
4. **Rise of contract labor:** **56% of new factory workers** since **2011-12** are contract workers, earning lower wages with no protection.

#### How Do Indian Industries Benefit from These Working Conditions?

1. Indian industries benefit by **keeping labor costs low** instead of investing in technology and innovation.
2. **Big firms shift production to small, unregistered enterprises**, avoiding labor laws. Over **70% of manufacturing workers** are in such units.
3. **56% of new factory workers** since **2011-12** are contract workers, receiving **lower wages** and **no labor protections**.

4. **Factory sector profits increased** from 31.6% (2019-20) to 46.4% (2021-22) while wages stayed low.
5. **Industries avoid modernization**, limiting growth, as seen in **India's stagnant 3.1% global garment export share**.
6. These practices **reduce costs in the short term** but **hurt long-term competitiveness**.

#### What Challenges Do Small Firms Face?

1. **Delayed Payments:** Big firms delay payments to small businesses **for several months** after receiving supplies, causing financial distress.
2. **Low Prices for Parts:** Large companies refuse to **increase payments** for parts despite rising material and production costs.
3. **Lack of State Support:** Small businesses face **inadequate access to bank credit** and rising competition from **cheaper imports**.
4. **Overdependence on Cheap Labor:** **70% of India's 68 million manufacturing workers (2021-22)** work in **small, unregistered enterprises** (each with fewer than 10 workers).
5. **Exploitative Relations with Large Firms:** Unlike **Japan**, where small and large firms cooperate, India's small firms face **exploitative conditions** that weaken them.

#### What Are the Long-Term Consequences?

1. Depending on cheap labor hurts innovation and economic growth. Even in **new industries like IT**, low wages slow progress.
2. Workers with low wages **cannot buy much**, which reduces demand in the domestic market.
3. Industries that focus only on short-term profits will **struggle to grow** in the long run.
4. Indian businesses must **modernize and invest in technology** to remain competitive.

#### Question for practice:

Evaluate how India's reliance on cheap labor instead of technology and innovation impacts long-term economic growth and global competitiveness.

### India can benefit from global skills shortage

**Source:** The post India can benefit from global skills shortage has been created, based on the article "**Talent shortage — global challenge, India's opportunity**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 24th February 2025

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper3- Economy- growth, development and employment.

**Context:** The article discusses the global shortage of skilled workers and how India can benefit. It highlights workforce demands in different regions, challenges like immigration barriers, and India's initiatives. It stresses the need for better policies to boost India's global workforce presence.

For detailed information on **India's Role in the Global Job Market** [read this article here](#)

### Why is the global labour market facing a skills shortage?

1. A FICCI-KPMG study estimates a **shortage of 85.2 million skilled workers by 2030**.
2. This shortage may lead to **\$8.45 trillion in unrealised annual revenue**, equal to the **GDPs of Germany and Japan combined**.
3. **Aging populations in Europe, GCC, and Australia** are increasing demand for **healthcare workers**.
4. The **GCC and Australia** need more **manufacturing and construction workers**.
5. **Europe needs more service-sector workers** as it is the **oldest post-industrial society**.
6. **Emerging sectors** require skills in **AI, big data, IoT, blockchain, and sustainability**.

### Which regions need skilled workers the most?

1. **Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)**: High demand for manufacturing and construction workers due to regional development needs.
2. **Europe (including the United Kingdom)**: Requires more service-sector workers because it is the oldest post-industrial society, facing a workforce deficit.
3. **Australia**: Similar to the GCC, needs skilled labor in manufacturing and construction to support its economic activities.
4. **Common to all regions**: Healthcare professionals are increasingly needed due to aging populations and expanding healthcare requirements.

### What are the barriers to skilled migration?

1. Several challenges limit the movement of skilled workers. These include **strict visa regulations, unrecognised Indian qualifications** (especially in medicine), **exploitative recruitment practices**, and **language barriers**.
2. Indian degrees are not accepted everywhere, leading to **underemployment**. Recruitment fraud and human trafficking also create risks for migrant workers.

### What is India doing to address these challenges?

1. **Bilateral and Free Trade Agreements (FTAs)**: India has agreements with **GCC nations** to protect Indian workers. The **Joint India-UAE Vision** emphasizes skill cooperation.
2. **Skill Development Programs**: India runs training programs to **align workers' skills with global market needs**, covering sectors like **automation, AI, big data, IoT, blockchain, and sustainability**.
3. **Digital Workforce Support Platforms**: Online recruitment systems **help protect workers** from fraudulent practices, especially in **GCC countries**.
4. **Regulation of Recruitment Practices**: Stricter oversight aims to **prevent exploitation and human trafficking**, as highlighted by **Prime Minister Modi** during his **U.S. visit**.
5. **Recognition of Qualifications**: India pushes for **mutual recognition of academic and professional degrees**, especially in **medicine**, to **reduce underemployment in Europe**.

6. **Public-Private Partnerships:** The Central and State governments promote private sector participation in training and global employment facilitation.

7. **Circular Migration and Mobility:** India supports temporary work visas and rotational workforce models to address global labour shortages without causing demographic imbalances.

For detailed information on **India's Role in the Global Job Market** [read this article here](#)

### How can India benefit from the global skills gap?

India has a large skilled workforce and faces less hostility in most global markets. Countries with anti-immigration policies still accept skilled Indian workers. By preventing illegal migration and improving global workforce integration, India can strengthen its reputation. India's GDP target of \$9 trillion by 2030 depends on how much of the \$8.45 trillion global opportunity it can capture.

### Question for practice:

Discuss how India can benefit from the global shortage of skilled workers.

## Impact of recent shift in US-Russia relations

**Source:** The post Impact of recent shift in US-Russia relations has been created, based on the article "In Ukraine tragedy, a lesson on big powers: Proxies always end up as doormats of history" published in "Indian Express" on 24th February 2025

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

**Context:** The article discusses the recent shift in US-Russia relations. The US is changing its approach, prioritizing global strategy over Europe. Ukraine is suffering due to its role as a proxy. India should rethink its strategic approach and avoid dependence on external powers.

For detailed information on **Trump's policies create divisions between US and Europe** [read this article here](#)

### Why is the US-Russia relationship changing?

1. **Major Diplomatic Shift:** The Lavrov-Rubio meeting in Riyadh signaled a reset in US-Russia relations, ending years of rising tensions.
2. **US Strategic Shift:** The US is adjusting its global priorities, moving away from the long-standing policy of isolating Russia and instead focusing on China.
3. **Trump's Vision for American Power:** President Trump emphasized strengthening American power through a mix of domestic and international policies. His campaign outlined this clearly, and implementation has begun.
4. **Russia's Long-Term Strategy:** President Putin managed the Ukraine conflict with patience, aiming to preserve Russia's great power status, even as the weakest among major players.
5. **Ukraine Conflict Stalemate:** After three years of war, Russia has gained leverage. Washington now accepts that the conflict can only end in Russia's favor.

