

9 PM Current Affairs Weekly 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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India recalibrates Bay of Bengal trade with caution

Source: The post India recalibrates Bay of Bengal trade with caution has been created, based on the article “**India’s uneasy balancing act in the Bay of Bengal**” published in “**The Hindu**” on 17th June 2025

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

Context: India's economic involvement in the Bay of Bengal has entered a new phase, marked by increased cargo movement through eastern ports and a recent BIMSTEC agreement promoting trade. However, India's sudden withdrawal of Bangladesh's transshipment privileges has created tensions, raising concerns about regional economic integration.

For detailed information on **Trade diplomacy: on India-Bangladesh trade-related tensions** [read this article here](#)

India's Growing Maritime Engagements

- 1. Port Infrastructure Enhancement:** Cargo throughput at major eastern ports—Visakhapatnam, Paradip, and Haldia—has grown significantly. Under the Sagarmala programme, India invested heavily to boost coastal logistics and connectivity, resulting in cargo movement on the east coast doubling in the past decade.
- 2. Policy-Driven Expansion:** Government incentives, including GST reductions on bunker fuel and coastal shipping encouragement, underpin India's maritime trade expansion, reflecting its strategic focus on enhancing logistical efficiency along its eastern coast.
- 3. BIMSTEC's Role in Regional Integration:** The recently signed BIMSTEC Maritime Transport Cooperation Agreement aims to streamline customs procedures and foster multimodal connectivity. This initiative seeks to reduce trade costs and facilitate smoother regional commerce, benefiting smaller economies like Bhutan, Myanmar, and Nepal.

Recent India-Bangladesh Tensions

- 1. Withdrawal of Transshipment Facility:** India unexpectedly revoked the facility allowing Bangladesh to route exports through Indian ports, citing logistical congestion. Bangladesh interpreted this as a political reaction to its closer diplomatic engagement with China and controversial remarks describing India's northeastern states as "landlocked."
- 2. Immediate Economic Impact:** Bangladesh's exporters, particularly the ready-made garment sector (over 85% of export earnings), now face increased logistical costs. Alternative trade routes through Sri Lanka or Southeast Asia are more expensive and slower, adding uncertainty amid already weak global demand.
- 3. Escalating Trade Restrictions:** In May, India restricted seven categories of Bangladeshi goods—garments, plastics, processed foods—forcing their entry only through specific seaports. This move, officially a response to Bangladesh's own import restrictions, was perceived as disproportionate and retaliatory by Dhaka.

Strategic Implications and Risks

- 1. Political Signaling:** India's recent decisions could signal political displeasure towards Bangladesh's diplomatic overtures with China and Pakistan. This use of trade as geopolitical leverage undermines India's portrayal of maritime infrastructure as neutral and cooperative.
- 2. Impact on Regional Perception:** Other regional countries—Myanmar, Thailand, and Sri Lanka—are closely observing India's actions. Using trade facilitation as political leverage risks damaging India's credibility as a stable economic integrator, prompting neighbors to hedge against future uncertainties.

Credibility and Future Prospects

- 1. Infrastructure Versus Trust:** Despite India's superior infrastructure and logistical advantages, regional leadership requires credibility and trust. India's decisions must avoid politicizing economic cooperation to maintain confidence among its neighbors.

2. Opportunity Amid Challenges: The Bay of Bengal region stands at a critical juncture, presenting opportunities for robust trade integration through proposed BIMSTEC free trade agreements. However, geopolitical anxieties could stall progress if trade facilitation remains susceptible to political fluctuations.

Way Forward

India should clearly define conditions for reinstating Bangladesh's transshipment arrangement or adopt a stable, rules-based mechanism insulating trade from political shifts. Establishing clear boundaries between economic policy and geopolitical strategy is essential for lasting regional integration.

Question for practice:

Discuss how India's recent trade decisions have impacted regional trust and economic integration in the Bay of Bengal.

The judiciary must ensure transparency in misconduct cases

Source: The post The judiciary must ensure transparency in misconduct cases has been created, based on the article “**Serving justices, but not justice**” published in “**The Hindu**” on 17th June 2025

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

Context: A fire at Justice Yashwant Varma's residence on March 14 led to the discovery of sacks of cash. This triggered swift judicial action, including his transfer and pending impeachment. The incident revealed deep opacity in the judiciary's internal inquiry system, especially the secretive 'in-house procedure' for misconduct. For detailed information on **Judicial Accountability in India** [read this article here](#)

The Varma Incident and Its Aftermath

- 1. Shocking Discovery During Fire:** Sacks of half-burnt cash were found during firefighting at Justice Varma's official residence. The nature and source of the money remain unexplained.
- 2. Immediate Judicial Action:** Within ten days, Justice Varma was stripped of judicial duties and transferred to Allahabad High Court. A judicial committee was quickly formed to probe the case.
- 3. Selective Disclosure by the Court:** The Supreme Court released a video, some photos, and redacted letters. However, crucial documents—two reports by the Police Commissioner and the final judicial committee report—were withheld.
- 4. Disappearance of Key Evidence:** The sacks of cash reportedly vanished the next morning, allegedly removed by Justice Varma's staff. The police did not secure them, raising serious procedural concerns.

Structural Opacity of Judicial Inquiries

- 1. Secrecy in the 'In-house Procedure':** Only fellow judges investigate misconduct. The existence of complaints, procedures followed, and outcomes are not disclosed publicly.
- 2. Lack of Clear Standards and Outcomes:** The committee decides whether removal is warranted. The criteria applied are unknown. Even confirmed misconduct need not be disclosed.
- 3. Shielding Judges From Public Scrutiny:** The system lacks transparency and external oversight, reducing public accountability for judges of constitutional courts.

Past Cases Reflecting Systemic Gaps

- 1. Justice Ramana Allegations:** In 2020, Andhra Pradesh CM accused Justice Ramana and others of misconduct. The Supreme Court gave a brief dismissal. Justice Maheshwari, also named, was transferred. No inquiry findings were disclosed.

2. CJI Gogoi Sexual Harassment Case: In 2019, a staffer accused CJI Gogoi. A committee exonerated him without legal aid for the complainant or access to the report. Later, she was reinstated with back wages, contradicting earlier actions.

3. Justice Surya Kant Allegations: Justice Surya Kant, CJI-designate for 2025, faced serious charges including bribery and asset misuse. Justice A.K. Goel urged an inquiry. Despite objections, Kant was promoted. There's no record of any investigation.

Citizens 'Right to Know

1. Judicial Endorsement of Transparency: The Supreme Court upholds the right to information as vital for democracy. This must include judicial accountability.

2. Disclosure as a Safeguard: Findings from in-house inquiries are not appealable. Public access would curb arbitrariness and ensure accountability.

3. Trust Through Openness: Transparency builds public confidence. Concealment signals institutional failure.

Reforming the In-House Mechanism

1. Avoiding Future Scandals: Reforms should be proactive. Continued secrecy risks deeper damage.

2. Beyond Symbolic Releases: Partial disclosures are inadequate. Full inquiry reports must be published.

3. Balancing Accountability and Independence: Judicial independence must not shield misconduct. Real integrity needs openness and internal reflection

Question for practice:

Examine how the in-house procedure of the judiciary affects transparency and accountability in cases of judicial misconduct.

India needs phased strategy to promote hydrogen as fuel

Source: The post India needs phased strategy to promote hydrogen as fuel has been created, based on the article "**Hydrogen fuel: Move slowly from grey to green**" published in "**Businessline**" on 17th June 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- Infrastructure-Energy

Context: India's National Green Hydrogen Mission (NGHM) aims to make the country a global hydrogen leader, starting with green hydrogen. However, the high production cost and lack of domestic demand pose serious challenges. A recent study suggests a phased, multi-colour approach to overcome these hurdles, especially in the transport sector.

For detailed information on **India's Path to Overcome Green Hydrogen Challenges** [read this article here](#)

Pricing and Demand Challenges

1. High Cost of Green Hydrogen: Green hydrogen is currently priced at ₹397/kg, as per Indian Oil Corporation's tender, with final costs exceeding ₹450/kg after supply and distribution. This makes it economically unviable compared to conventional fuels.

2. Lack of Domestic Demand: Despite policy mandates, domestic demand for green hydrogen is limited. Most producers are focusing on exports of green derivatives like ammonia and methanol, which face better global offtake prospects.

3. Imbalance Between Supply and Demand: The study highlights a pressing mismatch between supply capabilities and actual consumption within India. Export-led strategies are insufficient to build a self-sustaining hydrogen economy.

Importance of Hydrogen in Mobility

1. Transformational Role in Transport: Hydrogen, especially in Fuel Cell Electric Vehicles (FCEVs), offers high energy output with minimal emissions. Its potential in decarbonizing mobility is significant but underexplored in India.

2. Diverse Production Sources: Hydrogen can be generated from fossil fuels or renewables. Its versatility allows for broader applications across different transport technologies, supporting a shift to cleaner energy.

3. Slow Domestic Progress: India's mobility transition using hydrogen remains slow due to unclear global demand for green derivatives and lack of domestic incentives or infrastructure for hydrogen-powered transport.

Exploring Grey, Blue, and Green Hydrogen

1. Grey Hydrogen as a Starting Point: Grey hydrogen, produced from natural gas via steam reforming, is widely available and cheaper at ₹175–200/kg. It could be sold at ₹250/kg, offering a practical short-term solution.

2. Blue Hydrogen as a Medium-Term Strategy: Blue hydrogen involves carbon capture and storage (CCS) during production. It delivers substantial emission reductions and fits well with existing industrial infrastructure.

3. Green Hydrogen as a Long-Term Goal: Green hydrogen, produced via electrolysis using renewable energy, should be reserved for high-impact use cases such as public transport, export hubs, and urban corridors due to its current high cost.

Proposed Phased Approach for India

1. Multi-Colour Hydrogen Strategy: The study urges India to adopt a step-by-step transition: start with grey for immediate needs, shift to blue for scalable adoption, and ultimately aim for green hydrogen in targeted sectors.

2. Applications in Pilot Projects: Grey hydrogen can be deployed in retrofitted hydrogen ICE trucks and pilot mobility programs to build demand and familiarity.

3. Strategic Use of Green Hydrogen: Green hydrogen should be used selectively while building electrolyzer capacity and increasing renewable integration to reduce its cost over time.

Infrastructure and Policy Roadmap

1. Need for Refuelling Ecosystem: Creating hydrogen refuelling infrastructure is critical for making hydrogen mainstream in daily transport use.

2. Five-Pronged Refuelling Strategy

The study suggests:

- Integrating hydrogen into the Gati Shakti Master Plan
- Offering conditional Viability Gap Funding (VGF)
- Developing hydrogen valleys
- Promoting franchise + anchor ownership models
- Supporting indigenization via strategic licensing

3. Urgency of a Clear Strategy: To position hydrogen as a viable fuel, India must act with urgency and implement a pragmatic, coordinated approach involving technology, finance, and infrastructure development.

Question for practice:

Examine the challenges and strategic approaches involved in promoting hydrogen as a viable fuel source in India.

India needs an inclusive and sustainable pension system now

Source: The post India needs an inclusive and sustainable pension system now has been created, based on the article “**India needs to design an inclusive pension system**” published in “**The Hindu**” on 18th June 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2- Governance- social Security

Context: India's pension system is narrow in scope and fragmented. With rising old-age dependency and a dominant informal sector, the country faces a looming pension crisis. This discussion stems from the Economic Survey 2025–26, which highlights low pension assets and insufficient coverage.

For detailed information on **Indian Pension System- Significance and Challenges** [read this article here](#)

Current Pension Landscape in India

- 1. Low Pension Asset Base:** India's pension assets equal only 17% of GDP, far below the 80% seen in advanced economies. This weak base is insufficient for long-term retirement security.
- 2. Limited Workforce Coverage:** Only about 12% of India's workforce is covered by formal pension schemes, mainly in the public and organised private sectors. Informal workers remain largely outside this net.
- 3. Minimal Reach of Voluntary Schemes:** Schemes like the National Pension System and Atal Pension Yojana are voluntary and cover just 5.3% of the population as of FY24. These offer limited protection to informal workers.

Exclusion of the Informal Sector

- 1. High Contribution, Low Security:** Informal workers, making up 85% of the workforce and over half of GDP, lack pension coverage. Their exclusion threatens social stability as India's old-age dependency ratio is set to reach 30% by 2050.
- 2. Fragmented Schemes and Policy Gaps:** Multiple pension schemes exist, but none provide full coverage to informal or gig workers. Government efforts, such as aggregator-funded social security, address only a small portion.
- 3. Global Examples of Inclusion:** Countries like Japan offer mandatory flat-rate schemes for all adults. New Zealand provides universal pensions for residents over 65. These models support inclusive retirement systems.

Challenges of Sensitisation and Accessibility

- 1. Low Financial Literacy:** Awareness of pensions is poor in India. With most schemes being voluntary, lack of financial knowledge limits their uptake.
- 2. Successful Global Approaches:** Australia teaches superannuation in schools. The UK uses an opt-out enrolment system. Both promote early awareness and broader participation.
- 3. Digital and Transparent Systems:** The Netherlands provides annual pension disclosures. Nigeria has built digital pension systems for wider access. These improve public trust and accessibility.

Ensuring Fund Sustainability and Returns

- 1. Low System Adequacy:** India scores 44% in the Mercer CFA Global Pension Index 2024, with a sharp drop in adequacy. Pension fund liquidity and performance need urgent reform.

2. **Private Fund Support Needed:** China struggles to sustain pensions without private funding. Countries like Denmark and Australia rely on private funds to complement public schemes.

3. **Secure Investment Practices:** The US ensures pension fund returns through targeted debt investments. India must adopt similar models to protect fund stability.

Proposed Three-Tiered Pension Framework

1. **Tiered Pension System Design:** A unified regulatory system should integrate existing fragmented schemes. Tier one would offer a flat-rate mandatory pension for all. Tier two would include employer-linked schemes with auto-enrolment. Tier three would be voluntary, offering tax and return-based incentives.

2. **Supportive Ecosystem Enhancements:** Key reforms include digital enrolment, mandatory benefit disclosures, and targeted awareness drives in schools and colleges. These measures can boost participation and long-term trust.

3. **Safeguarding Retirement Security:** A structured, inclusive pension framework is vital for managing India's demographic transition. A minimum pension guarantee for all, including informal workers, will ensure financial security and dignity in retirement.

Question for practice:

Examine the key challenges and proposed solutions for creating an inclusive and sustainable pension system in India.

Israel Iran conflict may reshape West Asian power balance

Source: The post Israel Iran conflict may reshape West Asian power balance has been created, based on the article "What is Netanyahu's endgame in Iran?" published in "The Hindu" on 18th June 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2-International Relations

Context: Israel launched a large-scale air offensive against Iran on June 13, targeting its nuclear infrastructure and top leadership. This triggered a fierce missile response from Iran, escalating tensions. The core issue now revolves around Israel's endgame and the possible outcomes of this ongoing conflict.

For detailed information on **Israel attacks Iran and escalates regional conflict** [read this article here](#)

Escalation and Immediate Impact

1. **Initial Israeli Strikes and Objectives:** Israel struck Iran's Natanz nuclear site, missile bases, command centres, and key leadership figures, claiming to dismantle Iran's nuclear programme. It also hit civilian targets, including media headquarters.

2. **Iranian Retaliation:** In response, Iran fired about 400 missiles, damaging sites in Israel, such as the Haifa oil refinery and a major research facility near Tel Aviv.

3. **State of Air Superiority and Limitations:** Though Israel has air dominance, it lacks the bunker-busting capabilities required to destroy Iran's deeply buried Fordow facility. Iran continues to retaliate despite the damage to its military leadership.

4. **Effectiveness and Domestic Pressure:** With key nuclear facilities still functional and Iran's missile power undiminished, Israeli citizens face continued attacks. The closure of Ben Gurion Airport and civilian casualties have raised pressure on Netanyahu to resolve the war quickly.