**6. European Weakness & US Priorities:** Europe, especially NATO, has been unable to maintain strategic coherence. European NATO has become a burden on American global strategy.

**7. Global Energy & Economic Interests:** The US-Russia engagement can help create a more dynamic global energy and technology market, benefiting countries like India.

#### **What has been the impact of this change?**

**1. Impact on Ukraine:** Ukraine has suffered greatly as a proxy in the US-Russia conflict, with severe losses in territory and generational damage, as the US shifts its focus from Europe to global strategies against China.

**2. Shift in European Strategy:** Europe's strategic unity is weakening, evidenced by internal NATO conflicts and reduced US support. This shift leaves Europe vulnerable and less coherent in global politics.

**3. Opportunities for India:** The evolving US-Russia relations could benefit India by creating a more balanced Eurasian geopolitical environment and enhancing global markets in energy and technology.

#### **What lessons should India learn?**

**1. Reassess Strategic Alliances:** India should reconsider its strategic alliances, noting how Ukraine's dependence on the US and Europe led to significant losses and a precarious future. This underlines the risks of being a proxy in larger geopolitical conflicts.

**2. Pursue Balanced Geopolitics:** The US's realignment in its global strategy emphasizes the need for India to seek a balanced approach in Eurasia. This will help India capitalize on shifts in global energy and technology markets.

**3. Avoid Reliance on External Powers:** India must avoid over-reliance on foreign powers for military and strategic needs, learning from Ukraine's situation and Europe's challenges with NATO.

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

**Examine** how the recent shift in US-Russia relations impacts global geopolitics and what strategic lessons India can learn from it.

### **India can lead in transgender healthcare globally**

**Source:** The post India can lead in transgender healthcare globally has been created, based on the article "**How India can become the vishwaguru for transgender healthcare**" published in "**Indian Express**" on 24th February 2025

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

**Context:** The article discusses the rollback of transgender rights in the U.S. under Trump. It highlights India's legal protections and healthcare policies for transgender people. It suggests that India can become a global hub for transgender healthcare with better implementation and investment.

#### **How Has the Trump Administration Affected Transgender Rights?**

1. The Trump administration implemented policies that significantly restricted transgender rights.



2. An executive order was issued to recognize only two sexes—male and female—which affected federal IDs like passports.
3. A ban was placed on federal funding for gender-affirming care for individuals under 19, cutting off access to puberty blockers and hormone replacement treatments.
4. Transgender individuals were reinstated a ban from serving in the military and from participating in women's sports in federally-funded schools.
5. Detention policies were changed to house transgender individuals based on their sex assigned at birth, increasing their risk of violence.
6. **USAID's transgender healthcare support was halted, leading to Mitr Clinic's closure in India.**

### **What Are India's Existing Legal Protections for Transgender People?**

1. The **2014 NALSA vs Union of India** judgment legally recognized transgender people and provided protection against discrimination.
2. The **Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019** prohibits discrimination in education, employment, housing, and public spaces.
3. The law mandates **at least one government hospital per state** to provide sex reassignment surgery.
4. The **Ayushman Bharat TG Plus card** offers **Rs 5,00,000 per person** for transgender healthcare, but implementation is pending.
5. AIIMS Delhi has set up a **Centre of Excellence for Transgender Healthcare** to enhance medical services.

### **How Can India Become a Global Hub for Transgender Healthcare?**

1. Countries like **Thailand perform many gender-affirming surgeries** and attract medical tourists.
2. India has good doctors, a strong private healthcare system, and a culture that accepts gender diversity.
3. If medical colleges include transgender healthcare training and public hospitals provide more services, India can become a major destination for transgender healthcare.

### **What Steps Are Needed to Improve Transgender Healthcare in India?**

1. Implement the **Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, and Rules, 2020.**
2. Train doctors in **gender-affirming surgeries** and include transgender healthcare in medical education.
3. Set professional **guidelines for transgender healthcare.**
4. Improve public healthcare, including the **Ayushman Bharat TG Plus scheme.**
5. Improve **passport, visa, and document-change policies** for transgender individuals.
6. Increase the **budget for transgender healthcare** in India.

### **Conclusion**

If India improves policies and invests in healthcare, it can become a leader in transgender healthcare. With proper action, India can provide quality, affordable, and safe medical services for transgender individuals worldwide.

**Question for practice:**

Discuss how India can become a global hub for transgender healthcare and the steps needed to achieve this goal.

**The Right to Information Act is weakening**

**Source:** The post The Right to Information Act is weakening has been created, based on the article “**The RTI is now the ‘right to deny information’**” published in “**The Hindu**” on 25th February 2025

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

**Context:** The article discusses the decline of the Right to Information (RTI) Act in India. It explains how governments and courts have weakened the law over time. Bureaucratic delays, weak enforcement, and restrictive court rulings have reduced transparency, limiting citizens' access to information.

For detailed information on **Right to Information** [read this article here](#)

**What was the original purpose of the RTI Act?**

1. **Empower Citizens:** The RTI Act recognized citizens as the rightful owners of the government. It gave them the power to seek information with dignity and respect.
2. **Ensure Transparency:** It codified the fundamental right to information, making it one of the best transparency laws globally.
3. **Curb Corruption and Arbitrariness:** Citizens were expected to monitor the government and reduce corruption.
4. **Timely Information Sharing:** The law required public authorities to provide information within **30 days**.
5. **Limited Exemptions:** **Section 8** listed clear and narrow exemptions to ensure most information remained accessible.
6. **Strengthen Democracy:** It reinforced **Article 19(1)(a)** by guaranteeing access to government records.

**How has the RTI Act been weakened?**

1. **Bureaucratic Control:** Most Information Commissioners are retired bureaucrats who resist sharing power with citizens. They treat their roles as post-retirement benefits.
2. **Low Case Disposal Rate:** High Court judges dispose of over **2,500 cases** per year, but RTI commissioners clear fewer cases. They should ideally handle over **5,000 cases annually**.
3. **Long Delays:** The RTI Act mandates **30 days** to provide information, but commissions have no time limit, leading to **backlogs over a year**.
4. **Weak Enforcement:** Commissioners rarely use penalties against officials who deny information.

### How did the Supreme Court change the RTI Act?

1. In **2011**, the Supreme Court ruled in *CBSE vs Aditya Bandopadhyay* that RTI should not burden the administration. It said indiscriminate RTI requests could slow governance. This decision discouraged information sharing and painted RTI users as troublemakers.

2. In **2012**, the Supreme Court ruled in *Girish Ramchandra Deshpande vs CIC* that personal information could be denied under **Section 8(1)(j)** of the RTI Act. The Court ignored the part of the law that required officials to prove why the information should be denied. This ruling became a precedent, making it easier to reject RTI requests.

### What is the current state of the RTI Act?

Despite its initial promise, the RTI Act has not fully realized its potential to ensure transparency and accountability within the government. There is a need for citizens and media to advocate for adherence to the original principles of the RTI Act to prevent further dilution of this crucial right.