Challenges in Achieving War Goals

1. **Incomplete Destruction of Nuclear Assets:** IAEA reported significant damage at Natanz and Isfahan but minimal impact on Fordow. Israel has not fully crippled Iran's nuclear capacity.

2. **Iran's Continued Resistance:** Despite initial setbacks, Iran is maintaining strong retaliation through drones and missiles, countering Israel's hope of a quick victory.

3. Risk of Prolonged Conflict: With fortified Iranian sites intact and growing international concern, Israel risks being locked in a costly and indecisive conflict.

Strategic Options Before Netanyahu

1. Regime Change via State Collapse: Netanyahu may continue bombing with the aim of regime collapse in Tehran. He even hinted at assassinating Ayatollah Khamenei. However, mass bombings may unite Iranians rather than weaken the regime, as public anger shifts toward Israel.

2. Return to Diplomacy: Iran has reportedly sent signals through Gulf nations indicating willingness to negotiate if bombings cease. Trump also expressed openness to a deal, but Israel's aggression suggests diplomacy was never its true goal.

3. Drawing the U.S. into War: Israel seeks direct U.S. involvement, claiming prior approval for its attacks. Though Trump denies military participation, he warned Iran against targeting U.S. assets. Israeli pressure for American help continues, aiming to shift the war's trajectory.

Regional and Global Implications

1. Shifting Power in West Asia: A weakened Iran would strengthen Israel's position. With Syria's Assad isolated, militant networks damaged, and Gaza devastated, Israel faces little resistance in the region.

2. Impact on Global Powers: Russia's influence may diminish if Iran collapses. China's energy dependency on the Gulf will deepen. Trump, though reluctant now, may be forced into the war if escalation continues.

Conclusion

The conflict has reached a critical juncture with no clear outcome. Whether through continued bombing, diplomatic negotiations, or expanded war, Israel's actions are reshaping the regional order.

Question for practice:

Evaluate the strategic options available to Israel in its ongoing conflict with Iran and their potential consequences.

Unchecked discretion of creditors undermines insolvency code in India

Source: The post Unchecked discretion of creditors undermines insolvency code in India has been created, based on the article "**Holding creditor power in IBC to account**" published in "**Businessline**" on 18th June 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2-Government Policies and Interventions for Development in various sectors and Issues arising out of their Design and Implementation.

Context: The **Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 (IBC)** introduced a creditor-driven and time-bound resolution process for corporate debt. Central to this framework is the **Committee of Creditors (CoC)**. However, concerns are now growing over the CoC's unchecked discretion, lack of transparency, and procedural opacity in key decision-making.

For detailed information on **Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code** [read this article here](#)

Unchecked Discretion of the CoC

1. Commercial Wisdom Beyond Review: The courts have established that they will not interfere with the CoC's commercial decisions. However, this deference assumes that decisions are made through a transparent, informed process. In reality, decisions are often made without explanation, leaving stakeholders uncertain and excluded.

2. Opaque Decision-Making Practices: There is no statutory requirement for the CoC to record its reasoning or deliberations. As a result, important decisions are taken in silence, with resolution plans being rejected or accepted without justification.

3. Erosion of Confidence in the Process: Instances such as *Kalyani Transco v. Bhushan Power & Steel Ltd (2025)* show that courts have recognized CoC misconduct, undermining the principle that their discretion will be fair and informed.

Consequences of Procedural Opacity

- 1. Suboptimal Outcomes and Stakeholder Confusion:** Low recovery rates and high liquidation do not automatically indicate bad faith. But without any disclosed reasoning, it is impossible to assess if these outcomes resulted from valuation issues or poor judgment.
- 2. Loss of Legitimacy and Fairness:** Without minimal disclosure, even well-meaning decisions appear arbitrary. This affects the perceived fairness of the IBC process and weakens institutional trust.
- 3. Accountability Without Diluting Authority:** The issue is not with creditor primacy but with unaccountable use of power. Procedural discipline, not judicial overreach, is the missing safeguard.

Regulatory Loophole and Its Impact

- 1. Removal of Disclosure Mandate:** Until 2020, Regulation 39(3) required the CoC to record deliberations on resolution plans. Its removal through the 2020 amendment left a significant gap in transparency.
- 2. Opacity in Economic Decision-Making:** In a process determining corporate fate, absence of recorded reasoning is indefensible. A simple return to disclosure norms would enhance fairness without reducing CoC's authority.
- 3. Call for a Simple Procedural Reform:** Reinstating the duty to briefly record reasons for key decisions—like liquidation or plan rejection—would restore procedural checks. Even brief notes can show that discretion was not arbitrary.

Learning from Comparative Practices

- 1. UK's Structured Transparency:** In the UK, insolvency processes like CVAs and pre-packs require structured disclosures. SIP 3.2 and SIP 16 mandate that stakeholders be clearly informed about processes and justifications.
- 2. Singapore's Judicial Oversight:** Singapore's IRDA combines creditor control with judicial supervision to ensure procedural fairness. This ensures commercial discretion aligns with legal accountability.
- 3. Administrative Law Expectations:** Globally, decisions affecting rights are expected to be made transparently. This shows that reasoned discretion and commercial autonomy can coexist.

Path Forward for the IBC Framework

- 1. Proposal for Electronic Records:** CoC deliberations should be recorded as digitally signed, time-stamped documents. These need not be disclosed to all but must be available in case of legal scrutiny.
- 2. Ensuring Fair Use of Power:** This reform would not interfere with what the CoC decides, only ensure that its decisions are taken fairly and transparently.
- 3. Protecting the Code's Legitimacy:** The IBC's promise lies in efficiency and fairness. Reintroducing transparency will preserve its credibility and fulfill its foundational purpose.

Conclusion

The IBC has reshaped India's insolvency landscape. But unchecked discretion undermines its legitimacy. To restore faith, the CoC must continue to decide—but also explain. Transparency is essential to institutional credibility and long-term sustainability.

Question for practice:

Discuss how the unchecked discretion of the Committee of Creditors affects the transparency and fairness of the IBC resolution process.

India and the United States must rebuild lost trust

Source: The post India and the United States must rebuild lost trust has been created, based on the article “Resetting the India-U.S. partnership in uncertain times” published in “The Hindu” on 19th June 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2-International Relations

Context: Once seen as a defining 21st-century partnership rooted in democratic values and strategic convergence, India-U.S. ties now face a subtle but serious drift. This shift, triggered by conflicting diplomatic signals and policy incoherence, threatens a rare opportunity for deep, long-term cooperation.

Signs of Strategic Drift

1. **Rhetorical Shifts and Diplomatic Hyphenation:** Recent U.S. statements have revived old habits of equating India with Pakistan. Trump’s comments after Operation Sindoor, his Kashmir mediation offer, and nuclear warnings were seen as regressive. This undermines India’s long-standing efforts to de-hyphenate its rise from the India-Pakistan binary.

2. **Mixed Economic Messaging:** Despite claims of a completed China deal, Trump discouraged Apple’s CEO from expanding in India. He warned that firms investing in India might face U.S. market access issues. This contradicts India’s “China-plus-one” pitch and weakens its manufacturing hub image.

3. **Visa Uncertainty and Innovation Disconnect:** The H-1B visa regime, central to tech ties, now faces protectionist rhetoric. This threatens links between Silicon Valley and Indian innovation. The erosion of such collaboration endangers a key pillar of bilateral cooperation.

4. **Warmer U.S. Signals to Pakistan:** General Kurilla’s statement calling Pakistan a “phenomenal partner” in counterterrorism, along with Trump hosting its army chief, blurs counter-terror partnership lines. These moves unsettle India and reflect outdated U.S. security preferences.

Understanding the Causes

1. **Transactional Versus Strategic Cultures:** India follows a patient, layered, civilisational approach to strategy. The U.S., under Trump, prioritises quick, transactional deals. His unpredictable style—part showman, part salesman—creates uncertainty and weakens partner confidence.