### Question for practice:

Examine how the Right to Information (RTI) Act in India has been weakened over time by bureaucratic control, judicial rulings, and delays in enforcement.

## Uttarakhand's UCC increases control over relationships

**Source:** The post Uttarakhand's UCC increases control over relationships has been created, based on the article **"Fencing out interfaith relationships in the new India"** published in **"The Hindu"** on 25th February 2025

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper2-Indian Constitution

**Context:** The article discusses Uttarakhand's new Uniform Civil Code (UCC) and its impact on interfaith relationships. It argues that the UCC, along with anti-conversion laws, increases state control over personal relationships, strengthens religious influence, enables family control, and encourages vigilante interference.

For detailed information on **Right to Information** [read this article here](#)

### What is the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) in Uttarakhand?

1. On January 27, 2025, Uttarakhand implemented the Uniform Civil Code (UCC).
2. This law places all private relationships, including live-in and interfaith relationships, under state surveillance and regulation.
3. The UCC requires couples to register their relationships and obtain approvals from religious or community leaders. Failure to register can result in imprisonment

### How do existing laws affect interfaith marriages?

1. **Low Interfaith Marriages:** A 2014 survey of 70,000 respondents found that fewer than 5% of urban families had an interfaith marriage. Strict laws further discourage such unions.

2. **Bureaucratic Barriers:** The Special Marriage Act, 1954, requires a 30-day notice period, exposing couples to public scrutiny and family pressure.

3. **Strict Anti-Conversion Laws:** States like Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and Rajasthan enforce laws requiring declarations and waiting periods, making religious conversion for marriage difficult.

4. **Legal Cover for Vigilantism:** In Uttar Pradesh, 63 of 101 police complaints under the anti-conversion law were filed by third-party vigilante groups.

5. **Social Segregation:** These laws restrict personal choice, institutionalize separation, and reinforce religious divisions.

#### **What Are the Broader Implications of These Laws?**

1. These laws create social separation by making interfaith marriages and relationships difficult.
2. People from different religions cannot marry or live together without legal approval.
3. Religious leaders and families gain more control over personal relationships.
4. This reduces individual freedom, especially for women.

#### **Could This Legal Approach Spread to Other States?**

1. Uttarakhand's UCC may become a model for other states.
2. Rajasthan and Gujarat are considering similar laws.
3. These laws may increase government control over personal relationships.
4. This trend can weaken India's diverse society by restricting personal freedoms based on religion.

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

Evaluate the impact of Uttarakhand's Uniform Civil Code (UCC) and related laws on interfaith relationships and personal freedoms.

### **Surveillance capitalism threatens privacy and democracy**

**Source:** The post Surveillance capitalism threatens privacy and democracy has been created, based on the article "**Surveillance capitalism: the power to control personal data**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 25th February 2025

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper1-Effects of globalisation

**Context:** The article explains surveillance capitalism, where companies collect and sell personal data to predict and influence behavior. Tech giants like Google and Meta track users for profit. This weakens privacy, autonomy, and democracy. Weak regulations allow corporations and governments to benefit from mass surveillance.

#### **What is Surveillance Capitalism?**

1. Surveillance capitalism is a system where companies collect and sell personal data to predict and influence human behavior.
2. It was introduced by Shoshana Zuboff in her book *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism* (2018). This system reshapes capitalism by making human experiences a source of profit.

3. Companies like Google, Meta, and Amazon track user activities online and offline. They use this data for targeted ads and content recommendations.

### How is it Different from Industrial Capitalism?

1. **Core Resource:** Industrial capitalism relies on labor and material production. Surveillance capitalism profits from behavioral data extraction.
2. **User as Raw Material:** Users are both consumers and data sources in surveillance capitalism.
3. **Focus on Behavior Control:** Industrial capitalism aims at efficiency and productivity. Surveillance capitalism uses algorithms to shape user behavior.

**Example:** Cambridge Analytica scandal (2014) showed how personal data was used to manipulate voter behavior.

### How Does It Affect Privacy and Democracy?

1. **Data Exploitation:** Surveillance capitalism collects massive amounts of personal data without user consent. For example, the Cambridge Analytica scandal showed how data can manipulate elections by targeting voters with personalized ads.
2. **Loss of Autonomy:** Users are nudged towards decisions that benefit corporations, not themselves, making them predictable economic actors.
3. **Reduced Privacy:** Constant monitoring erodes privacy as every online action is tracked and analyzed.
4. **Weak Democratic Accountability:** The partnership between states and private tech companies reduces public scrutiny, allowing data usage beyond democratic control.

### Why is It Difficult to Regulate?

1. Regulations like the **EU's GDPR** and **India's DPDPA** aim to protect data privacy.
2. However, they do not stop companies from using personal data for profit. Big corporations influence policymakers to prevent strict regulations.
3. The rise of tech CEOs in politics increases corporate control over policies. This makes it hard to limit data collection and behavioral manipulation.

For detailed information on **India's Data Protection Rules** [read this article here](#)

### Why Is This a Concern?

Surveillance capitalism allows companies and governments to control information. It makes people vulnerable to manipulation. If strong laws are not made, privacy and democracy will be at risk. Public awareness and policy changes are needed to stop exploitation.

### Question for practice:

Evaluate the impact of surveillance capitalism on privacy, autonomy, and democracy.



## The Three-Language Formula and Its Challenges

**Source:** The post The Three-Language Formula and Its Challenges has been created, based on the article “Yogendra Yadav writes: Focus on multilingualism, not Hindi” published in “Indian Express” on 25th February 2025

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

**Context:** The article discusses India's three-language formula (TLF) and its political debate. It criticizes the dominance of English in education. It highlights Tamil Nadu's resistance to TLF and suggests fair implementation across all states. It also questions Hindi states' lack of reciprocity.

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

### What is the Three-Language Formula (TLF)?

1. The TLF requires schoolchildren to learn three languages.
2. In Hindi-speaking states, students learn Hindi, English, and a modern Indian language (preferably a South Indian language). In non-Hindi-speaking states, they learn their regional language, Hindi, and English.
3. The formula was first proposed by the Radhakrishnan Commission (1948–49) and later accepted by the Kothari Commission.
4. It was included in the education policies of the 1960s and 1980s.

### Why is the Three-Language Formula Important?

1. India is a multilingual country where many people speak more than one language.
2. Multilingual education improves cognitive flexibility, creativity, and social tolerance.
3. Experts, including D.P. Pattanayak and Ramakant Agnihotri, have supported TLF.
4. The National Curriculum Framework (2005) states that learning multiple languages helps in the overall development of children.

### Why is Tamil Nadu Opposed to TLF?

1. Tamil Nadu follows a two-language system (Tamil and English). The state believes the TLF is an attempt to impose Hindi.
2. The Union government has withheld funds under the Samagra Shiksha Scheme due to Tamil Nadu's refusal to implement TLF. Chief Minister M.K. Stalin opposes this decision, saying it violates federal principles.
3. Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan argues that Tamil Nadu must follow the Constitution, but Stalin has challenged him to show the legal basis for this requirement.