2. **Persistent U.S. Nostalgia for Pakistan:** Some in the U.S. security establishment still see Pakistan as a familiar partner, especially for Afghanistan-related goals. Despite its record on cross-border terrorism, its utility is often overstated. India’s strategic autonomy is misread as indecision.

3. **Communication and Influence Gaps:** India’s geopolitical rise outpaces its institutional influence in Washington. This causes misjudgments of its ambitions. Critics like Ashley Tellis claim India suffers from “great-power delusions,” but in reality, India’s approach reflects sovereignty and long-term vision—not confusion.

India’s Strategic Response

1. **Maintain Calm and Strategic Focus:** India should avoid overreaction. Tactical irritants must not overshadow core alignments in defence, Quad, and intelligence sharing. Quiet and calibrated diplomacy should be prioritised.

2. **Widen Institutional Outreach in the U.S.:** Engaging U.S. Congress, think tanks, and the Indian-American diaspora can strengthen strategic advocacy. Broader engagement is key to correcting misperceptions and fostering trust.

3. **Reform and Reframe Economic and Talent Strategy:** India must push internal reforms and improve infrastructure to attract investment. The H-1B issue should be repositioned as mutual innovation, not a concession. Skilled mobility must support co-development of future technologies.

4. View This Moment as a Stress Test: This drift is not a rupture. It is a stress test. The partnership's true value lies in how it responds to strain—not just success. With a steady approach, renewal remains possible.

What the United States Must Do

1. Let Go of Cold War Legacies: Viewing Indian manufacturing and mobility as threats is self-defeating. A stable Indo-Pacific needs real U.S. investment in India's regional capacity-building.

2. Renew the Moral Core of the Partnership: This relationship must rest on shared democratic ideals—not just countering China. The 2005 civil nuclear deal showed what trust can achieve. That spirit is needed again.

3. Respect Strategic Autonomy and Diversity of Approach: India's independent path shows strength, not fence-sitting. Accepting strategic diversity is key to rebuilding durable trust.

4. Choose Renewal Over Rupture: This turbulence is not an endpoint. With candour and commitment, both nations can revive a partnership capable of reshaping the global democratic order.

Question for practice:

Examine the key factors contributing to the recent drift in India-U.S. relations and suggest how both countries can restore strategic trust.

Foreign universities face challenges in Indian expansion

Source: The post Foreign universities face challenges in Indian expansion has been created, based on the article "The real challenge for foreign campuses" published in "The Hindu" on 19th June 2025

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

Context: India has seen growing interest in foreign universities establishing local campuses after the UGC's 2023 regulations. While institutions like Deakin and Wollongong have begun operations, early signs suggest rushed implementation. This raises concerns about quality, sustainability, and the long-term value of such initiatives in India's evolving higher education ecosystem.

Initial Momentum and Growing Interest

1. Recent Campus Launches: Two Australian universities, Deakin and Wollongong, started classes in Gujarat's GIFT City, while the UK's University of Southampton is preparing to admit students in Gurugram.

2. New Approvals and Expansions: India recently issued Letters of Intent to five more institutions, including the University of York and Illinois Institute of Technology, for proposed campuses in Mumbai.

3. Concerns About Rapid Implementation: Admissions for some campuses began before crucial details—like faculty and curriculum—were shared, signaling enthusiasm but also raising issues around transparency and preparedness.

Global and Domestic Challenges

1. Global Headwinds for Transnational Education: Worldwide, universities face uncertainty. In the U.S., the higher education sector has been weakened by domestic political hostility, making foreign expansion less appealing. The Illinois Institute of Technology's entry is an exception.

2. Navigating India's Competitive Landscape: India's higher education system is already crowded with strong domestic institutions. New foreign campuses will struggle to stand out without unique value propositions.

3. Market-Driven, Narrow Focus: Most incoming foreign institutions offer high-demand courses in business or technology. This limited scope may fail to distinguish them from top Indian private colleges.

Academic Identity and Reputation Risks

1. Lack of Institutional Depth: These branch campuses are mostly small, specialised units rather than full-fledged universities with research breadth. Without a broad academic presence, they risk being seen as diploma mills.

2. Brand vs Substance: In India's vibrant education market, strong branding alone cannot ensure success. Foreign institutions must deliver high academic standards to avoid diluting their global reputations.

3. Infrastructure and Campus Perception: Many campuses operate in rented vertical buildings, lacking the feel of a full university. Absence of holistic infrastructure undermines their credibility in students' eyes.

Domestic Strength and Foreign Competition

1. Existing Indian Excellence: Institutes like IITs and IIMs are expanding globally and deepening their research and international ties. Joint degree programmes with foreign institutions are also growing in private universities.

2. No Room for Complacency: Foreign universities cannot assume that their name alone will attract students. They must offer clear academic advantages over well-established Indian institutions.

3. Reliance on Marketing Over Quality: Some new campuses focus more on advertising than academics. Students today assess faculty quality, curriculum strength, and support systems before enrolling.

Ensuring Long-Term Value

1. Local Relevance and Institutional Fit: India must assess whether incoming proposals match national priorities. Not all foreign institutions bring equal value, especially without local relevance or long-term commitment.

2. Avoiding Short-Term Failures: If rushed or inadequately designed, these campuses may fail quickly. Such failures could hurt institutional credibility and slow broader internationalisation efforts.

Question for practice:

Discuss the key challenges faced by foreign universities in establishing sustainable branch campuses in India.

India needs full gender parity to move forward confidently

Source: The post India needs full gender parity to move forward confidently has been created, based on the article "Unfinished business of gender parity in India" published in "The Hindustan Times" on 19th June 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 1-society-Women Empowerment

Context: India ranks 131st in the Global Gender Gap Report 2025, behind most South Asian and all BRICS countries. While there are visible improvements in education and grassroots politics, economic participation by women remains weak. The article stresses the urgent need for full institutional inclusion of women.

For detailed information on **Steps to improve gender parity in India** [read this article here](#)

India's Gender Gap: A Troubling Global Rank

1. Stagnation in Global Position: India stands at 131 out of 148 countries, reflecting its slow pace in bridging gender disparities. The fall in rank is due to other countries progressing faster.

2. Poor Regional Comparison: India performs worse than all BRICS nations and lags behind most South Asian neighbours, signalling an urgent need for accelerated reforms.

Gains in Education and Political Visibility

1. Education Nearing Parity: Women's educational attainment is at 97%, approaching full parity with men.

2. Grassroots Representation Through Panchayati Raj: Thanks to reservation laws, women now hold 45% of seats in panchayati raj institutions, strengthening grassroots democracy.

3. Parliamentary Representation Still Low: Despite local gains, women form just 14% of Parliament — the highest ever, but still far from adequate.

4. Improved Entry into Bureaucracy: Women made up 41% and 38% of recent recruits in the IAS and IFS, showing positive trends, though overall representation remains unclear.

Economic Participation Remains a Major Weakness

1. Declining Workforce Involvement: The female labour force participation rate has dropped sharply. Women contribute less than 20% to GDP, earn under one-third of men's income, and hold few leadership roles.

2. Economic Cost of Exclusion: McKinsey estimates India could add \$770 billion to GDP by 2025 with gender parity. At the current rate, this may take 135 years — a massive missed opportunity.

Structural Barriers and Institutional Apathy

1. Severe Underrepresentation in Institutions: Women are just 3% in the armed forces, 12% in the police, and only one out of 33 Supreme Court judges. Such minimal presence reflects institutional reluctance.

2. Negligent Legal Standards: Bodies like NHRC have never had more than one woman member. Laws only require “at least one woman,” enabling tokenism.

3. Deep-Rooted Cultural Biases: Institutions treat male norms as default. When women assert their realities, it is often misread as asking for favour, not fairness.

Promising Initiatives and the Road Ahead

1. Economic Empowerment Schemes: Self-Help Groups, savings plans, and credit access are helping rural women shift from subsistence to entrepreneurship.

2. Upcoming Political Gains: The long-promised 33% reservation in legislatures may materialise post-census, leveraging the strong grassroots base.

3. Global Models of Reform: The UK's use of all-women shortlists raised female representation from under 10% to over 30%, proving systemic redesign works.

Urgent Need for Institutional Reform

1. Breaking the 33% Barrier: The national mindset remains fixed at 33% inclusion. True parity demands moving beyond this artificial ceiling.

2. Inclusion as a Right, Not a Favour: Institutions must evolve fully and deliberately — not to concede, but to correct a long-standing injustice.

Question for practice:

Discuss how structural and institutional barriers hinder gender parity in India.

India's Jet Engine Gap Threatens Defence Autonomy

Source: The post India's Jet Engine Gap Threatens Defence Autonomy has been created, based on the article “India's Jet Engine Gap Threatens Defence Autonomy” published in “The Hindu” on 20th June 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- Science and Technology- indigenization of technology and developing new technology.

Context: India's indigenous AMCA fighter jet project is generating excitement, but history urges caution. The persistent failure to develop native jet engines, as seen in the HF-24 Marut and Kaveri projects, highlights a critical propulsion gap. This dependency endangers India's military preparedness, strategic autonomy, and aerospace ambitions.

Historical Lessons from Indigenous Aviation Efforts

1. The HF-24 Marut's Unfulfilled Promise: Developed in the 1950s by HAL under Kurt Tank, the Marut reflected India's aerospace aspirations. Although sleek and capable of transonic flight, it was held back by underpowered British engines and retired by 1990 after limited production.

2. Propulsion as a Critical Weakness: The Marut's failure lay not in its design but in engine limitations. IAF veterans stressed that propulsion defines combat effectiveness. Without a powerful engine, advanced aircraft remain operationally compromised.

3. Longstanding Foreign Engine Dependence: India's inability to build its own engines crippled its fighter projects. The pattern of reliance continues with present and upcoming programmes.

Challenges in Indigenous Engine Development

1. Prolonged Struggles with the Kaveri Project: Launched in 1989 for the LCA, the Kaveri engine failed despite ₹2032 crore spent over decades. Nine prototypes and multiple test hours could not meet thrust, thermal, and reliability benchmarks.

2. Unfruitful International Collaborations: Attempts with Snecma and Safran failed either due to technical gaps or DRDO's reluctance to co-develop. These collapses delayed progress further.

3. Fallback to GE Engines for Tejas: With Kaveri inadequate, ADA adopted the U.S. GE F404 engine in 2004. It allowed limited Tejas deployment from 2015 but constrained payload and manoeuvrability.

Recent Setbacks and Delays

1. LCA Mk1A Engine Delivery Delays: GE delayed 99 F404 engines under a \$716 million contract by 13 months. Deliveries began only in April 2025, pushing back the upgraded LCA Mk1A's induction.

2. Sharp IAF Criticism of HAL: Air Chief Marshal A.P. Singh criticized HAL for chronic delays, especially as IAF squadrons dropped to around 30 from the sanctioned 42.5. He stressed that military readiness cannot wait.

3. GE-F414 Engine Deal Stalled: HAL's plan to co-produce the F414 engine hit a roadblock. GE demanded \$500 million more and refused to share key technologies like turbine blades and thermal coatings, crucial for engine durability and thrust.

Wider Impacts of Propulsion Dependency

1. Engine Import Reliance Across Forces: The Army's Arjun tanks and Navy's warships also use imported engines. India lacks domestic propulsion systems for land, sea, and air platforms.

2. AMCA and LCA Mk2 Also Affected: Both AMCA Mk1 and LCA Mk2 will depend on GE's F414 engines as interim solutions. Talks with Safran and Rolls-Royce for joint development have not yielded results.

3. Strategic Risks of Continued Dependence: Without indigenous engines, India remains exposed to geopolitical risks, just as it was during the Marut era.

Need for a Long-Term Engine Strategy

1. Engines as a Strategic Asset: Jet engines determine aircraft power, export control, and readiness. Dominant powers like the U.S., China, and France lead because of in-house propulsion expertise.

2. Underlying Political and Institutional Gaps: Experts argue India's failure is rooted more in political indecision and fragmented funding than technical capability.

3. Urgent Reforms and Ecosystem Integration Needed: True engine autonomy demands structural reform, strong political will, and an ecosystem that links defence R&D, academia, and private innovation into a unified, strategic framework.

Question for practice:

Examine the impact of India's continued dependence on foreign jet engines on its indigenous fighter aircraft programmes and overall military preparedness.

India's income inequality is deepening despite growth

Source: The post India's income inequality is deepening despite growth has been created, based on the article "Time to bridge income inequality gap" published in "Businessline" on 20th June 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- Indian Economy

Context: India's rapid economic growth has reduced extreme poverty, but widening income inequality poses serious risks. The World Bank's 2025 Spring brief noted that 171 million Indians moved out of extreme poverty, yet gaps in official labour data reveal that income disparities are redrawing opportunity boundaries.

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

Structural Nature of Income Inequality

- 1. Persistent Gaps in Labour Market:** PLFS data (2017–18 to 2023–24) shows structural inequality. Median incomes rose from ₹1,02,000 to ₹1,44,000 with a 5.92% CAGR, but gains were unequally distributed.
- 2. Faster Growth at the Top:** The top 1% saw incomes rise from ₹50,000 to ₹75,000 per month (6.99% CAGR). The top 10% threshold increased from ₹25,000 to ₹32,000, highlighting disproportionate gains.
- 3. Stagnant Incomes at the Bottom:** The bottom 50% moved from ₹8,500 to ₹12,000, and the bottom 10% saw just a ₹700 rise—from ₹3,200 to ₹3,900—only a 3.35% CAGR. This reveals stark asymmetries in income growth.
- 4. Inequality Measures Remain High:** The Gini coefficient stayed around 0.42, despite per capita GDP increasing from \$1,907 to \$2,481. The Theil index at 0.33 confirmed income concentration. The top 1% to bottom 50% ratio grew from 5.89x to 6.25x.

Regional Variations in Inequality

- 1. High Inequality States:** Himachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Odisha, and Jharkhand showed high Gini and Theil indices. The income gap between the top 1% and bottom 50% was especially wide.
- 2. More Inclusive States:** Mizoram, Bihar, Manipur, and Goa had lower inequality. Mizoram and Bihar narrowed income gaps at the bottom, suggesting stronger inclusivity.
- 3. Occupational Differences:** In Maharashtra and Himachal Pradesh, self-employed workers had large income gaps. Chhattisgarh and Meghalaya showed rising top-end earnings among salaried workers.
- 4. Rural-Urban Divide Worsens:** By 2023–24, urban top 10% incomes were over twice rural ones nationally. States like Himachal Pradesh, Bihar, Goa, and Meghalaya saw the greatest divergence.

Erosion of Middle-Income Stability

- 1. Hollowing Middle Class:** Data shows a weakening middle-income group, pointing to a shrinking economic centre and uneven growth.

2. **Risks to Stability:** Joseph Stiglitz warns that eroding middle-class strength threatens political stability and demand-driven growth.

3. **Need for Structural Reforms:** Tackling inequality requires rural revitalization, better education and skills, gender parity in labour, and more formal jobs. Equity in income and opportunity is vital for resilient, inclusive growth.

Question for practice:

Discuss how rising income inequality in India affects inclusive growth and social stability despite overall economic progress.

India's GDP accurately includes informal sector despite measurement debates

Source: The post India's GDP accurately includes informal sector despite measurement debates has been created, based on the article "**India's informal sector is being tracked better than ever before**" published in "**Live Mint**" on 20th June 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper3- Indian Economy – Issues relating to growth, development and employment.

Context: A recent World Bank projection, cited by NITI Aayog, stated that India has become the world's fourth-largest economy. This sparked debate on whether India's GDP accurately captures the informal sector. Some claim it is either **underestimated** or **overestimated**, leading to widespread speculation.

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

Understanding Informal Sector Definitions

1. **ILO vs SNA Interpretations:** The term "informal sector" is often misused. The **International Labour Organization (ILO)** defines it as informal employment—jobs without contracts or job security. In contrast, the **System of National Accounts (SNA)** defines it as value added by household enterprises lacking formal accounting.