### Has the Central Government Changed TLF Under NEP 2020?

1. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 continues the TLF but removes the mention of Hindi.
2. It allows states to choose any three languages, provided two are Indian languages.

3. Tamil Nadu could teach Tamil, English, and another South Indian language, or Tamil, classical Tamil, and English.

4. The policy gives states more flexibility but does not force Hindi.

#### **Why is There Political Resentment Against TLF?**

1. TLF has not been applied equally across India. Tamil Nadu argues that Hindi-speaking states have avoided learning South Indian languages.

2. Originally, Hindi states were supposed to teach Tamil, Telugu, or other regional languages. Instead, they introduced Sanskrit as the third language.

3. This shortcut allowed them to avoid learning another language, making TLF an unfair deal for non-Hindi states.

#### **What Can Be Done to Solve the Issue?**

1. The central government should not use funds to pressure states. Instead, it should hold a meeting with chief ministers to create a fair language policy, as was done in 1968.

2. Hindi-speaking states should not use Sanskrit as a substitute for learning other Indian languages. This approach can help shift the debate from political conflict to the importance of multilingual education.

#### **Why is the English Language a Bigger Issue?**

1. **Dominance of English:** India is gradually adopting an "English-only" education system, sidelining Indian languages.

2. **Ignoring Expert Advice:** Experts like D.P. Pattanayak support multilingual education, which improves cognitive skills and social tolerance.

3. **Education Policy Shift:** While the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 promotes Indian languages, English still dominates schools and higher education.

4. **Political Focus Elsewhere:** The debate over Hindi and regional languages diverts attention from English's growing influence.

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

Discuss the challenges and controversies surrounding the implementation of the Three-Language Formula (TLF) in India.

### **Western Contradictions in Security, Democracy, and Migration**

**Source:** The post Western Contradictions in Security, Democracy, and Migration has been created, based on the article "**The right's rise, Europe's state of denial**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 26th February 2025

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

**Context:** The article discusses the contradictions and challenges within U.S. and European policies, their disagreements on managing far-right movements and migration, and the impacts on their democratic values

and trans-Atlantic relations. It highlights the irony in their actions versus their stated ideals, especially regarding the Ukraine war and broader international relations.

### **Why was the Munich Security Conference ironic?**

1. The U.S. and Russia discussed Ukraine without involving Ukraine and Europe.
2. Previously, Europe and the U.S. held a peace summit excluding Russia.
3. The U.S. accused Europe of suppressing right-wing politics while having interfered in democratic processes before.

### **What are the U.S. and Europe's contradictions on security?**

1. **U.S. Criticism of European Efforts in Ukraine:** The U.S. has criticized Europe for not doing enough to resolve the Ukraine conflict, despite the U.S. itself having contributed over \$110 billion, including \$65 billion for ammunition.
2. **Push for European Defense Independence:** The U.S. urges Europe to take more responsibility for its security but has historically resisted European efforts to organize their own defense, complicating the relationship.
3. **Nord Stream Pipeline Sabotage:** The sabotage of the Nord Stream pipelines by Germany's allies, purportedly under U.S. influence, forced Germany into a dependent position on U.S. energy supplies, showing a strategic manipulation of European energy security.

### **Why is migration a critical issue in Europe?**

1. Europe's liberal policies enabled radical groups like Al Qaeda's Hamburg Cell and LTTE terrorists to exploit open societies.
2. Right-wing parties are gaining popularity as a reaction to migration and cultural shifts.
3. U.S. criticism of European migration policies contradicts its previous stance on extremism.

### **How is Western interventionism affecting global stability?**

1. **Regime Changes Supported by the West:** Western interventionism, such as support for regime changes in Afghanistan and Syria, undercuts the Western narrative of promoting democracy.
2. **Criticism from India:** India's External Affairs Minister, S. Jaishankar, has called out the West for claiming to support democracy while backing non-democratic forces, particularly in the Global South.
3. **Division in UN Over Ukraine:** The division between the U.S. and Europe in the UN General Assembly vote on Ukraine illustrates deep fractures in their alliance, highlighting the inconsistencies in their foreign policies.

### **Is the U.S.-Europe partnership over?**

1. Despite tensions, the trans-Atlantic alliance remains crucial, especially against the Russia-China partnership.
2. The U.S. might be using pressure tactics for better negotiations rather than permanently withdrawing.
3. Europe needs to rethink its policies on security, migration, and foreign relations.

**Question for practice:**

**Examine the contradictions in U.S. and European policies regarding democracy, security, and migration, and their impact on global stability.**

**India faces a serious human smuggling crisis**

**Source:** The post India faces a serious human smuggling crisis has been created, based on the article "**Human smuggling must engage Parliament's attention**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 26th February 2025

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper3- Security-Security challenges and their management in border areas – linkages of organized crime with terrorism.

**Context:** The article discusses the severe problem of human smuggling in India. It highlights how illegal immigration involves young Indians being misled by criminals into dangerous situations for profit. It calls for strong national legislation to tackle this issue, as current laws are insufficient.

For detailed information on **Illegal Migration from India** read this article [here](#)

**What is the issue of illegal immigration in India?**

1. **Widespread Problem:** Many young Indians attempt illegal immigration or "irregular migration" every year.
2. **Key States Involved:** Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Kerala, and Gujarat are major hubs.
3. **Role of Smugglers:** Human smuggling, known as *kabootarbazi*, is a high-profit illegal trade.
4. **Severe Exploitation:** Victims suffer inhumane conditions, including suffocation, starvation, and forced labor.
5. **Deadly Outcomes:** Many die in deserts, drown at sea, or are trapped in slave labor camps.
6. **Legal Gaps:** The **Emigration Act, 1983**, does not define human smuggling.

**How Does Human Smuggling Affect Individuals?**

1. **Inhumane Treatment:** Victims are often shackled, handcuffed, and humiliated during deportation. They return home heartbroken and in shame.
2. **Extreme Suffering:** Survivors report being forced to sit in human waste, deprived of food and water, and watching others die, with bodies dumped at sea or roadsides.
3. **High Risk of Death:** Many migrants suffocate in containers, drown at sea, or die in deserts. Some are forced to work in ammunition dumps or fields in Iraq under dangerous conditions.

**What Are the Legal Measures in Place?**

1. **Emigration Act, 1983:** Regulates the emigration of Indian citizens but does not define or address human smuggling. This creates a legal gap in tackling organized smuggling networks.
2. **Punjab Travel Professionals Regulation Act, 2012:** Regulates travel agents to prevent human smuggling. It mandates licensing for travel agents and includes penalties for illegal activities. However, implementation remains weak.

3. **Emigration (Overseas Mobility Facilitation and Welfare) Bill:** This bill has been discussed but not implemented. Its fate remains uncertain, leaving a crucial legal gap.