2. **India's Adoption of Global Standards:** Since 2011–12, India's national accounts have used the SNA approach. Chapter 7 of the **National Account Statistics 2025** provides detailed aggregates from the household sector, confirming that informal activity is part of GDP.

3. **Misconceptions about Exclusion:** The claim that informal output is not measured in GDP is incorrect. The inclusion of household sector data reflects its formal consideration in GDP estimates.

Criticism of Overestimation Post-2015

1. **Post-Reform Doubts:** Some critics argue that GDP data **overstates informal sector activity**, citing disruptions from **demonetization**, **GST**, and the **COVID-19** pandemic. They claim these shocks were not properly captured in the revised series.

2. **Sector-Wise Composition:** Agriculture and construction, which form **over 56%** of the household sector, use independently verified production data under the **commodity flow method**, reducing chances of estimation errors.

3. **Base Year Methodology:** For other parts of the household sector, **GVA in 2011–12** was based on **NSS employment data** and **2010–11 surveys** on unincorporated enterprises. The new approach also applied **effective labour weights** based on job types.

Indicators Used for GVA Estimations

1. **Sector-Based Proxies-** After the base year, GVA growth was tracked using specific indicators:

- **Transport:** Growth in commercial vehicles
- **Trade:** Shifted from sales tax to GST
- **Manufacturing:** Based on IIP and ASI

- **Other Sectors:** Linked to corporate sector growth

2. **GST and Informality:** The **introduction of GST** did not automatically formalize small firms. Enterprises below ₹1.5 crore turnover still operate informally, often under the **GST composition scheme** without formal books.

Improved Data Collection and Sector Trends

1. **Frequent Surveys by NSS:** Since **2017–18**, the NSS has conducted regular employment and enterprise surveys, now conducted **monthly**. These provide consistent insights.

2. **Trends in Informal Sector:** Three years of survey data show **strong informal sector growth**. Informal employment is at a **20-year high**, especially in **household enterprises**.

3. **Evolving Structure of Employment:** Employment composition is changing. The idea of **effective labour** needs ongoing refinement for accurate GDP estimation.

Towards Continuous GDP Measurement

1. **Better Data, Better Estimates:** Improved and regular informal sector data opens the door to **continuous national accounting**, reducing reliance on major base revisions.

2. **Aligning with Global Norms:** India can now revise GDP methodology **only when global standards change**, improving transparency and long-term stability.

Supreme Court strengthens maternity rights in India

Source: The post Supreme Court strengthens maternity rights in India has been created, based on the article “**Financing maternity rights in India**” published in “**Businessline**” on 21st June 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper2- Constitution of India And GS paper1- Society- Social empowerment

Context: The Supreme Court’s May 23 judgment in *K Uma Devi vs State of Tamil Nadu* marks a historic shift by recognising maternity rights as a fundamental right under Article 21. This decision enhances job security for working women, aligns with global standards, and reinforces the State’s duty to ensure equitable maternity benefits.

Recognition of Maternity Rights as Fundamental Rights

1. **Link to Article 21 and Previous Judgments:** The Court declared maternity benefits as part of the right to life and dignity under Article 21 of the Constitution. It referred to earlier rulings affirming reproductive and bodily autonomy as essential components of fundamental rights.

2. **Reference to International Instruments:** Extensive references were made to global frameworks like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and the International Labour Organization’s (ILO) Maternity Protection Convention C183.

3. **Restoration and Job Continuity:** The ILO Convention emphasizes that maternity leave must not just ensure time off, but also job security—guaranteeing that women return to the same position after leave.

Statutory Framework and National Progress

1. **Maternity Benefit Act as Normative Foundation:** The Court upheld the Maternity Benefit (MB) Act, 1961 as the legal basis ensuring non-discriminatory employment conditions for women. It acknowledged the increasing role of women in the workforce and the State’s obligation to uphold their reproductive rights.

2. **India’s Paid Maternity Leave Achievement:** India now provides 26 weeks of paid maternity leave, surpassing the ILO’s standard of 18 weeks, placing it among 42 countries offering the longest fully paid leave.

3. Inclusion of Diverse Motherhood Categories: Since 2017, the MB Act also covers adoptive and commissioning mothers, granting them 12 weeks of leave. It also allows flexible work options to support women's workforce participation.

Concerns Over Coverage and Implementation

1. Public vs Private Sector Scope: The judgment does not clarify whether its application is limited to public sector employees or extends to women in all forms of employment, including contractual and non-standard jobs.

2. Inclusion of Informal Sector Women: A major concern remains the large number of women in the informal sector. There is uncertainty about how their maternity rights will be recognised and implemented.

3. Employer Responsibilities Without Exemption: Employers must now provide maternity benefits without exemption. While large firms can afford this, Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) face greater financial strain.

Financial Constraints and Global Practices

1. ILO Recommendations on Maternity Funding: The ILO recommends that maternity benefits should be funded through social insurance, public funds, or non-contributory schemes—not borne solely by individual employers.

2. Indian Historical Context and Challenges: India's first maternity law—the Bombay Maternity Benefit Act, 1929—placed full funding responsibility on employers, a model still influencing current practices.

3. Need for a Universal Maternity Fund: Though the Supreme Court praised the MB Act, it emphasised the need for robust support institutions. A Universal Maternity Fund aligned with ILO standards can address financing challenges.

Way Forward

1. Global Financing Models: According to ILO's World Social Protection Report (2024–26), most countries use a combination of tax-based systems, national social security, or insurance schemes for maternity funding.

2. Lessons for India's Informal Workforce: India must learn from these global practices to ensure effective maternity protection, particularly for informal and temporary women workers, and fully realise the Uma Devi ruling.

Question for practice:

Examine how the Supreme Court's judgment in *K Uma Devi vs State of Tamil Nadu* strengthens maternity rights and addresses the challenges of implementation and financing in India.

India and United Kingdom Deepen Cultural Cooperation

Source: The post India and United Kingdom Deepen Cultural Cooperation has been created, based on the article "Lighting the spark in U.K.-India cultural relations" published in "The Hindu" on 21st June 2025

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

Context: In May, the United Kingdom and India took a significant step in strengthening ties beyond trade by signing a wide-ranging cultural agreement. The Programme of Cultural Cooperation (POCC) highlights mutual focus on creativity, technology, and cultural exchange.

For detailed information on **India-UK Relations- Significance, Challenges and The way ahead** [read this article here](#)

Strengthening Bilateral Cultural Ties

1. **Signing of the POCC:** On May 2, the U.K. and India signed the Programme of Cultural Cooperation. It focuses on five areas: digital culture, exhibitions, events, cultural property, and sustainability. It promotes creative collaboration and economic growth.

2. **Support from High-Level Leaders:** U.K. Secretary of State for Culture Lisa Nandy and Indian Culture Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat formalized the agreement. Ms. Nandy, the first Labour Cabinet Minister of Indian heritage, also addressed the WAVES summit in Mumbai, emphasizing joint creative potential.

3. **Collaborative Institutions:** The POCC connects India's Ministry of Culture, the U.K.'s Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport, and the British Council. Major U.K. institutions like Arts Council England, the British Museum, and the Natural History Museum are also partners.

The Creative Economy's Global Rise

1. **Sectoral Growth and Employment:** The global creative sector is expanding fast and is expected to reach 10% of global GDP by 2030. India's creative economy, valued at \$35 billion, employs nearly 8% of its workforce, second only to agriculture.

2. **India's Cultural Strengths:** India has a vast cultural base, a large youth population, and strong technological capacity. It also has over 300 universities and 3,000 colleges offering courses in arts, design, and architecture, producing a globally competitive workforce.

3. **Non-Metro Creative Hubs:** An Asian Development Bank report (2022) notes that six of India's top ten creative hubs are in non-metro areas, such as Badgam and Tiruppur. This shows the depth of India's cultural reach beyond major cities.

Innovation, Education, and Technology in Culture

1. **Need for Skill Development:** The creative sector faces a shortage of skilled workers. Meeting this challenge requires sustained investment in education, vocational training, and apprenticeships. International collaborations can build global competencies.

2. **Digital Transformation:** Technologies like Artificial Intelligence, augmented reality, and virtual reality are reshaping creative industries. The British Council's report recommends integrating these into India's creative education to prepare professionals for the digital shift.

3. **Institutional Collaboration for Growth:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi envisions India as a global creative hub. Achieving this requires cooperation between government, industry, and academia, built on education, skill development, and international ties.

Cultural Projects and Public Diplomacy

1. **Royal Enfield and Himalayan Knot:** Royal Enfield, a U.K.-India brand, is preserving craft traditions through its Social Mission. With UNESCO, it works with 580 artisans in the Himalayas on the Himalayan Knot textile conservation project.

2. **Arts Festivals and Exchanges:** Events like the Serendipity Arts Festival's Birmingham chapter and initiatives like Wales in India and the Hornbill Festival showcase how cultural programs build people-to-people bonds.

3. **Shared Stories and Cultural Healing:** In uncertain times, culture remains a powerful tool for connection and peace. The enduring stories and shared heritage between the U.K. and India offer hope, healing, and unity.

India Must End Its Self-Hyphenation with Pakistan

Source: The post India Must End Its Self-Hyphenation with Pakistan has been created, based on the article "Perils of self-hyphenation" published in "Business Standard" on 21st June 2025

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

Context: India has long pursued a strategy of "**de-hyphenation**" from **Pakistan** to project itself as a standalone power. However, recent domestic political choices have reversed this trend. The article examines the **risks of re-hyphenating with Pakistan**, especially under the current political discourse.

The Legacy and Logic of De-Hyphenation

1. **A Strategic Necessity:** Since the 1980s, India has aimed to **separate itself diplomatically from Pakistan**. **China is the primary strategic challenge**, requiring long-term effort to build deterrence or peace. Managing Pakistan is essential, but **facing both adversaries simultaneously must be avoided**.

2. **Global Recognition of the Policy:** India strongly pushed back against **Western attempts to club India and Pakistan together**. Since **Bill Clinton's presidency**, this policy gained traction. The **Simla Agreement** cemented **bilateralism**, rejecting third-party mediation.

3. **Symbolic Victories of De-Hyphenation:** **Bill Clinton's brief visit to Pakistan post-Kargil** and **Indonesia's President skipping Pakistan after visiting India** are signs of success. The U.S. adopted a "**non-zero-sum**" view, supporting **separate relations** with India and Pakistan.

The Reversal through Domestic Politics

1. **Hyphenation from Within:** Despite diplomatic wins, India's **political messaging under the BJP** has **re-hyphenated Pakistan**. Since **Pulwama and the 2019 elections**, Pakistan has become a **central theme in BJP's domestic politics**.

2. **Pakistan as a political tool:** The BJP frames **Pakistan as synonymous with terrorism**, using this to **amplify Hindu-Muslim polarisation** and strengthen its core electoral narrative.

3. **Disproportionate Attention:** Pakistan dominates speeches by BJP leaders. A **word-cloud comparison** suggests a **100:1 ratio of Pakistan to China mentions**, despite China being the **more significant long-term threat**.

Strategic Consequences of Self-Hyphenation

1. **Strengthening the Adversary:** Giving Pakistan too much attention **enhances its perceived leverage**. The **Pakistan army gains legitimacy**, as seen with **General Asim Munir's boost after Operation Sindoor**.

2. **Geopolitical vs. Political Interests:** India's goal is to **focus on China, build economic power**, and manage Pakistan calmly. **BJP's internal narrative clashes with strategic needs**, creating a dangerous contradiction.

3. **Undermining strategic focus:** Overfocus on Pakistan **distracts from India's primary global challenges**. It reduces strategic bandwidth to deal with **complex global crises**, especially involving China.

Towards a Coherent 3D Strategy

1. **Diminish the threat:** India must keep using **diplomacy and military investments** to **reduce Pakistan's threat potential** over time.

2. **Deter Through Strength:** A strategy of **deterrence backed by restraint** will limit Pakistan's capacity to provoke or escalate conflict.

3. **De-Hyphenation:** India must **stop using Pakistan in domestic political narratives** to stay aligned with its global ambitions and maintain strategic clarity.

Conclusion

India's long-term strategy of **de-hyphenation** is undermined by **self-hyphenation** through domestic politics. To secure its global rise, India must return to its original plan: → Diminish → Deter → De-Hyphenate.

Question for practice:

Discuss how India's domestic political discourse has affected its long-term strategy of de-hyphenation from Pakistan.

Adivasi faiths need recognition in Census

Source: The post Adivasi faiths need recognition in Census has been created, based on the article "**Recognising Adivasi identity in the Census**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 23rd June 2025

UPSC Syllabus Topic: **GS Paper2-** mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections. **And GS Paper1-** Social empowerment

Context: The 2027 Census notification has been criticised for ignoring caste enumeration. Yet, an equally urgent and neglected issue is the demand by Adivasi/Scheduled Tribe (ST) communities for the recognition of their distinct faiths in the Census.

For detailed information on **Caste Census – Significance and Challenges** [read this article here](#)

Constitutional Violations in Current Census Practices

- 1. Exclusion of ST Faiths:** The Census lists **only six major religions** and a vague '**Other Religious Persuasion**' (ORP) category. It omits faiths followed by ST communities, despite their distinct spiritual traditions.
- 2. Ignored Legal Protections:** The Constitution guarantees the cultural and religious rights of STs through the **Fifth and Sixth Schedules** and **Articles 25, 26, 371A, and 371B**. **Denying recognition** of their faiths **violates** these safeguards.
- 3. Forced Religious Misidentification:** The lack of a specific option **forces STs to identify** with dominant religions or use the unclear ORP category, undermining their **Article 25 rights** to freely practise their faith.

Census Data Reveals Identity Suppression

- 1. Underrepresentation in ORP:** In the **2011 Census**, India's ST population was **10.43 crore (8.6%)**, yet **only 79 lakh (0.66%)** registered under ORP. This shows **widespread forced misidentification**.
- 2. Awareness Boosts Accurate Reporting:** In **Jharkhand**, **49 lakh individuals identified as Sarna** due to awareness campaigns. In **Madhya Pradesh**, **10 lakh registered as Gond**. When informed, STs **choose to declare their faiths**.
- 3. Lack of Information in Rural Areas:** Most Adivasis live in remote areas and **lack awareness** of the ORP option. Without guidance, they are **absorbed into incorrect categories**, distorting the religious demography.

Hindutva Narrative and Cultural Assimilation

- 1. Targeting of Christian STs:** **RSS-affiliated groups** have intensified attacks on **Christian converts** and missionaries among STs, promoting **ghar wapasi** under a Hindutva agenda.
- 2. State-Driven Cultural Absorption:** Government-backed campaigns introduce **Hindu symbols, temples, and chants** in tribal areas. **Soil from ST groves** was taken for the **Ram temple**, altering tribal sacred spaces.
- 3. Ideological Influence in Education:** In **Eklavya schools**, ST children are taught **Hindu customs**, not their own. **RSS-run schools** flourish using **CSR funds**, reinforcing assimilation efforts.

Double Standards and Erosion of Identity

- 1. Selective Recognition of ST Status:** **Christian STs are denied recognition**, while **Hindu-identifying STs are accepted**. This reveals a **political double standard**, not a legal principle.

2. **Broader Basis for ST Classification:** ST status is based on **social, cultural, and historical factors**, not religious affiliation. **Religious bias undermines constitutional intent.**

3. **Threat to Pluralism:** The ‘one nation, one culture’ model suppresses ST diversity. STs represent a **rich mosaic of languages, traditions, and beliefs.**

Urgent Call for Census Reform

1. **Jharkhand’s 2020 Resolution:** Jharkhand unanimously passed a resolution seeking **Sarna’s inclusion** in the Census. It was sent to the Centre, but **no action was taken.**

2. **Need for Nationwide Recognition:** STs across India follow **diverse traditional faiths.** A **new column—‘Adivasi/ST Faiths’**—would ensure accurate and fair religious representation.