4. **Lack of a Central Law:** No national law directly targets human smuggling. A stronger legal framework is needed to combat organized crime and protect victims.

### Conclusion

The government must act urgently. Parliament should create a strict law against human smuggling. This law should regulate migration, punish traffickers, and protect Indian citizens from exploitation. Effective enforcement is essential to stop this growing crisis.

### Question for practice:

Examine the issue of human smuggling in India and the legal gaps that make it difficult to combat this crime.

### Political consultancy firms changed Indian elections

**Source:** The post political consultancy firms changed Indian elections has been created, based on the article “How political consultancies are rewriting Indian elections” published in “The Hindu” on 26th February 2025

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper2- Polity- Election

**Context:** The article discusses how political consultancy firms influence Indian elections. These firms shape campaign strategies using technology and data. This weakens party cadres and promotes personality-driven politics. Their growing role raises concerns about accountability and the decline of internal party democracy.

### How Have Political Consultancy Firms Changed Indian Elections?

Political consultancy firms have become key players in Indian elections. They help political parties with campaign strategies, voter outreach, and digital engagement. Their work has made elections more professional but has also changed traditional party structures.

### When Did Political Consultancy Begin in India?

1. India's first major political consultancy firm, **Viplav Communications (2003)**, helped MPs with campaigns.
2. It became famous for working with the **Biju Janata Dal (BJD) in 2009**, introducing innovations like the **SuperCaller** (pre-recorded voter messages).
3. Other firms like **Populus Empowerment Network (PEN)**, **Showtime Consulting**, and **JPAC Personafollowed**.
4. The **Indian Political Action Committee (I-PAC)** worked with **AAP in New Delhi elections**.

### What is 'Americanisation' of Indian Elections?

1. Political consultancy firms use **data analytics, social media, and digital campaigns** like in U.S. elections.
2. **Election focus has shifted from party ideology to individual leaders**. Example: BJP's **Narendra Modi**, Congress's **Rahul Gandhi**.
3. **Continuous campaigning** happens through **television, rallies, and social media** between elections.



4. Campaign strategies are tech-driven, reducing ground-level mobilisation.
5. IIT, IIM, and NLU professionals work in war room-style settings for election strategies.
6. Political ads, cinematic-style videos, and aggressive PR are now common.

#### How Are Party Cadres Losing Importance?

1. **Political Consultants Replace Cadres** – Consultants now handle voter surveys, campaign framing, and feedback collection, which party workers previously did.
2. **Direct Access to Leadership** – Consultants work directly with top leaders, sidelining grassroots workers. Example: I-PAC in TMC – Influenced ticket distribution and campaign issues in West Bengal elections.
3. **Regional Party Control** – TMC, NCP, and SP are family-controlled, reducing cadre influence.
4. **Party Ideology Weakens** – Elections become professional campaigns, not grassroots movements.
5. **Worker Frustration** – Party workers feel consultants undermine their role.
6. **Weakens internal democracy** – Consultants, not grassroots workers, shape political decisions.

#### What Should Political Parties Do?

Political parties should **strengthen their internal democracy**. They must **listen to their workers, reconnect with voters, and revisit their founding principles**. Instead of relying only on consultants, they should **build strong, independent political structures** for long-term success.

#### Question for practice:

Examine how political consultancy firms have impacted internal party democracy and the role of party cadres in Indian elections.

### Madras HC Ruling on Night Arrests of Women

**Source:** The post Madras HC Ruling on Night Arrests of Women has been created, based on the article “**What did the HC rule about arresting women at night?**” published in “**The Hindu**” on 26th February 2025

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

**Context:** The article discusses the Madras High Court’s ruling on night arrests of women. It ruled that Section 46(4) of CrPC/Section 43(5) of BNSS is a guideline, not a strict rule. It also explains legal safeguards, past recommendations, and Supreme Court observations.

#### What are the safeguards under BNSS 2023 and CrPC?

1. Two key safeguards exist for arresting women:

- No arrest of a woman after sunset and before sunrise, unless in exceptional cases.
- Even in exceptional cases, prior permission of a magistrate must be obtained through a written report by a woman police officer.

- Additionally, police officers should not touch a woman during arrest unless necessary or if the arresting officer is female.

2. However, the law does not define "exceptional situations," leading to different interpretations.

#### **What did the Madras High Court rule?**

1. The High Court ruled that Section 46(4) of the CrPC is **directory, not mandatory**.
2. The absence of penalties for violating this rule indicates that it is not an absolute restriction.
3. The court noted practical concerns, such as the risk of a woman escaping if a magistrate is unavailable at night.
4. It emphasized that police must not misuse this provision, and guidelines should be issued on what qualifies as an "exceptional circumstance."

#### **What is the history behind Section 46(4) of CrPC?**

1. The **135th Law Commission Report (1989)** first suggested restrictions on night arrests, requiring approval from senior officers.
2. The **154th Law Commission Report (1996)** reinforced this recommendation.
3. In **2005**, Section 46(4) was added to the CrPC, including a magistrate's permission for night arrests.

#### **What has the Supreme Court said on this issue?**

1. In an earlier case, the **Nagpur Bench of the Bombay High Court** ruled that no woman should be detained after sunset without a female constable.
2. However, the **Supreme Court observed** that strict adherence could create practical difficulties.

#### **Does this ruling weaken legal protections for women?**

1. The High Court clarified that the provision is still important and must not be ignored by the police.
2. While failure to follow the rule may not make an arrest illegal, the police officer must justify their actions.
3. The court directed authorities to create clear guidelines defining exceptional circumstances for night arrests.

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

**Discuss the legal provisions regarding the arrest of women in India and evaluate the impact of the Madras High Court's ruling on Section 46(4) of the CrPC.**

### **Government fails to provide adequate maternity benefits**

**Source:** The post Government fails to provide adequate maternity benefits has been created, based on the article "**A leap backward for maternity entitlements**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 27th February 2025

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

**Context:** The article discusses how the central government is failing to provide maternity benefits under the National Food Security Act. The Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana offers reduced benefits with poor implementation. States like Tamil Nadu and Odisha have better schemes with higher coverage.

### What is the legal entitlement for Pregnant Women in India?

1. **Under the NFSA 2013**, all pregnant women (except those in the formal sector) should receive **₹6,000 per child** as maternity benefits.
2. **Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY)** restricts benefits to **₹5,000 for the first child** and recently extended to the second child if it is a girl.