3. **Strengthening Democratic Rights:** All political parties must **demand this inclusion** to uphold **constitutional rights** and **cultural dignity** of Adivasi communities.

Question for practice:

Examine how the exclusion of Adivasi faiths from the Census undermines constitutional rights and cultural representation of Scheduled Tribes in India.

India Faces Challenges from Expansionary Policy Shift

Source: The post India Faces Challenges from Expansionary Policy Shift has been created, based on the article “**Expansionary policies in a slowing economy**” published in “**The Hindu**” on 23rd June 2025

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

Context: The Reserve Bank of India has recently cut repo rates twice, following earlier income tax reductions. This double expansionary approach—fiscal and monetary—has raised concerns about inflation, policy coordination, and economic outcomes amid signs of slowing growth and weak demand.

Monetary and Fiscal Shift

1. **Recent Monetary Policy Actions:** The RBI has lowered the repo rate by 75 basis points since April 2025. The rate now stands at **5.5%**, indicating a strong expansionary stance. These cuts were possible due to a significant fall in inflation to **3%**, the lowest in six years.

2. **Fiscal Expansion via Tax Cuts:** In February 2025, the government introduced **income tax cuts** aimed at boosting household consumption and economic activity. This was expected to support aggregate demand through higher disposable incomes.

3. **Growth and Inflation Outlook:** The RBI forecasts **6.5% GDP growth** for 2025–26 and inflation within its target band of **4% ±2%**, providing justification for monetary easing. However, concerns remain regarding whether both policies working simultaneously will overheat the economy.

Need for Policy Coordination

1. **Interaction of Demand-Side Policies:** Both monetary and fiscal policies influence aggregate demand. While lower interest rates boost investment, tax cuts increase consumption. Without coordination, their combined effects may risk rising inflation or fiscal slippages.

2. **International Precedents:** In the U.S. and U.K., **tax cuts were offset by tight monetary policy** due to inflation concerns. Conversely, in 2008, when interest rates were ineffective, **government spending** was used to restore demand.

3. **Current Scenario in India:** India's situation reflects **simultaneous expansion**, raising questions about policy alignment. The muted response from households may suggest that tax cuts have not translated into immediate demand, highlighting possible issues in coordination.

Signs of Economic Weakness

1. **Falling Credit Growth and Rising Unemployment:** Credit growth dropped to a **three-year low of 9%**, and unemployment rose to **5.6% in May 2025**. These indicators point to weak aggregate demand despite policy stimulus.
2. **Ineffective Consumption Boost:** Households were expected to increase spending post-tax cuts. However, **actual consumption has remained low**, raising concerns about the effectiveness of fiscal policy in stimulating immediate growth.
3. **Delayed Policy Impact:** Some argue that tax windfalls take time to influence behaviour. But this challenges the **assumption of forward-looking households**, a key principle in inflation targeting frameworks. If delayed, future demand surges may require **sharp policy responses**.

Inflation and Deficit Concerns

1. **Inflation Risks:** If both investment and consumption pick up suddenly, it could result in a **future inflation spike**, pressuring the RBI to react sharply with rate hikes, disrupting economic stability.
2. **Rising Fiscal Deficit Fears:** If output doesn't rise, **tax revenues may fall**, widening the **fiscal deficit**. The government may be forced to reduce spending, potentially harming vulnerable sections of society.
3. **Need for Inclusive Measures:** Given rising profits and weak wage growth, the article suggests **targeted government spending** to raise wages and consumption power among the poor as a more sustainable path to growth.

Question for practice:

Examine how simultaneous expansionary fiscal and monetary policies in India could impact inflation, growth, and fiscal sustainability.

India shows strong growth but faces inclusion and reform challenges

Source: The post India shows strong growth but faces inclusion and reform challenges has been created, based on the article "**With poverty levels now at historic lows, a need to revisit food and fertiliser subsidies**" published in "**Indian Express**" on 23rd June 2025

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

Context: As Prime Minister Narendra Modi completes 11 years in office, this article assesses India's economic progress, compares it with the UPA era (2004–2014), and outlines future challenges around inclusivity, welfare efficiency, and policy reforms.

For detailed information on **Inclusive Growth** [read this article here](#)

Economic Growth in Global and PPP Terms

1. **Significant GDP Expansion:** India's **nominal GDP rose from \$2.04 trillion in 2014 to \$4.19 trillion in 2025**. During the UPA tenure, it increased from \$709 billion in 2004 to \$2.04 trillion. India is now **set to become the world's fourth-largest economy**.
2. **Rise in PPP-Based GDP:** GDP in **Purchasing Power Parity (PPP)** terms improved from \$6.45 trillion in 2014 to **\$17.65 trillion in 2025**, placing India **third globally**, after China and the US.

3. **Per Capita PPP Income Growth:** India's per capita income (PPP) rose from \$4,935.5 in 2014 to **\$12,131.8 in 2025**. The global rank improved from 166th to **149th**. Yet, **India remains the lowest among G20 nations** on this metric.

4. **Regional and Global Comparison:** India still trails **Sri Lanka (\$14,970)** and **Bhutan (\$17,735)**, and is well below **China (\$28,978)** and the **US (\$89,105)**. However, it ranks above **Pakistan (\$6,950.5)** and **Bangladesh (\$10,261.1)** in 2025.

Inclusivity and Income Distribution

1. **Gini Coefficient Stability:** The **Gini coefficient** indicates modest income inequality changes: **0.34 (2004)**, **0.35 (2014)**, and **0.33 (2021)**. This shows persistent, though moderate, inequality.

2. **Importance of Equitable Growth:** High-level growth needs to be accompanied by broader welfare. **Macro gains can mask disparities**, especially in large economies.

3. **Agriculture's Role in Inclusion:** With **46.1% of the workforce** in agriculture (2023–24), its performance is critical. Agriculture GDP grew at **4% annually (FY15–FY25)** despite two drought years, exceeding the **UPA's 3.5% growth**.

4. **Farmer Support Measures:** Key initiatives include **PM-KISAN income support**, **urea price freeze**, and **subsidised food and housing**, especially targeting rural areas.

Welfare Schemes and Poverty Reduction

1. **Direct Benefit Programs:** The Modi government has provided nearly **free food grains, housing aid, and farmer support**, benefiting millions.

2. **Steep Drop in Extreme Poverty:** Poverty at the **\$3/day PPP level** fell from **27.1% in 2011** to **5.3% in 2022** — an **80% drop**, the sharpest since 1977.

3. **Decline in Broader Poverty Line:** At the **\$4.20/day level**, poverty declined from **57.7% to 23.9%** between 2011 and 2022 — a **60% reduction**, showcasing major welfare gains.

4. **Need for Policy Recalibration:** With poverty levels now **historically low**, the sustainability and targeting of subsidies need review for better outcomes.

Reforming Food and Fertiliser Subsidies

1. **Rationalising Food Subsidy:** Over **800 million people** receive free food, costing **Rs 2.03 lakh crore** in FY26. Digital **food coupons of Rs 700/family/month** for the poorest 15% are suggested. For others, **Rs 500/family/month** could apply to buy nutritious items, ensuring better targeting and reduced leakage.

2. **Reforming Fertiliser Subsidy:** Fertiliser subsidy is set at **Rs 1.56 lakh crore**. Shifting to **fertiliser coupons** and **price deregulation** could support bio-fertiliser use, reduce chemical overuse, and **cut environmental harm**.

3. **Efficiency and Sustainability Gains:** Reforms can save public funds, improve soil and water health, and reduce import dependence. This would also **diversify production and improve resource use**.

4. **Political Will and Communication:** Effective reform needs data triangulation, **trust-building with farmers**, and political communication. PM Modi's **strong messaging ability** is seen as vital to implement these changes.

Question for practice:

Discuss how India's economic growth under Prime Minister Modi compares with the UPA era and the challenges it faces in ensuring inclusive and sustainable development.