For detailed information on **Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana** [read this article here](#)

### What are the issues with legal entitlement for Pregnant Women in India?

1. **Non-implementation of NFSA Maternity Benefits:** The **National Food Security Act (NFSA) 2013** entitles pregnant women (except in the formal sector) to **₹6,000 per child**, but this has not been fully implemented.
2. **Flaws in PMMVY:** The **Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY)** provides only **₹5,000** for the first child and recently extended benefits to a second child only if it is a girl, violating the NFSA.
3. **Low Coverage:** PMMVY coverage peaked at **36% in 2019-20**, dropped to **9% in 2023-24**, while Tamil Nadu and Odisha had **84% and 64% coverage**, respectively.
4. **Budget Cuts:** Central government spending on PMMVY fell from **₹2,700 crore in 2018-19** to **₹870 crore in 2023-24**.
5. **Implementation Issues:** Problems include **Aadhaar-based payment failures, software glitches**, and complex procedures, leading to delays and exclusions.

### How Are Tamil Nadu and Odisha Doing Better?

1. **Higher Maternity Benefits:** Tamil Nadu provides **₹18,000 per child**, while Odisha offers **₹10,000** (doubled before the **2024 elections**). PMMVY gives only **₹5,000** for the first child.
2. **Better Coverage:** Tamil Nadu's coverage was **84% in 2023-24**, and Odisha's was **64% in 2021-22**. PMMVY's national coverage was **below 10%** in 2023-24.
3. **Simpler Implementation:** Both states have **efficient systems** with fewer complications. PMMVY has **Aadhaar-linked hurdles and software failures**.
4. **Consistent Policy Commitment:** Tamil Nadu has run maternity schemes since **1987**, and Odisha since **2009**.

### What Is the Difference Between Formal and Informal Sector Benefits?

1. Women in the formal sector get **26 weeks of paid maternity leave**, much more than the World Health Organization's **14-week standard**. In contrast, informal sector women get only **₹5,000** under PMMVY, with many struggling to access it.
2. **Unequal Treatment:** Formal workers receive continuous support, while informal workers face **funding cuts and bureaucratic hurdles**.

### What Needs to Change?

PMMVY should be reformed to comply with **NFSA norms**. Benefits must be **raised, indexed to inflation**, and made universal. A simpler, **transparent system** is needed to ensure pregnant women receive support without unnecessary hurdles.

### Question for practice:

Evaluate the effectiveness of maternity benefit schemes in India, with a focus on the Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana, its implementation challenges, and comparisons with successful state models like Tamil Nadu and Odisha.

## Critical minerals shape global power and conflicts

**Source:** The post Critical minerals shape global power and conflicts has been created, based on the article “**The strategic race India can’t lose**” published in “**Indian Express**” on 27th February 2025

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

**Context:** The article discusses how critical minerals like lithium and rare earths are now as important as oil for global power. The U.S. wants to secure these minerals, especially from Ukraine. India must reduce its import dependence by boosting domestic exploration and production.

For detailed information on **Critical Minerals** [read this article here](#)

### How Do Critical Minerals Shape Global Conflicts?

1. **New Geopolitical Power:** Critical minerals like lithium, cobalt, and rare earths are as influential as oil in global politics. They are essential for electric vehicles, renewable energy, and semiconductors.
2. **U.S. Oil Strategy vs. Mineral Dependency:** The U.S. once depended on oil imports but became self-sufficient. Today, it faces a bigger challenge—import dependence on critical minerals, with China controlling 75% of rare earth reserves.
3. **Russia’s War Power:** Russia sustains prolonged wars due to its self-sufficiency in oil and gas. Europe’s dependence on Russian energy limits its response to the Ukraine war.
4. **U.S. and Ukraine’s Resources:** Ukraine holds one-third of Europe’s lithium reserves and top-five global graphite reserves. The U.S. sees Ukraine as a key resource partner to reduce reliance on China.
5. **India’s Vulnerability:** India imports more critical minerals than oil. It must boost domestic exploration to avoid strategic dependence.

### How is the U.S. Securing Critical Minerals?

1. The U.S. is securing mineral sources to reduce dependence on China.
2. **Ukraine has one-third of Europe’s lithium reserves** and is rich in **graphite and rare earths**. The war increases U.S. leverage over Ukraine’s resources.
3. **Donald Trump** showed interest in **Greenland and Canada** due to their mineral wealth.
4. The U.S. fears losing its edge in **electric vehicles, AI, and military technology** without secure mineral access.

5. It aims for **zero dependence on unfriendly nations** for critical minerals.

#### What Should India Do to Reduce Its Dependence?

1. **Increase Domestic Exploration:** India has a rich geology with significant potential for critical minerals. Liberalizing exploration policies will encourage discoveries and monetization.
2. **Develop Manufacturing:** Transition from importing components to manufacturing them domestically, especially for batteries and renewable energy infrastructure.
3. **Secure Overseas Assets:** Actively pursue and sign supply agreements with countries that are friendly to India, to ensure a steady supply of critical minerals.
4. **Utilize Existing Resources:** India should tap into its large reserves of lithium and rare earths, as demonstrated by Ukraine's strategy to leverage its mineral wealth.

#### Question for practice:

Examine how critical minerals are shaping global power dynamics and influencing the geopolitical strategies of major nations.

### India's Path to 100 GWe Nuclear Capacity

**Source:** The post India's Path to 100 GWe Nuclear Capacity has been created, based on the article “**On nuclear energy, it can't be business-as-usual**” published in “**Indian Express**” on 27th February 2025

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper3- Infrastructure-Energy

**Context:** The article discusses India's goal of 100 GWe nuclear capacity by 2047. It highlights uranium supply challenges and suggests recycling uranium and thorium. It emphasizes fast breeder reactors, HALEU-thorium fuel, small reactors, and domestic technological development for nuclear energy expansion.

For detailed information on **India's Nuclear Energy Program** [read this article here](#)

#### Why does India need 100 GWe nuclear capacity by 2047?

1. **Energy Demand:** As India progresses towards achieving *Viksit Bharat*, its energy demand is expected to surge. Nuclear power offers a reliable and substantial source to meet this growing need.
2. **Sustainable Development:** Nuclear energy provides a cleaner alternative to fossil fuels, aiding in reducing carbon emissions and promoting environmental sustainability.
3. **Fuel Security:** The current uranium requirement for nuclear power is significant, almost one-third of global production. Increasing nuclear capacity reduces reliance on imported fossil fuels and enhances energy security.
4. **Technological Advancement:** Developing nuclear capacity involves advanced technologies, promoting domestic innovation and high-tech industries, crucial for long-term economic growth.

#### What are the challenges in achieving this target?

1. **Uranium Supply Constraints:** Running *100 GWe* nuclear power would require *18,000 tons* of mined uranium annually, nearly *one-third* of the world's uranium production today.



**2. Fuel Dependency:** India's nuclear capacity expansion needs a *tenfold* increase, but uranium availability is limited. By 25 GWe, uranium demand will reach 8-10% of global production, making access difficult.

**3. Slow Fast Breeder Reactor Progress:** India has *closed the nuclear fuel cycle* and developed *MoX fuel*, but large-scale deployment of *Fast Breeder Reactors (FBRs)* is still lagging.

**4. Need for Thorium Utilization:** HALEU-thorium fuel must be used in *PHWRs* to reduce uranium dependency and improve safety.

**5. Technology and Policy Gaps:** India's *AHWR-300-LEU* reactor, designed for thorium use, has not been pursued despite its potential advantages.

**6. Private Sector Role:** Laboratories like *BARC* and *IGCAR* must lead research, while the private sector should focus on scaling up, not leading the programme.

For detailed information on **India's nuclear power challenges and proposed reforms** [read this article here](#)

### How can fuel recycling and thorium help?

**1. Reduces Uranium Demand:** Recycling uranium and thorium can cut the need for newly mined uranium by *one or two orders of magnitude*.

**2. Supports Fast Breeder Reactors (FBRs):** India has *closed the nuclear fuel cycle* and developed *MoX fuel* for the *500 MWe Prototype Fast Breeder Reactor*.

**3. Thorium in PHWRs:** HALEU-thorium fuel in *Pressurised Heavy Water Reactors (PHWRs)* can ensure stable fuel supply.

**4. Improves Safety and Efficiency:** Thorium fuel enhances *reactor safety* and reduces fuel bundle requirements.

**5. Future Growth:** Molten Salt Reactors (MSRs) using recycled fuel are essential for India's long-term nuclear energy strategy.

### What technological and policy steps should India take?

1. India has *closed the nuclear fuel cycle* and developed *MoX fuel*.

2. The *Prototype Fast Breeder Reactor (500 MWe)* is a key project.

3. *Bharat Small Reactors (BSRs)* can help increase nuclear power with private partnerships.

4. *Small Modular Reactors (SMRs)* should be safe and fully manufactured in India.

5. India's *AHWR-300-LEU* reactor design, which uses thorium, needs to be revived.

### What role should government and industry play?

1. *Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC)* and *IGCAR* must lead R&D.

2. The private sector should focus on scaling up, not leading research.

3. International uranium markets should be leveraged but not over-relied upon.

4. A long-term nuclear strategy should integrate *Molten Salt Reactors (MSRs)* using thorium.

**Question for practice:**

Examine the challenges and potential solutions for achieving India's goal of 100 GWe nuclear capacity by 2047.

**U.S. Peace Talks with Russia and Their Global Impact**

**Source:** The post U.S. Peace Talks with Russia and Their Global Impact has been created, based on the article "Will the U.S.'s changed Ukraine policy end the Russia-Ukraine war?" published in "The Hindu" on 28th February 2025

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

**Context:** The article discusses U.S. President Donald Trump's shift in Ukraine policy by engaging in peace talks with Russia. It explores the geopolitical implications, the impact on Ukraine, NATO, and Europe, and whether Trump's strategy can end the Russia-Ukraine war.

For detailed information on **Impact of recent shift in US-Russia relations** read [Article1](#), [Article2](#)

**Why has the U.S. reversed its policy on peace talks with Russia?**

1. The Biden administration avoided direct peace talks with Russia since the war began in 2022. Trump has now changed this policy, engaging with Russia to find a peaceful resolution. His campaign promised to "end the war," which has led to talks in Riyadh.
2. His administration believes that NATO expansion caused the war and that the U.S. has spent too much on Ukraine (**\$350 billion**)

**What is Trump's stance on Ukraine and its leadership?**

1. Trump has criticized Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, calling him a "dictator" and questioning his legitimacy. He insists Ukraine must hold elections.
2. Trump also links peace to U.S. economic interests, proposing that Ukraine grant the U.S. mineral rights in exchange for aid.
3. His policy has weakened Zelenskyy's standing, with European allies worried about U.S. withdrawal.

**Can a peace deal be successful, and what are the challenges?**

1. **Zelenskyy's Resistance:** Ukraine's President opposes territorial concessions. His chief adviser, Andriy Yermak, also resists negotiations. European leaders support him.
2. **U.S. Leverage:** Trump controls Ukraine's military aid. Without U.S. support, Ukraine's war efforts may collapse, forcing Zelenskyy to negotiate.
3. **Russia's Military Gains:** Russia controls Donbas, where Ukraine's key mineral wealth lies. Russia sees this as an existential conflict and will not withdraw easily.
4. **European Concerns:** Europe fears U.S. withdrawal would weaken NATO. Some leaders want Ukraine to keep fighting.

5. **Humanitarian Cost:** One million people have died. Ukraine faces a manpower crisis, as noted by Marco Rubio.

6. **Previous Failed Talks:** Turkey mediated a deal in 2022, but the U.S. and U.K. opposed it. Riyadh now hosts peace talks.

#### **Why is the war still ongoing despite humanitarian concerns?**

1. **Heavy Casualties:** Ukraine has lost many soldiers, and its military lacks manpower. Russia has around 200,000 casualties but continues its offensive.

2. **Ukraine Under Martial Law:** Citizens cannot freely express opinions on ending the war.

3. **Western Support:** NATO sees this as a proxy war against Russia, sustaining Ukraine with funds and weapons.

4. **Nationalist Resistance:** Neo-Nazi and ultra-nationalist groups in Ukraine oppose peace.

5. **Russia's Commitment:** Moscow considers this an existential conflict and refuses to withdraw.

#### **Why are peace talks happening in Riyadh instead of India?**

1. **Traditional Locations Shifted:** Peace talks were previously held in **Helsinki, Brussels, and Geneva**. Now, Riyadh is the chosen venue, surprising **the European Union and the global community**.

2. **Saudi-Russian Relations:** **Putin visited Saudi Arabia earlier**, and he enjoys **good relations with Saudi Arabia**, making Riyadh a favorable location for Russia.

3. **U.S. Strategy:** The U.S. sees Riyadh as a **strategic alternative** to traditional Western venues, aligning with Trump's diplomacy shift.

4. **India's Role:** India **maintained neutrality**, criticized sanctions, and remained a **strong Russian ally** throughout the war.

5. **Outcome for India:** India benefits from a **U.S.-Russia reset**, while **Europe emerges as the biggest loser** in this geopolitical shift.

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

Discuss the impact of the U.S.'s shift in Ukraine policy on the Russia-Ukraine war, European security, and global diplomacy.

### **U.S. SEC's Legal Action Against Adanis and India's Response**

**Source:** The post U.S. SEC's Legal Action Against Adanis and India's Response has been created, based on the article "**The SEC and Hague Service Convention**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 28th February 2025

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

**Context:** The article discusses the U.S. SEC's efforts to serve legal summons on Gautam Adani and his nephew, Sagar Adani, in a securities fraud case. It explains the Hague Service Convention's role, India's service process, and possible legal consequences if summons service fails.

### What is the Hague Service Convention?

1. The Hague Service Convention was adopted in **1965** to ensure proper legal notification of defendants in foreign jurisdictions.
2. It has **84 member countries**, including **India and the U.S.**
3. The Convention facilitates judicial and extrajudicial document service between signatory states.
4. The primary method of service is through **designated central authorities** in each country.

### How is the U.S. SEC trying to serve summons on the Adanis?

1. The **U.S. SEC invoked Article 5(a) of the Hague Service Convention** to request **India's Ministry of Law and Justice** to serve legal summons on **Gautam Adani and Sagar Adani** in a **securities and wire fraud case**.
2. The SEC is also **exploring alternative service methods** under **Rule 4(f) of the U.S. Federal Rules of Civil Procedure**, which governs legal proceedings in U.S. federal courts.
3. **India acceded to the Hague Convention in 2006**, but it **rejects all alternative service methods** under **Article 10** and allows service **only through its central authority—the Ministry of Law and Justice**.
4. All service requests **must be in English or translated into English**, and India **can refuse service** if it believes it would **compromise sovereignty or security (Article 13)**.
5. The **process usually takes six to eight months**, making it **time-consuming and difficult** for foreign agencies like the SEC.
6. If **India does not cooperate**, a **U.S. court can issue a default judgment** under **Article 15** after **six months**, provided all required conditions are met.
7. Example: In **Duong v. DDG BIM Services LLC (2023)**, U.S. plaintiffs **requested email service** due to difficulties in **effectuating service through India's central authority**. Judge Mizelle noted that **Article 15 allows default judgments** if service efforts fail.

### How does the Trump administration's order affect the case?

1. On **February 10**, the **Trump administration** paused the enforcement of the **Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (FCPA)** for **180 days**.
2. The **FCPA prohibits U.S. entities and individuals** from bribing foreign governments, officials, or political parties to secure business.
3. The executive order directs the **Attorney General** to review **all existing FCPA investigations or enforcement actions** and take steps **to restore proper bounds on FCPA enforcement**.
4. However, the **SEC's latest court filing** indicates that the order **does not apply retroactively**.
5. As a result, the **SEC's investigation against the Adanis is likely to continue** unless the **FCPA is amended**.

### Question for practice:

Examine the role of the Hague Service Convention in cross-border legal proceedings and how India's reservations under the treaty impact the service of judicial documents in foreign cases.

## Tamil Nadu fears losing seats after delimitation

**Source:** The post Tamil Nadu fears losing seats after delimitation has been created, based on the article "Counting matters: Delimitation must remain true to both representation and federalism" published in "The Hindu" on 28th February 2025

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper2- Polity- issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure

**Context:** The article discusses Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin's call for a national debate on delimitation. It explains how seat allocation in Parliament has been frozen since 1971. Tamil Nadu fears losing representation if seats are reallocated based on population growth. The article urges the government to conduct the delayed Census to address concerns.

For detailed information on **Challenges of delimitation in India** [read this article here](#)

### Why is Tamil Nadu Concerned About Delimitation?

- 1. Risk of Losing Parliamentary Representation:** Tamil Nadu fears that the delimitation process may reduce its Lok Sabha seats if they are allocated based on population.
- 2. Population Growth Comparison:** Tamil Nadu's electorate grew by **171%** since 1971, while Bihar's (including Jharkhand) grew by **233%**.
- 3. Impact on Southern States:** If seats are reallocated only based on population, States with lower fertility rates, like Tamil Nadu and other southern states like Kerala and Karnataka may lose seats.
- 4. Delayed Census Concerns:** The **2021 Census** has not been conducted, raising fears that early delimitation may favor northern states, increasing their parliamentary seats at the expense of southern states.

### Why Was Delimitation Frozen Since 1971?

The government froze the number of seats in **1973** to ensure fairness. States with better health and population control were not "punished" by losing seats to those with higher birth rates. The **84th Constitutional Amendment** allowed delimitation only after the first Census following **2026**.

### What Has the Union Government Said?

Home Minister **Amit Shah** has assured that southern states will not lose seats on a **pro-rata basis** and will get their **rightful share**. However, there is no clear explanation of how this will be done.

### What Should Be Done?

The government should conduct the Census soon to remove doubts. India, as a growing global power, cannot afford to delay such a basic national process. The balance of power between states should also be maintained for federal stability.

### Question for practice:

Examine why Tamil Nadu is concerned about the impact of delimitation on its parliamentary representation.



## Panel Recommendations for Strengthening Women's Leadership in Panchayati Raj Governance

**Source:** The post Panel Recommendations for Strengthening Women's Leadership in Panchayati Raj Governance has been created, based on the article "**GENDER JUST THIRD-TIER: Addressing problem of male proxies for women panchayat heads requires persuasion, not exemplary punishment**" published in "**Indian Express**" on 28th February 2025

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper2- Polity- devolution of powers and finances up to local levels and challenges therein.

**Context:** The article discusses the issue of male relatives controlling decision-making in panchayati raj institutions despite women's reservations. It highlights a panel's recommendations to empower women leaders, emphasizing awareness and training over punitive actions. It stresses the need for systemic change rather than symbolic representation.

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

### Why was the panel formed by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj?

1. The Ministry of Panchayati Raj constituted the panel to investigate cases where male relatives of women panchayat pradhans (heads) were making decisions on their behalf.
2. This issue undermines women's reservation in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs).
3. In 2023, the Supreme Court, while hearing a petition on the misuse of women's reservation in panchayats, declined judicial intervention and left the matter to the ministry.
4. In response, the advisory committee was formed.

### What are the key findings of the panel?

1. The panel found that despite **46.6% women's representation in PRIs**, male relatives often play a dominant role in decision-making.
2. This contradicts the **spirit of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act**, which mandates women's participation in governance.
3. The **Kudumbashree study (2024)** was conducted by the **Kerala government** and the **National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj**. It revealed that the **lack of training** prevents **elected women representatives (EWRs)** from effectively participating in **decision-making**.

### What solutions has the panel suggested?

The panel recommended **persuasion over punishment** to strengthen women's leadership. Key suggestions include:

- **Gender-exclusive quotas** in panchayat and ward committees
- **Public swearing-in** of women pradhans in gram sabhas
- **Rewarding "anti-pradhan pati champions"** to encourage independent leadership
- **Appointing women ombudsmen** for grievance redressal

- **Creating a federation of women panchayat leaders** for collective empowerment
- **Establishing leadership hubs and support networks** to train and mentor women representatives

**Why is "exemplary punishment" controversial?**

The panel opposed the idea of **exemplary punishment** for male proxies, arguing that punitive measures could push the practice underground instead of eliminating it. Instead, it emphasized **awareness, training, and systemic change** through a **bottom-up approach** rather than harsh retributive action.

**How does this issue relate to broader women's representation?**

**1. Legal Framework:** The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act ensured **one-third** reservation for women in **Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs)**.

**2. Increased Reservation:** By 2024, 21 states and 2 Union Territories increased **women's reservation to 50%** in PRIs.

**3. Needed Change:** Like **women's reservation in Parliament**, real empowerment requires **training, leadership networks, and systemic change** beyond **symbolic representation**.

**Question for practice:**

Examine the effectiveness of women's reservation in Panchayati Raj Institutions and discuss how the panel's recommendations address the challenges of male dominance in decision-making